

*I love to tell the story about the young seminary graduate who wanted to be a preacher. He was excited when he was invited to interview with a small, country church. His meeting with the search committee began with a question from the chairman. "Young man, do you know your Bible?" The young man replied, "Yes sir. I know the Bible from front to back." Another member of the committee asked, "Do you know the stories and parables?" The candidate answered, "Oh yes! I know all the stories and parables." Another committee member said, "Tell us one of the parables of Jesus—let's say the parable of the Good Samaritan." And so he did. It went like this.*

*"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, who went down to Jericho by night and fell among stony ground. And the thorns rose up and choked him nearly half to death. He said, 'What shall I do?' Then he said, 'I shall arise and go to my father's house.' And he arose, and climbed up into a sycamore tree. The next day Solomon and his wife Gomorrah came by, and they carried him down to the ark for Moses to take care of him. And as he was going into the ark, he caught his hair in a tree limb and he hung there for 40 days and 40 nights.*

*And afterwards, he hungered and the ravens came and fed him. The next day the three wise men came and carried him down to Nineveh. And when he got down there, he found Delilah sitting on the wall. He cried out, 'Chunk her down, boys.' And they said, 'How many times shall we chunk her down, unto seven times?' And he said, 'Nay, but unto seventy times seven.' So they chunked her down, 490 times and they picked up twelve baskets of her fragments. And they asked him, 'Lord, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be?'"*

*The committee sat silent until the chairman finally said, "Folks, I say we call him. I know he's young, but he sure knows his Bible."*

My goal today is to convince you of the importance of knowing your Bible, not so you can impress people with your knowledge but so you can suppress the assaults of the enemy. We have come to the final piece of the armor of God, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. It is the only spiritual weapon that is both defensive and offensive. Let's review. (photo of armor)

The Belt	Truth	Frees us from deception
The Breastplate	Righteousness	Covers inadequacies/ Protects emotions
The Shoes	Readiness	Provide stability and mobility
The Shield	Faith	Extinguishes fear
The Helmet	Salvation	Gives us eternal perspective
The Sword	Word of God	Insures our success

Let me offer three compelling reasons for knowing the word of God.

**I. We need spiritual weapons to protect us in an invisible war.** The word of God is spiritual. The "sword of the Spirit" can mean the Spirit's sword or a sword that is spiritual. It's both. In order to conduct spiritual warfare, we need spiritual weapons. **2 Corinthians 10:3-4a** "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh." We have at our disposal a sword that is offensive and defensive.

There are three different Greek words that can be translated "the word of God.

Graphe refers to the writings. The written book is just a book. It is not a lucky charm. Some of you may have grown up in a church that had "sword drills" as if this book were the sword. But that is not what is intended in this verse. The book is not the sword.

Logos, used in Jn. 1:1, is the reality behind the graphe. It is the message of the book.

Rhema, the word used here in Eph. 6:17, is a word spoken or declared. It is the proper use of the logos recorded in the graphe. It is the rhema of God that the Spirit uses to address the enemy. It is a specific word for a particular situation. It is the rhema OF GOD. In some circles someone has "a word" or a rhema that may or may not be consistent with the Bible. Rhema is a specific verse or passage that effectively addresses a particular satanic suggestion. Harry Ironside has said: "The Bible is not the sword of the Spirit, it is the armory. There are thousands of swords in [the Bible] and every one of them is powerful and two-edged."

God's Spirit is the force behind God's Word. The scriptures were written by the Holy Spirit. "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." 2 Pe. 1:20-21

God's Spirit uses God's word to make us alive. "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." John 6:63. **1 Peter 1:23-25**, "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word (logos) of God."

**II. We need a powerful weapon to stand firm against a powerful force.** "In the beginning," when the world was created, the spoken word had the power to do whatever God declared. God spoke and it was so. He spoke all things into existence. His word is divinely powerful. "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. 10:4-5.

God's word is powerful enough to destroy fortresses. Fortress = human worldviews and paradigms that imprison men and women. These fortresses of the mind are constantly reinforced by our culture. "You deserve to be happy." "What goes on in Vegas stays in Vegas." "Love the one you're with." "Do unto others before they do unto you." These expressions are "lofty things raised up against the knowledge of God." Speculations, theories, viewpoints, philosophies, religions, anything that contradicts the truth of God's revealed word. The only way to defeat falsehood is by proclaiming truth. The word of God can destroy Satan's arguments.

Jesus masterfully used the word of God to do battle with the devil in the wilderness. Mt. 4:1-4 - "If" (first class condition - "since") tell these stones to become bread. Jesus didn't get into an argument with the devil. He says, "It is written..." Jesus quotes Dt. 8:3 where Moses reminded the people that God used supernatural means to feed them. The devil wanted to address Jesus' need by supernatural means too. The issue is not "is my need legitimate?" the issue is who is giving me the advice as to how to solve the problem. Jesus is saying that man does not live by bread alone but he is also saying that it is important to establish where the bread man lives by came from. "By every word of God." The devil changes the subject. Finally, "The devil left Him." Mt. 4:11

As Tony Evans says, "If the living Word needed to use the written word to deal with the enemy of the word then how much more do you and I who have written no word need to use that same word against the enemy of the word. What makes you think you're better than Jesus?" If you ever wonder why the devil won't leave you alone consider the possibility that you never say, "It is written." And you never say, "It is written" because you don't know where it's written. If you don't read the graphé you can't comprehend the logos you can't use the rhema. You are unarmed in this battle and the devil will eat your lunch.

**III. We need a penetrating weapon to separate the flesh from the Spirit.** One word of caution: Be careful with this sword because it is ALL BLADE. Don't think you can pick it up and start swinging it at people. You will discover it's sharp, penetrating quality. Heb. 4:12, "The word of God (logos) is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Sometimes our soul conflicts with our spirit and they must be divided. Often times we make decisions based on our soul (our mind, will and emotions), when we should be making decisions from the spirit. You can go to a movie and be brought to tears by a plot that is satanic. Put the right music to it, appeal to the emotions and bam, your soul just overwhelmed your spirit. When you discover that God's word, wielded by God's Spirit, runs counter to what you feel, then you just got sliced. God's word cuts right through the invisible realm.

1. If you are biblically uninformed, you are spiritually unarmed. So every time you memorize a verse or learn where it can be found in the Bible, you have added another sword to your arsenal. Every time you learn something new about a verse, you have sharpened the blade on the sword. Every time you learn a new way to apply a verse, you have become quicker and more adept at using the sword. That is why so much practice is needed in correctly handling the Word of Truth.

Let's say a Jehovah's Witness has just knocked on your door, and he is telling you that Jesus Christ was just a god, He was not actually God himself. Where would you turn in Scripture? Where would you go? (Answer: John 1; Mark 2; Luke 18)

Or, "A coworker has gone through some troubling times in her life, and she walks up to you some day, and says, 'You're a Christian right? What does a person have to do to get to heaven?'" What would you tell her? What verses would you show her? Do you know? (Answer: John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; 1 John 5:11-13)

What if another coworker overhears the conversation and says, "Hey, I'm a pretty good person. I haven't done too many bad things. I'm going to heaven." What would you tell him? Can you think of a few verses that would show him the truth? (Answer: Matt 5; Jas 2:10)

What if you sin and Satan starts to whisper in your ear that you aren't saved, or that God doesn't love you anymore? Do you have a word to use to protect yourself? (Answer: Rom 8; John 5:24; 6:47; 10:27-29)

2. Establish God's word in your life you will be established. "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success." Joshua 1:8

The only way to take up the sword is to immerse ourselves in the Word of God. There are no short cuts or fast tracks. The only way to take up the Sword of the Spirit is to spend as much time as you possibly can in the Word of God. Read it. Study it. Memorize it. Talk about it. Meditate upon it. Pray through it. Think about it. Attend a church—such as ours—where the Word of God is faithfully and systematically taught—verse by verse, book by book so that, over time, you receive the whole counsel of God.

Jesus has already defeated the enemy. He has already won the battle. Our assignment is to hold the ground. We are not fighting FOR something. You are fighting FROM something. But the word of God should always be with us to protect us from enemy thoughts, to penetrate our hearts to reveal our sin and to help us to grow.

Can you imagine a Roman soldier without a sword saying, "I don't like carrying a sword. It's too heavy. Besides, I've got all this armor on to protect me." When the enemy attacks, he will be the first one taken out.