

“Scripture: God’s Love Letter to Us”

(2 Timothy 3:15-17)

Introduction

➤ This summer we have been diligently studying the Scriptures to learn about “Spiritual Disciplines” (this summer sermon series titled, “Disciplines for Disciples”). As the term implies, a “spiritual discipline” is a means of training or chastening oneself to grow spiritually. The concept of a spiritual discipline is taken from 1 Timothy 4:7 – “... *train yourself for godliness.*”

1 Tim 4:6-10 ~ “If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained [*entrophō*] in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train [*gymnazō*] yourself for godliness; ⁸for while bodily training [*gymnasia*] is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰For to this end we toil [*kopiaō*] and strive [*agōnizomai*], because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.”

As an imperative verb, the word “train” (vs.7) serves as a command. By definition the word “train” – (*gymnazō*; from which our English word “gymnasium” is derived) can mean to train, practice, compete, or exercise (also Heb.5:14; 12:11; 2Pet.2:14). It is important to remember that the pursuit of spiritual growth (spiritual discipline) is a command from God, and therefore not an option or elective for the Christian. Just as every Christian needs to grow and persevere in Christ, so too every Christian needs to practice spiritual disciplines. True spiritual disciplines are found explicitly in God’s Word.

➤ It is important to note our working definition, throughout this summer sermon series, for a *Spiritual discipline: a biblical practice that helps Christians to mature and persevere in their walk with Jesus Christ*. So far in this series, we have studied “spiritual disciplines” in general, and the specific disciplines of “worship”, “fasting”, “confession”, “prayer” and “fellowship.”

This morning, we are going to biblically examine the spiritual discipline of “Scripture” – that is, the living and inspired Word of God:

2 Tim 3:14-17 ~ “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Heb 4:12 ~ “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

John 17:17 ~ “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

Ps 19:7-9 ~ “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.”

➤ The sanctifying work of Scripture should be the Christian’s daily pursuit and passion – and throughout each day. It must not be something the Christian does because he/she religiously has to, but because they desperately want to. For in God’s Word, we find God’s instructions/commands, God’s will/desires, God’s character/nature, God’s attributes, God’s truth, God’s Gospel, and God’s purpose for our lives.

✓ Illust: “A Bible that’s falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn’t” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

✓ Illust: “The Bible is meant to be bread for daily use, not cake for special occasions” (unknown).

➤ As with each of these spiritual disciplines, the topic of Scripture is massive. For our time this morning, I want to focus more on the practical aspects of the spiritual discipline. That is, how do we as Christians exercise, or engage in, the spiritual discipline of Scripture? Biblically speaking, there are at least six ways (all of which the Christians should be using in their pursuit of godliness).

1. Hearing God's Word

➤ To be sure, merely hearing God's Word – i.e., “in one ear and out the other” – is not sufficient. In Scripture, we are exhorted to hear God's Word as means to knowing, believing, and obeying God's Word. In fact, in the New Testament, the Greek word translated “to hear” is *akouō* (from which our English word acoustic is derived), which can also be translated “to listen” or “to obey.” The implication is that what you are hearing is actually making an impact [(accusing someone of not paying attention: ‘You're not listening to me’ (even though they may have heard everything said)].

Interestingly, one Greek word for “obedience” in the New Testament is *hypakouō* which could literally be translated “to hear under” meaning as in submitting to (obeying) what you have heard – to not just hear, but really listen to what is being said (see Matt.8:27; Eph.6:1).

➤ So, hearing God's Word is in many ways the first step in obeying God's Word.

Rom 10:14-17 ~ “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard [*akouō*]? And how are they to hear [*akouō*] without someone preaching? ¹⁵And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’ ¹⁶But they have not all obeyed [*hypakouō*] the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard [*akoē*] from us?’ ¹⁷So faith comes from hearing [*akoē*], and hearing [*akoē*] through the word of Christ.”

➤ This underscores the importance of hearing God's Word.

Neh 8:1-4 ~ “And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. ²So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. ³And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.”

Neh 8:8-10 ~ “They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. ⁹And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, ‘This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.’ For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.”

Neh 8:12 ~ “And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.”

➤ So, hearing God's Word is not passively or inattentively listening (which is not truly listening). Rather, hearing God's Word is actively listening to God's truth, being receptive and submissive to the Word of God. Today, we are blessed to have many different ways of hearing Scripture (e.g., church, radio, internet, phone apps, etc.).

1 Tim 4:13 ~ “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”

2. Reading God's Word

➤ As important as having spiritual “ears to hear” is having spiritual “eyes to see.” Bible knowledge does not come by osmosis. The reason why God gave us the Scriptures – the written Word of God – is so that we would read and come to know His Word (see 2Tim.3:15-17; 2Pet.1:20-21). Unfortunately, many (professing) Christians spend little time reading the Bible. While excuses abound, good reasons are few.

✓ Illust: A Barna Research Group survey revealed that only 18% of professing Christians say they read the Bible every day, and 23% of professing Christians admit they never read the word of God (taken from *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*; by Donald Whitney, p.27).

➤ When teaching, both formally and informally, Jesus often said, “*It is written...*” citing Old Testament Scripture (e.g., Matt.4:4/Deut.8:3; Matt.4:7/Deut.6:16; Matt.4:10/Deut.6:13). Jesus’ apostles adopted this in their teaching/writing as well (e.g., Rom.3:10-12/Ps.14:1-3; Jms.2:8/Lev.19:18; 1Pet.1:16/Lev.11:44). Jesus’ teaching was not based on worldly philosophies, secular psychology, social/moral trends, or cultural/political worldviews. His teaching was always based on, driven by, and steeped in, the written Word of God. He taught from Scripture – proclaiming, defending, and teaching God’s Word.

Matt 4:4 ~ “But he answered, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Deut.8:3)

➤ The most asked question from Jesus, as recorded in Scripture, was “*Have you not [or never] read...?*” (a phrase that Jesus [in reference to the Scriptures]. This rhetorical question indicates that Jesus expected His disciples (and the Jewish leaders) to have read, and obeyed, what was recorded in Scripture (i.e., to them, the Old Testament), and He chided them for their lack of understanding and their disobedience. This is still God’s expectation for all of us – to know and follow God’s Word.

Matt 22:29 ~ “But Jesus answered them, ‘You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.’” [the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection (Mk.12:18), and questioned Jesus about it]

➤ Let me encourage you, if you are not already doing so, to read your Bible every day (e.g., choose a time and be consistent, choose a place that is quiet and secluded, have a plan and read the Bible in context: a. Passage Study, b. Chapter Study, c. 90-Day Study, d. Bible in a Year [caution: be careful of “Chronological Bibles”, reading “canonically” (book by book) is reading as the Scriptures were written]). What we should not do is read the Bible randomly, or indiscriminately. The Bible ought to be read as it was written. Much confusion comes from arbitrarily reading verses of Scripture out of context. Like we would with any letter or book, we must read Scripture as it was written.

✓ Illust: “Knowledge of the Bible never comes by intuition. It can only be obtained by diligent, regular, daily, attentive reading” (J.C. Ryle).

3. Studying God's Word

➤ Truly studying the Bible is more than hearing or even reading Scripture. And true Bible study is not pondering what Scripture means to you, or trying to discover some secret message (or hidden code) in Scripture.

✓ Illust: “Bible study is the most essential ingredient in the believer’s spiritual life, because it is only in study of the Bible as that is blessed by the Holy Spirit that Christians hear Christ and discover what it means to follow Him” (James Montgomery Boice).

✓ Illust: “Bible study is the metal that forges a Christian” (Charles Spurgeon).

✓ Illust: “Reading gives us breadth, but study gives us depth” (Jerry Bridges; *The Practice of Godliness*; p.51).

✓ Illust: “Every Christian who does not study, really study, the Bible every day is a fool” (R. A. Torrey).

➤ God's Word is amazing! As it has been said, "God's Word is an anvil and there are many broken hammers all around it." This is the holy and living Word of God. This is the Bible – God's Word, breathed out by God Himself.

The question then becomes how do we approach it? What are we to do with it? How are we to correctly handle – read, study, apply – God's Word?

2 Tim 2:15 ~ "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

2 Tim 2:15 ~ "**Do your best** [*spoudazo*; to use speed; means to be earnest, eager, diligent] **to present yourself** [*parastemi*; to stand beside/before] **to God as one approved** [*dokimos*; approved, tested, tried], **a worker** [*ergates*; laborer for hire] **who has no need to be ashamed** [*anepaischuntos*; lit. having no cause for shame/guilt], **rightly handling** [*orthotomeo*; lit. to cut/make straight; "orthodontist" (teeth), "orthodox" (straight beliefs)] **the word of truth.**"

2 Tim 2:15 ~ "Make every effort to present yourself before God as a proven worker who does not need to be ashamed, teaching the message of truth accurately." (NET)

2 Tim 2:15 ~ "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth." (NAS)

➤ The Apostle Paul charged Timothy to cut straight the Word of God (e.g., like a carpenter cutting wood with precision and accuracy). We too must have teachers/preachers who 'cut straight' the Word of God, and we too must be people who can rightly divide it with precision and accuracy (see Acts 17:11). How do we do that? We interpret the Bible just like we would correctly interpret any other literature (actual events, actual people, actual places, and actual history). Studying God's Word takes work but it is not impossible, and it can be eternally rewarding.

➤ Let me offer six key steps to studying the Bible. Whether for personal study, a Bible lesson, or a sermon, these steps can help us mine the truth of God's Word.

a. Preparation (pray) ~ Is my heart and mind submissive to God's Word?

Unfortunately, this step is often neglected or overlooked in the studying of the Bible. Be sure to spend some time in prayer – confessing and repenting of sin, asking for God's knowledge and wisdom – before you begin to read or study God's Word.

✚ **Key Truth: The Bible is not meant merely to inform, but to transform (Psalm 139:23-24).**

The hardest person to put under the correction of God's Word is yourself! John Stott: "We must allow the Word of God to confront us, to disturb our security, to undermine our complacency and to overthrow our patterns of thought and behavior."

b. Observation (read) ~ What does the text say?

Observation is essentially, actively, reading. Read the text of Holy Scripture to observe what it is saying. Not simply reading words on a page, but asking questions while you are reading (Who? What? When? Where? Why?).

✚ **Key Truth: Don't make the Bible say what you want it to say (2 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Peter 2:2-3).**

We must not read the Bible randomly, or indiscriminately. The Bible ought to be read as it was written. Much confusion comes from arbitrarily reading verses of Scripture out of context. Like we would with any letter or book, we must read Scripture as it was written to find out what it actually says (not what we want it to say).

c. Interpretation (study) ~ What does the text mean?

The books of the Bible were written many centuries ago. For us to understand today what God was communicating then, there are several gaps that need to be bridged: the language gap, the cultural gap, the geographical gap, and the historical gap. Proper interpretation, therefore, takes time and disciplined effort.

↳ **Key Truth: If you don't have the right interpretation of the Scriptures – you don't have the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15).**

While a biblical passage may have many applications, it can only have one true interpretation. The goal is not “What does this verse/passage mean to me?”, but “What does this verse/passage mean?” God only meant one thing by what He has revealed in Scripture. When we add our own subjective feelings and thoughts or try to force secular worldviews into the Word of God, we pervert and prostitute the Bible for our own benefit. It is our responsibility as Christians to rightly divide the Word of Truth. To study to find out what God meant when He said, “Thus saith the Lord.”

d. Correlation (survey) ~ How does this truth relate to other Scripture?

Correlation moves us out of the passage we are studying, and into the whole counsel of God. This step moves us throughout God's Word to teach us God's Word.

↳ **Key Truth: Scripture always interprets Scripture (Psalm 1; 19:7-9; Acts 17:11).**

The Bible never contradicts itself (when it appears to contradict, we know the problem lies with our interpretation not God's inspiration). We must interpret the Bible with the Bible.

e. Investigation (research) ~ What do Bible teachers say about the passage?

We are blessed today to have so many books and media on the Bible. But therein lies a problem as well. It can be difficult to sort out which ones are good and which ones are not (only God's Word is truly inspired of God).

↳ **Key Truth: The Bible is the best commentary on the commentaries (Hebrews 4:12-13; 1 Peter 1:23-25).**

Let me encourage you to purchase a good study Bible (e.g., The ESV Study Bible, The Reformation Study Bible, The MacArthur Study Bible). Read introductions to books of the Bible, read commentaries, read books on Biblical geography and customs. Like a true investigator, try to learn more about God's Word.

f. Application (obey) ~ How does this truth affect my life?

Here you must remember the goal of Bible study: to be obedient and submissive to the Word of God! Going through this study without applying what you have learned is like preparing a banquet feast and then throwing it out!

↳ **Key Truth: You cannot correctly apply God's Word until you have correctly interpreted God's Word (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 119:9-16, 105; James 1:22-25).**

Application is a crucially important step. If you go only this far, but do not apply (obey) God's Word to your life, then you have not truly gained anything ... you have only deceived yourself (see Jms.1:22-25)!

✓Illust: “If there is a command to be obeyed, we obey it. If there is a promise to be embraced, we claim it. If there is a warning to be followed, we heed it. This is the ultimate step: we submit to

Scripture and let it transform our lives. If you skip this step, you will never enjoy your Bible study and the Bible will never change your life” (John MacArthur; article: “How to Enjoy a Bible Study”).

- Studying God’s Word is not merely an intellectual exercise. And it must not be a self-righteous (heartless, mindless, religious) pursuit. The study of God’s Word is to be passionate and genuine pursuit of God’s truth – His nature/character, His will/pleasure, His commands, His promises, His wisdom, His warnings, His salvation, His glory.
- ✓ Illust: Martin Luther, the great Protestant Reformer of the 16th century, said: “I study my Bible like I gather apples. I shake the whole tree first, that the ripest might fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch. And then I shake every twig. And then I look under every leaf. I search the Bible as a whole, like shaking the whole tree. Then I shake every limb, I study book after book. Then I shake every branch, I give attention to the chapters. Then I shake every twig, or a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences and words and meanings”

(<https://www.gtv.org/library/sermons-library/52-31/responding-to-gods-word>).

4. Meditating on God’s Word

- In the wake of many cultic and false religions, the word “meditate” has fallen on hard times. Many people wrongly assume that meditating is for eastern religions (i.e., transcendental meditation, yoga, etc.). There is a right and wrong way to meditate: the right way fills the mind, the wrong way empties the mind. We are never commanded, in God’s Word, to empty our minds by meditation (this is extremely dangerous as it makes us susceptible to error and false teaching!).
- The Psalmist underscored that the blessed way of the righteousness is filled with a constant pondering and musing of God’s Word. The Christian is not engaged in a temporal study, but an incessant preoccupation with it.

Psa 1:1-3 ~ “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ²but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”

Psa 119:15, 97, 99 ~ “I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. ... ⁹⁷Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. ... ⁹⁹I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.”

Josh 1:8 ~ “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 good success.”

- The Hebrew word translated “meditate” in the Old Testament carries the idea of actively pondering, or repeatedly mulling-over, something. Illustratively, it is an onomatopoeic word which describes the low inarticulate murmuring or muttering sounds a person can make while thinking, or the sound that resonates off of a musical instrument. Some have even likened it to a cow chewing its cud.
- ✓ Illust: “Meditation goes beyond hearing, reading, studying, and even memorizing as a means of taking in God’s Word. A simple analogy would be a cup of tea. You are the cup of hot water and the intake of Scripture is represented by the tea bag. Hearing God’s Word is like one dip of the tea bag into the cup. Some of the tea’s flavor is absorbed by the water, but not as much as would occur with a more thorough soaking of the bag. In this analogy, reading, studying, and memorizing God’s Word are represented by additional plunges of the tea bag into the cup. The more frequently the tea enters the water, the more effect it has. Meditation, however, is like immersing the bag completely and letting it steep until all the rich tea flavor has been extracted and the hot water is thoroughly tinted reddish brown. ...

True success is promised to those who meditate on God's Word, who think deeply on Scripture, not just at one time each day, but at moments throughout the day and night. They meditate so much that Scripture saturates their conversation. The fruit of their meditation is action. They do what they find written in God's Word and as a result God prospers their way and grants success to them." (Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*; p.44)

✓ **Illust:** "Reading reaps the wheat, meditation threshes it, grinds it, and makes it into bread. Reading is like the ox feeding: meditation is digesting when chewing the cud. It is not only reading that does us good; but the soul inwardly feeding on it, and digesting it" (Charles Spurgeon; sermon "The Truly Blessed Man"; November 13, 1864).

➤ Meditation is pondering God, His works, and His Word throughout the days of your life – standing in line at the store, driving in your car, taking a walk, cleaning the house, doing yardwork, etc., but also more formal times of concentrated (devotional) meditation. The point is to regularly, fervently, think about God, God's will, and God's truth.

✓ **Illust:** "We are called to an everlasting preoccupation with God" (AW Tozer; *That Incredible Christian*, 46).

Col 3:16 ~ "Let the word of Christ dwell [*enoikeō*] in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

1 Peter 2:2 ~ "Like newborn infants, long for [*epipotheo*; long for, desire greatly, pursue intensely] the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation"

5. Memorizing God's Word

➤ Unfortunately, for many Christians, memorizing Scripture is viewed as something that is good for children but not necessary – or nearly impossible – for adults. The truth is, every Christian – no matter one's age, maturity, or knowledge – should strive to memorize (and fight to retain the memory of) God's Word.

To be sure, memorizing God's Word may be more difficult as a person ages. But we must not abandon it altogether. Whether you memorize verses a week, or one verse a week, it is important to pursue committing God's Word to memory. And it is actually quite easy to do – just commit to memorizing at least one phrase a day (adding it to the previously learned phrase). For example: Day 1 – "*For God so loved the world*"; Day 2 – "*... that he gave his only Son*"; Day 3 – "*... that whoever believes in him*"; Day 4 – "*... should not perish*"; Day 5 – "*... but have eternal life.*"

➤ The goal of memorization is not memorization. That is, the objective of memorizing Scripture is not just being able to recite Scripture from memory. It is to have God's Word stored in your heart and mind, so that it can affect how you live.

Ps 119:11 ~ "I have stored up [Hb. *tsasan*; to keep, hide, treasure] your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."

Ps 119:11 ~ "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (KJV)

Ps 119:11 ~ "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You" (NASU)

➤ To be sure, this verse suggests much more than mere mental (academic) memorization of God's Word. It is treasuring and revering God's Word, with faithful affection and devotion.

✓ **Illust:** "Here is the best thing, "*Thy word*" – hidden in the best place, "*in my heart*" – for the best purpose, "*that I might not sin against thee*" (quoted in Spurgeon's commentary; *The Treasury of David*; Ps.119:11).

✓ **Illust:** "The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible" (Dwight L. Moody).

6. Obeying God's Word

➤ This final aspect must not be neglected or overlooked. As we've already seen, the Bible must not be viewed or treated as some academic textbook to be studied, and it must not be viewed as some superstitious good-luck charm. God's Word is to be rightly understood and sincerely obeyed.

James 1:22-25 ~ "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing."

Rom 2:13 ~ "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified."

James 4:17 ~ "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

➤ After a person has genuinely received the Word of God into their heart and mind the next natural and spiritual step is to respond to God's Word with your life and actions. The Bible knows no separation between the two – there is no disconnect in the Bible between a Christian's faith and their obedience (cf. James 2:17). According to Scripture, upon receiving the Word of God in faith, the true believer will also respond God's Word in faithfulness.

Jesus clearly stated this when He said:

John 13:16 ~ "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

Luke 6:46-49 ~ "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

➤ As has been already stated reading God's Word without applying it to one's life is futile and absurd (and even dangerous as it can lead to hypocrisy and self-righteousness). Many militant atheists, as well as curious agnostics, know what God's Word says – many can even quote it as they seek to undermine and distort its authenticity, inerrancy, and divine authority. Simply knowing what God's Word says – and even memorizing it – is not sufficient for the true believer.

We must not just be hearers, but also doers of God's Word. To read the Bible and not apply it to our lives is like a cloud without rain, a gun without bullets, or a lion without teeth. The power of God's Word is seen as it is lived in the life of a believer.

✓ Illust: "Visit many good books, but live in the Bible" (Charles H. Spurgeon).

✓ Illust: "The Bible is not meant to inflate the head, but inflame the heart" (unknown).

Conclusion

➤ In the introductory pages of one of my study Bibles is this great declaration:

"This book contains: the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers.

Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be saved, and practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here heaven is open, and the gates of hell are disclosed.

Christ is the grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, health to the soul, and a river of pleasure. It is given to you here in this life, will be opened at the judgment, and is established forever.

It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and condemn all who trifle with its contents” (*The MacArthur Study Bible*; “Introduction”).

[This sermon was preached at Skyline Baptist Church by Pastor David Woodruff on August 15, 2021]