

PAUL LAGASSE

THE WORD OF GOD



How it Impacts
a Person's Life

NewTestamentEvangelism.com

THE WORD OF GOD

How it Impacts a Person's Life

Paul Lagasse

Copyright © Paul Lagasse 2023
All Rights Reserved

Lagasse, Paul. The Word of God: How it Impacts a Person's Life.
Includes bibliographic reference.
ISBN-13: 978-0-9964663-4-9

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®
NIV®

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™
Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

I affectionately inscribe this book to our Lord

Jesus Christ,

in grateful appreciation of the fact that I now have

eternal life with Him.

Contents

Acknowledgments	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. The Word of God: Definition	6
What is the Word of God?	6
Origin of the Word of God.....	11
The Bible is the Word of God.....	18
Jesus is the Word of God	31
Chapter 2. The Word of God: Characteristics	35
Every Word of God is Pure.....	35
Textual Accuracy	38
Further archaeological discoveries	39
Prophecies	40
For the Word of God is Quick	41
Relevance Today.....	42
Discerning Sin.....	42
God’s Word in a Person’s Life	46
Active Judgement.....	48
The Word of God is Sharp.....	49
A Powerful Weapon.....	50
Transformational Power.....	57
The Word of God is a Sword	58
The Word of God is Alive	60
Chapter 3. The Word of God: Action.....	64
Hearing Comes by the Word of God	64
Seeing the Truth.....	65
A Personal Relationship with God is Possible.....	69
The Word of God Speaks.....	70
How to Discern the Thoughts and Intentions of the Soul.....	71

How Our Circumstances Are Changed.....	72
The Benefits of Meditating on the Word of God.....	77
The Benefit to the Soul	78
Resisting Temptations.....	80
Rightly Dividing the Word of God	84
Preaching the Word of God	85
Preaching the Word.....	86
Teaching the Word.....	87
Conclusion.....	89
Public Law 97-280.....	92
Bibliography.....	93

Acknowledgments

My lovely wife of thirty years and our two wonderful daughters have been an inspiration to me both as a husband and a parent. Their presence and their love are constant reminders that God does love us, even through others.

Introduction

Why is the Word of God (*the Bible*) necessary in a person's life? Have you ever considered that? There are so many concerns that require our attention in our lives today: God, family, work, friends, hobbies, house/apartment chores/maintenance, relaxation, etc. It seems that our time is already consumed before we even think about God or His Word. However, we should consider God's Word in conjunction with God Himself as the number one priority in our lives. Why? Because the Word of God *is* God. The apostle John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . The Word became flesh [Jesus Christ] and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14). The reference here of the Son coming from the Father is Jesus Christ. And the phrase "The Word became flesh" indicates that Jesus Christ *is* the *Word*. Also, the phrase "the Word was God" indicates that Jesus Christ *is* *God*. It is imperative, therefore, that we prioritize God's Word in our daily lives.

In order to consider God's Word, we must consider God Himself. We can only appreciate God's Word if we first have a relationship with Him. God's Word is not only the gateway to God Himself, but it allows us to understand who God is and how much He loves us. He loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to this earth to die on the cross for our sins – to pay the penalty for our sins, since we cannot pay that penalty ourselves. In addition to sending His Son (Jesus Christ) to this earth, God the Father also imparts the Holy Spirit unto those of us who are Christians. In order to know how God's Word fits into our lives as we relate to God and others, we must understand the interpersonal relationships between God, Christians, and non-Christians. Figure 1 shows these relationships.

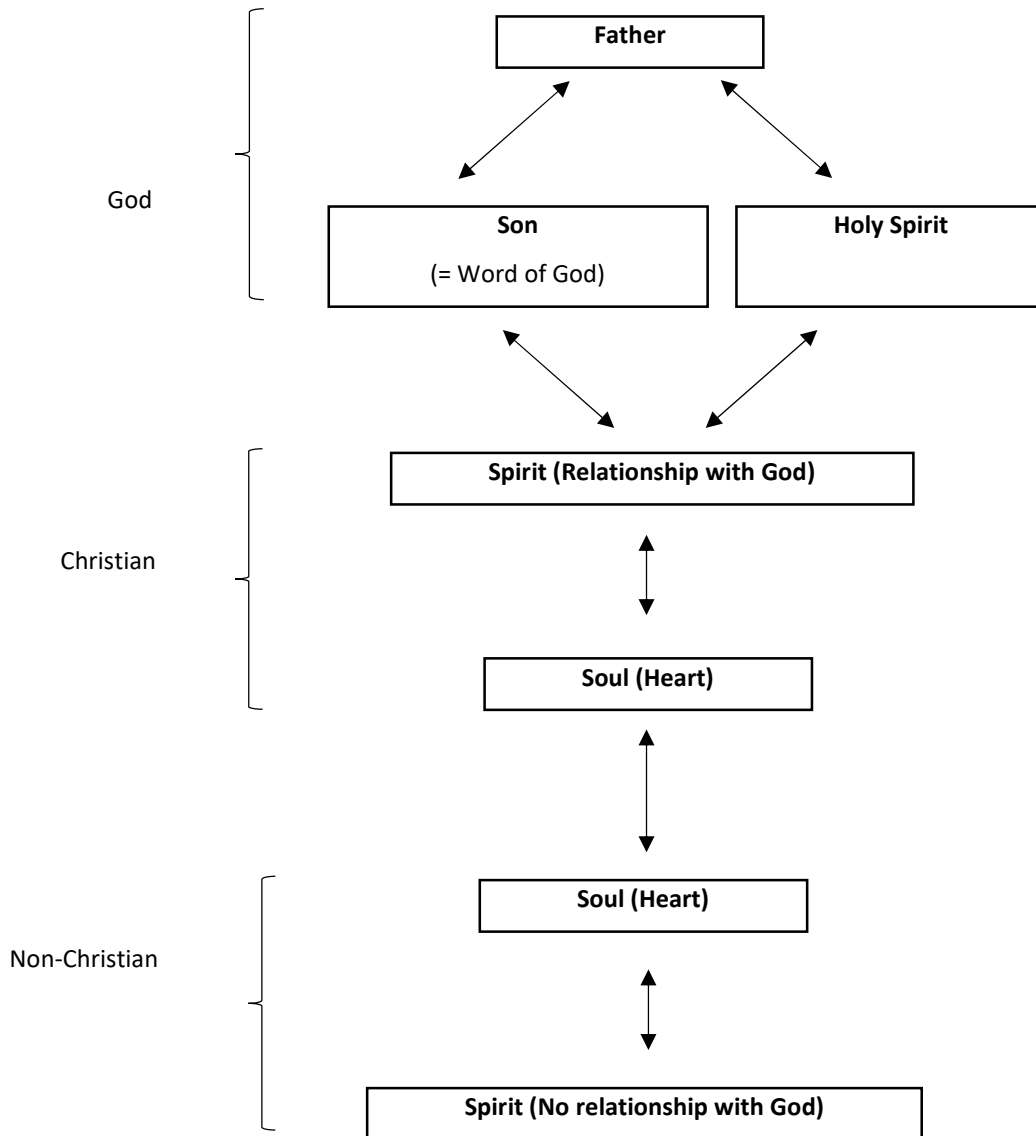


Figure 1 – Separation of Soul and Spirit

In this figure, God is shown as three persons but one God (sometimes referred to as the Trinity). Each representation of God has a specific function: (1) God, the Creator (Genesis 1:1), (2) the Son, Jesus Christ who sacrificed Himself for our sins so that we can have an eternal relationship with Him (Hebrews 7:27) and is equated with the Word of God (John 1:14), and (3) the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to follow God's will according to the Word of God (2 Timothy 1:14).

For a Christian, there are two components that allow us to function in the spiritual realm as shown in the figure: a person's spirit and their soul (Hebrews 4:12). A person's spirit is what allows them to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. This component of a person (whether they have a relationship with Christ or not) allows them to live after their physical body dies. For those who have a relationship with Jesus Christ, their spirit will live forever with Christ in the Kingdom of God (Revelation 22:12-14). For those who do not, they will exist in hell separated from God forever (Revelation 20:15). The soul, on the other hand, is what allows a person to function daily. We refer to this component as a person's cognitive and social abilities. The soul perishes along with the physical body when a person dies. It is impossible for us as humans to psychologically distinguish between the spirit and the soul. To us, it seems as one entity. But to God, they are separate (Hebrews 4:12).

Before we go deeper into God's Word in relation to our relationships, I would suggest that you first read my book, [Understanding All About God](https://newtestamentevangelism.com) (accessible from <https://newtestamentevangelism.com>). It will open up the channel to having a relationship with God. Once we have a relationship with God, He sends us His Spirit who opens up His Word to us. Only after we have a relationship with God can we properly discern His Word, being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

In this book, Chapter 1 defines what the Word of God is. The origin, contents and authors are explained. Then the association is made between Jesus Christ and the Word which speaks to the holiness of the Word instead of just a

human document. Credibility is justified for God's Word because of the numerous miracles that were performed as recorded in the Word.

Chapter 2 delves into the construct of the Word and the fact that God's Word is pure (flawless) and trustworthy. The Word is textually accurate according to the discoveries made. In addition, God's Word is flawless because of the numerous prophecies that were true. However, the Word of God is not just a textual document but a living one. It actually impacts individuals and societies. It convicts people of their sin and provides a way of dealing with it. It holds people accountable for their sin.

Putting God's Word into action is discussed in Chapter 3. Before action can take place, a person must be ready to "hear" what God is saying. This is accomplished by reading and meditating on His Word. This points to the divine communication between God and a person. This is necessary so that a person can "see" the Truth. Before a person can act on God's Word, they must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is only then that God can work in and through us. At this point, God changes our viewpoint so that we see life and His word in this world from His perspective. A Christian is then ready to share and teach the message of God in His Word to others.

So why is the Word of God necessary? According to Arthur Pink, the human race needed a "divine revelation" from God.¹ Creation itself does not entirely present God's character. There is much more to understanding God than to look at a beautiful landscape. What's more, creation itself is not perfect since sin has corrupted its beauty.² The Word of God identifies sin in the human race, its effects on a human spirit, and how to gain forgiveness and reconciliation with God. It guides the direction our lives take if we are willing to read and

¹ Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1917), 9.

² Ibid.

study it. We must treat it as a treasure in our lives instead of a book that collects dust or is something that we just carry back and forth to church.

Chapter 1

The Word of God: Definition

What do we know about the Word of God? As noted earlier, the *Bible* is referred to as the Word of God. It is a collection of sixty-six books spanning the Old and New Testaments (39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament). The Old and New Testaments were divided chronologically by the birth of Jesus Christ. The books were penned by human authors starting with Moses around 2500 B.C. and culminating with the apostle John around 100 A.D. Even though the books were written by human hands, they were inspired by God's Spirit according to His (God's) will and not human will. Over the next 300 years, these "books" or parchments were used by local clergy. It wasn't until the year 404 A.D. that St. Jerome compiled the Latin Vulgate, which included the Old and New Testaments.³

What is the Word of God?

In the simplest sense, God's Word reflects the mind and will of God. There is no other reference available to us but God's Word to understand the nature of God. Many have sought to conjecture who God is and how He operates, but there is no other source for this information other than God's Word. God empowered human authors by His Holy Spirit to record His Word in one volume, unchanged over the centuries: "For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20). And as yet, it continues to impact human lives. The Word of God is the conduit between God and people; what's

³ Geddes MacGregor, *The Bible in the Making*, (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1959), 15.

more, it establishes a relationship between Jesus Christ and those who repent of their sins and put their faith and trust in Him. It is the lifeline to create and sustain a healthy life. In particular, it conveys God's love to all that would receive Him. It is the source of both quality of life and eternal life.

God's nature, as passed down to us, goes beyond His loving, nurturing character. It identifies God's righteousness and His abhorrence of sin. We can begin to "live a life of great faith, trust, humility, and surrender."⁴ However, we must be willing to respond and accept God's Word as truth. In other words, God's Word does not have any meaning until we first recognize the divine nature of God's Word on the one hand, and our sinful state on the other. When we recognize this dichotomy then we enter a realm where God can begin to work in and through our lives. His Word then has meaning.

To those who are willing, God's Word infiltrates their lives to sustain not only them, but also those around them including future generations. It is the very sustenance, the spiritual food, which allows a Christian to conduct themselves according to divine principles as outlined in God's Word. This is evident by evaluating the Christian lives around us to see if there is a pattern of moral and ethical conduct exhibiting God's divine principles. Remember, God loves us and wishes the best for our lives. That means the lives of every human being. Leland Ryken used these words to explain this further: "Stories have an author who stands outside the story and controls it. Stories bear the imprint of their author and express that author's values. The Christian's life is a story told by God."⁵ The great mystery of Christian life is that God controls us while at the same time, he allows freedom of will to make our own choices. It is the

⁴ Amy Swanson, "What are the Most Important Things to Understand About the Nature of God?" Christianity.com, last modified October 2, 2020, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/god/important-things-to-understand-about-the-nature-of-god.html>.

⁵ Leland Ryken, "And It Came to Pass: The Bible as God's Storybook," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Apr-Jun 1990), 141.

junction of human fallibility with God's infallibility. Even though we might be befuddled as to how this works, we can rest assured that God created this process and therefore it is perfectly normal.

The apostle Paul, inspired by God, wrote these words to his co-worker Timothy: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16). Paul encouraged Timothy regarding God's inspired Word. The term "God-breathed" refers to the process whereby God's Spirit inspired human writers to pen His words. It points to the divinity or perfection of God's Words. It reminds us of the divine authority that God has, requiring not only Timothy's attention, but ours as well. The phrase, "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" refers to the inspiration of God's Word upon a reader – people like you and I. In other words, God's Word is affecting His plan when we teach others, when we rebuke or stand up against violators or violations of His Word, and when we correct others. Finally, we train others in virtuous or righteous living – a byproduct when a reader subscribes wholeheartedly to God's Word. This direction results in what Paul calls, "the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." That is, one who believes in God's Word is now able to act and perform righteously, based on God's Word, and according to His plan.

In addition to God's righteousness, He has also revealed His salvation to us. Consider God's words written by a psalmist:

Sing to the LORD a new song,
For he has done marvelous things;
His right hand and his holy arm
Have worked salvation for him.
The LORD has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the nations. (Psalm 98:2)

God's Word is effective because it reveals God's salvation to us. Saved from what? Saved from eternal separation from Him which is the just reward for our sins.⁶ In other words, those of us who believe in Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross for our sins will not experience eternal damnation. Our spirits will live in the presence of God forever. This revelation is extremely important to us and sums up God's Word to us because it restores our relationship with Him after it was broken by the advent of sin in the world (see Genesis 3).

The apostle Peter knew Jesus Christ personally. He spent three years with Christ during the course of His ministry. Peter observed first-hand the message and power of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Here are some words that Peter expressed about God's Word:

We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (2 Peter 1:19)

Peter attested to the fact that God's Word is "completely reliable." Sometimes we look for contractors to do work on our houses and we prefer to have someone come in who we trust - someone who is knowledgeable and can get the job done. So it is with us. Peter recommended God's Word as something reliable, something that can minister to us, something that can reveal God's Word and love us. Peter then encouraged us to pay attention to it – not in a haphazard fashion – but to take it very seriously. Notice the metaphor that he used: "as to a light shining in a dark place." This is a stunning metaphor because light, even a candle, invokes a sharp contrast when shone in a dark room. It reveals the objects and contour of a room not previously seen in darkness. That is how God's Word works in the spirit of a Christian. It exposes only those

⁶ God abhors sin and has nothing to do with it. That is why He sent Jesus Christ to this earth to die on the cross for our sins. We could not pay the penalty for our sins – only a divine God in the person of Jesus Christ could do that. That is why we should ask Him to forgive us of our sins and trust Him as our Lord.

thoughts and behaviors that God is aware of and only God can deal with. The final metaphor in that verse: “until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,” refers to the act of God’s Spirit first indwelling in a new Christian’s spirit. Before a person comes to Christ, there is a spiritual darkness or void in their spirit. But once a person intentionally makes a decision to confess their sin and ask God for forgiveness and subsequently invite God into their spirit, there is spiritual light. God exposes those things in a person’s spirit that no one else can. He does this by enlightening the Christian as they read His Word.

The Word of God is the truly inspired message that God brought to us through human writers. The apostle Peter further proclaimed: “For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). The words written in God’s Word were inspired by God upon men via His Holy Spirit. They were written by men, but their thoughts were governed by God. God could have placed a pristine copy of His Word in the Library of Congress, penned by His own hand. But instead, He chose to reveal Himself through the thoughts of men.

How then do we define God’s will? God’s will is embodied in the concept of love. God could have created the universe, and then reclined from any intervention in the doings of humanity. That is certainly within His right because He is God. However, God did choose to intervene out of love. First, He wanted to identify Himself as the Creator, the One who deserves the credit for His creation. Our response should be an awesome thank you and credit for such a task. Second, He chose the nation of Israel as His people, the people who would be the mouthpiece of God’s love to the world. This does not mean that everyone else is inferior to the Israelites, but rather, that the Israelites initially carried God’s message – God’s Word. The message applies to all people – both

the Israelites and everyone else. And third, God's will established a way for all people to be reconciled to Himself. When sin entered the world, it separated all of us from God (Isaiah 59:2). We were held responsible for our sin, which is eternal damnation or separation from God. However, Jesus Christ, came into the world and sacrificed Himself on the cross for our sin so that we would not see eternal damnation, but rather eternal life with God forever (Romans 6:23). As we can see, God's will communicated to us with regards to spiritual life and death, something that would affect us for all eternity. This is the beginning of understanding all truth about God. A.W. Pink summarized this understanding in this way: "Grant that the Bible is a Divine revelation and communication of God's own mind and will to men, and you have a fixed starting point from which advance can be made into the domain of truth."⁷

Origin of the Word of God

The sixty-six books in the Word of God were written by forty writers over a span of 2000 years. They are sectioned into the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is comprised of thirty-nine books and the New Testament has twenty-seven. The Old Testament is sometimes referred to as Hebrew Scripture, since it records the events taken place in what was and still is Israel. The Israelites were also known as the Hebrews. Scripture is derived from the Latin word, *scriptus*, or "writings." The first five books of the Old Testament are sometimes referred to as the Torah (Hebrew for "instruction and law"). These books were written primarily by Moses. It's a historical account from the beginning of creation to the journeys of the Israelites after they were freed from imprisonment in Egypt. They also contain the laws given by God to the Israelites.

⁷ Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1917), 5.

The second group of books in the Old Testament are known as the Prophets. These people were the mouthpieces of God. They contain the consequences that the Israelites would face depending on whether or not they obeyed God's Word in the Torah. Even though God worked through the Israelites, they were still human with fallibilities and sometimes chose to disobey God's Word into what is known as sin.⁸

The third group of books are the Writings. They contain much of the historical accounts of the Israelites from the establishment of the Israelites in the land promised by God (which is modern day Israel). In addition, they record the lyrics used by the psalmists during worship of God as well as wise sayings – both for the encouragement of the Israelites and others who read them. These three groups: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings were written as a token of God's dealings with the nation of Israel and to inform future generations.⁹ It is a standard by which Israelites and Christians can look upon as God's character and how He relates to humans. They are used as encouragement for the reader and the building of one's faith in God.

The twenty-seven books in the New Testament start with the birth of Christ and have not concluded yet. In fact, there is no conclusion in time because the last book, the book of Revelation, promotes an eternity where Christians will reside forever with Christ. The New Testament contains the gospels, the letters, and the revelation. The four gospels are the eye-witness accounts regarding Jesus Christ written by four of His disciples. The letters were written as instruction and encouragement to the Church both in its infancy and today. The book of Revelation describes events that are to take place in the end times

⁸ Sin is disobedience to God's Word, but it results in a break in the relationship between a person (or nation) and God. With the exception of the creation story in the first three chapters of the first book (Genesis), the remainder of the chapters and books in the Word of God deal specifically with the topic of sin and its ramifications.

⁹ Lucas Hagen, "The Bible Was Written to Inform God's People", Christianity.com, October 29, 2020, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/what-is-the-purpose-of-the-bible.html>.

(futuristic). In summary, the Old Testament covers the creation story until the time of Christ while the New Testament describes the time of Christ throughout eternity.

The Word of God obviously finds its origin in God Himself. Jesus said in Luke 11:28, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” Jesus referred to His words as the Word of God. He has the right to do so, because [He is one of the three manifestations of God \(God the Son\)](#). God always existed and so did the Word of God. The fact that Jesus then spoke these words about 30 A.D. only points to the fact that His Words always existed – just as God always existed. It is difficult for us to imagine a God who always existed, but that is the divine nature of God. We cannot possibly determine His origin, because He had none. It is up to us by faith to trust in His eternal existence, and the eternal existence of His Word.

Since Jesus Christ is God, and the Word of God is Jesus Christ, He is the final authority and the trusted origin of the Word of God. There is no doubt, therefore, that the Word of God is infallible because the thoughts and words recorded originated with God, even though they were penned by fallible human writers. God’s Spirit worked through the thoughts of these writers to record His infallible Word. God has the power and authority to conduct the thoughts of humans as He wills.¹⁰ Lewis Chafer described Christ’s infallible Word in this fashion:

. . . the Lord Jesus Christ has ever been the expression, or manifestation, of God . . .
. The living Word is ever the Manifester . . . the final Revealer of God . . . Christ is the voice of God speaking to men, and that is a direct, uncomplicated revelation of

¹⁰ Free choice, however, is still given to humans. Humans have the ability to do what is right and what is wrong. In this case, God has chosen specific writers to record His infallible Word as a standard for all people to abide by.

God. When beholding or hearing the Son, men are enabled to know what God is like. This revelation is complete, wanting nothing.¹¹

Jesus Himself proclaimed that His words, which are the Word of God, came from God the Father and not Jesus Himself: “For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say” (John 12:49-50). We also see the triune God ([see Figure 1](#)), one God but three persons or manifestations in action. God the Father gave God the Son (Jesus) the words to say. God the Holy Spirit, who is part of the triune God also inspired humans to write the words of God the Father. This three-person development of God’s Word gives us the assurance that God’s Word is genuine and can be trusted.

But how did God use *human* writers to record His words? God used prophets on many occasions. These were men and women who were given a word directly from God. One example is in the book of 1 Samuel. Samuel was a prophet who was tasked by God to give a message to a Benjamite by the name of Saul. Saul did not initially realize what was happening, but Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul’s head, kissed him and declared Him Israel’s king (1 Samuel 9:25 – 10:1). The rest of the book of Samuel (chapters 10-31) deals with the kingdom and military feats of Saul, which fulfills the prophecy.

Arguably the greatest prophecy is that of the coming of Jesus Christ and His suffering and death on the cross for our sins. There are many prophecies regarding this, but here is one example:

He [Jesus Christ] grew up before him [God] like a tender
shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us

¹¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 58 in John A. Witmer, "The Incarnate and the Written Word of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, (Jan-Mar 1956), 67.

to him,
Nothing in his appearance that we
should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by
mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with
pain.
Like one from whom people hide their
faces
he was despised, and we held him in
Low esteem.

Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace
was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:2-5).

But do these prophecies originate in the thoughts of humans or God Himself. And if the origin was God, how was it transmitted to the human mind. Was it an audible or inaudible voice? Were there visible signs? C.E. Stowe claims that the third person of God, the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit) was involved in this process. Even though man was operating under “his own spontaneity,” God’s Spirit guided the writer to use his (both God’s and his) own words:

Inspiration acts not on the man's words, not on the man's thoughts, but on the man himself; so that he, by his own spontaneity, under the impulse of the Holy Ghost, conceives certain thoughts and gives utterance to them in certain words, both the words and the thoughts receiving the peculiar impress of the mind which conceived and uttered them, and being in fact just as really his own, as they could have been if there had been no inspiration at all in the case. . . . The Divine mind is, as it were, so diffused through the human, and the human mind is so interpenetrated with the Divine, that for the time being the utterances of the man are the word of God.¹²

¹² C.E. Stowe, *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible* (Harford, CT: Hartford Publishing Company, 1868), 19-20.

According to this quotation, God's utterance cannot be separated from that of a man. The two are inseparable. It would appear that the writer was using his own words, which is true. However, God's utterances were intertwined in those words.

An opposing view is taken by B.B. Warfield. In this approach, God is viewed as supplying His Word independent of the human author even though it was penned by humanity. Warfield ignores the indwelling of the Holy Spirit upon the human writer, concluding that the "Scriptures are a Divine product, without any indication of how God has operated in producing them."¹³ In Warfield's defense, it may not appear that the divine perfect thoughts of God can be mixed with the imperfect thoughts and pen of the human writers. But if this were true, then how can we as imperfect beings have a relationship with God? How can we come to Him asking Him to forgive us of our sins in the name of Jesus Christ and then receive mercy, forgiveness, and eternal life with Him forever? Warfield's explanation seems to follow the gnostic tradition where God exists in His kingdom in all of His divinity, and mankind exists separate from God on this earth. It defies Acts 17:28 which says, "In Him we live and move and have our being." The intertwining of God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) with the thoughts of human writers is further described by John Walvoord:

Essentially, however, inspiration is as inscrutable as any supernatural work of God. If one could answer the questions, how God can create? How God can perform miracles? How God can predict with absolute certainty the future actions of men? And how the dead? Then one could also solve the problem of the mode of inspiration. Inspiration is the explanation of how the Word of God came into being. It is impossible to account for the Bible apart from such a supernatural activity of God through its human authors.¹⁴

¹³ B.B. Warfield, "Inspiration," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, III, 1474. Cf. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*, pp. 131 ff in John F. Walvoord, "Is the Bible the Inspired Word of God?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Jan 1959), 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

Consider for a moment the words of the apostle Paul, “All Scripture is *God-breathed* [italics mine] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Greek word for God-breathed is *theopneustos*, which means “. . . to breathe or blow. Prompted by God, given by divine inspiration, breathed out by God, produced by the breath of God.”¹⁵ Clearly, the apostle Paul who wrote these words to Timothy described the very words he was writing (as well as those from other writers) as: (1) initiated by God, and (2) released by God onto or into another entity. Regarding the first point, “initiated by God” points to God as the origin of God’s Word. With regard to the second point, God breathed out His Word into the writer’s mind. Can a perfect God breathe something into an imperfect writer’s mind? Sure, God can do whatever He wants with His resources. So even though the writers were using their human minds and hands to pen God’s Word, the words originated with God and God breathed or impressed them into the minds of these authors.

Also, consider these words written by the prophet Jeremiah where God said to the prophet: “The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Before I formed you in the womb
I knew you,
Before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. (Jeremiah 1:4)

The phrase, “The word of the LORD came to me” occurs three more times in chapters 1 and 2. This signifies the working of God’s Spirit, or the “breathing” of the Spirit upon Jeremiah. It shows that a divine, perfect God can impress His words upon a human being.

¹⁵ Spiros Zodhiates and Warren Baker, eds., *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: Key Insights into God’s Word* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1996), 2535.

The Bible is the Word of God

The Bible and the Word of God are two interchangeable terms. The term *Bible* comes from the Greek *biblos* and Latin *biblia*, meaning books. That is, there are 66 individual books that comprise the Bible. But more importantly, it is the contents of these 66 books which not only astonishes humanity, but it shows the divinity and perfection of God who revealed Himself to us. The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

But some may dispute that the Bible is the Word of God, that it is divine and perfect and without error. They may even try to prove that it is not true based on scientific facts. But what does the Bible or the Word of God have to do with science? God did not intend His Word to be an encyclopedia of scientific facts, but rather, an explanation of His plan for the nation of Israel and the redemption of those who would trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

For example, the “sun rises and then sets” is a phenomenon mentioned in Ecclesiastes 1:5. However, it is distinct from “the earth revolves on its axis from west to east once in twenty-four hours, thus producing day and night,” which is a scientific fact.¹⁶ Thus, we see that science, even though it is true to the physical universe, does not conform to the Word of God. This is not to criticize science itself. Our physical universe is an aggregation of scientific facts. But the Word of God conforms to the message that God Himself is proclaiming, and a scientific fact or a collection of scientific facts are not part of that message.

¹⁶ Stowe, C.E., *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible* (Harford, CT: Hartford Publishing Company, 1868), 29.

If we need to look for hard evidence as to the credibility of God's Word, we need to look no further than the substance of His Word itself. For example, there are numerous miracles and prophecies that cannot be disputed, but yet reveal God in all of His glory as He deals with both people and circumstances. These records show the perfection of God and His Word. There are 83 **miracles** in the Old Testament and 81 in the New Testament:¹⁷

Old Testament miracles:

1. Creation – Genesis 1:1–27
2. Enoch's translation – Genesis 5:24
3. The Flood – Genesis 7:17–24
4. Confusion of tongues at Babel - Genesis 11:3–9
5. Sodomites blinded – Genesis 19:11
6. Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed - Genesis 19:24–25
7. Lot's wife turned to a pillar of salt – Genesis 19:26
8. Ass speaking in human voice- Numbers 22:21–35
9. Burning bush – Exodus 3:3
10. Moses' rod changed into a serpent – Exodus 4:3–4, 30
11. Moses' hand made leprous – Exodus 4:6–7, 30
12. Aaron's rod changed into a serpent – Exodus 7:8–10
13. River turned to blood – Exodus 7:20–25
14. Frogs – Exodus 8:1–15
15. Gnats – Exodus 8:16–19
16. Flies – Exodus 8:20–24
17. Murrain – Exodus 9:1–7
18. Boils – Exodus 9:8–12
19. Hail – Exodus 9:18–24
20. Locusts – Exodus 10:1–20
21. Darkness – Exodus 10:21–23
22. First-born destroyed in Egypt – Exodus 12:29–30
23. Pillar of cloud and fire – Exodus 13:21–22; 14:19–20
24. Crossing the Red Sea – Exodus 14:21–23
25. Bitter waters sweetened – Exodus 15:25
26. Manna sent – Exodus 16:13–36
27. Water from the rock in Rephidim – Exodus 17:5–8
28. Amalek defeated – Exodus 17:9–13

¹⁷ Staff, "How Many Miracles are there in the Bible?" 2/28/19, accessed 8/2/21, <https://www.spiritoflifeag.com/how-many-miracles-are-there-in-the-bible/#:~:text=Feel%20free%20to%20share%20with%20others.%20There%20are%20thann%2080%20found%20in%20the%20New%20Testament.>

29. Strange fire on Aaron's sacrifice – Leviticus 9:24
30. Nadab and Abihu destroyed – Leviticus 10:1–2
31. Israel's judgment by fire – Numbers 11:1–3
32. Miriam's leprosy – Numbers 12:10–15
33. Korah and his gang destroyed by unnatural means – Numbers 16:31–35
34. Murmurers destroyed by a ravaging plague – Numbers 16:41–50
35. Aaron's rod blossoms – Numbers 17:8
36. Water from the rock in Kadesh – Numbers 20:8–11
37. Brazen serpent healed many bitten by fiery serpents – Numbers 21:9
38. Jordan supernaturally divided – Joshua 3:14–17
39. Fall of Jericho – Joshua 6:6–20
40. Dew on Gideon's fleece – Judges 6:37–40
41. Sun and Moon stood still – Joshua 10:12–14
42. Angel in flame – Judges 13:20
43. Lion slain by Samson – Judges 14:5–6
44. Thirty Philistines killed by Samson – Judges 14:19
45. Water from the hollow place Lehi – Judges 15:19
46. City gates carried away by Samson – Judges 16:3
47. Dagon's house pulled down by Samson – Judges 16:29–30
48. Dagon's fall before the Ark – 1 Samuel 5:1–12
49. Men of Beth-Shemesh destroyed – 1 Samuel 6:19–20
50. Thunder and rain in harvest time – 1 Samuel 12:18
51. Uzzah's mysterious death – 2 Samuel 6:6–7
52. Jeroboam's hand withered and restored – 1 Kings 13:4–6
53. Rending of the altar in Bethel – 1 Kings 13:5
54. Drought ordered by Elijah – 1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17
55. Elijah fed by ravens – 1 Kings 17:4–6
56. Widow's oil and meal supernaturally increased – 1 Kings 17:12–17
57. Widow's son raised from dead – 1 Kings 17:17–23
58. Sacrifice consumed by fire – 1 Kings 18:38
59. Rain in answer to prayer – 1 Kings 18:41
60. Captains destroyed by Elijah's command of fire – 2 Kings 1:9–12
61. Jordan divided by Elijah's mantle – 2 Kings 2:8
62. Elijah translated to heavens in a chariot of fire – 2 Kings 2:11
63. Jordan divided by Elisha with Elijah's mantle – 2 Kings 2:14
64. Waters of Jericho healed – 2 Kings 2:20–22
65. Young mockers of Elisha torn by bears – 2 Kings 2:24
66. Waters supernaturally supplied for Jehoshaphat – 2 Kings 3:16–20
67. Widow's food supernaturally multiplied – 2 Kings 4:1–7
68. Shunammite's raised from dead – 2 Kings 4:19–37
69. Poisoned pottage made harmless – 2 Kings 4:38–41
70. Hundred fed with 20 loaves – 2 Kings 4:42–44
71. Naaman cured of leprosy – 2 Kings 5:10–14
72. Gehazi struck with leprosy – 2 Kings 5:27
73. Axe head caused to float – 2 Kings 6:5–7

74. Ben-Hadad's plans revealed – 2 Kings 6:8–13
75. Syrian army defeated – 2 Kings 6:18–20
76. Resurrection by touch with Elisha's bones – 2 Kings 13:21
77. Sennecherib's army destroyed by an angel – 2 Kings 19:35
78. Hezekiah healed – 2 Kings 20:7
79. Shadow returned to sundial – 2 Kings 20:11
80. Uzziah afflicted with leprosy – 2 Chronicles 26:16–21
81. Three men delivered from fiery furnace – Daniel 3:19–27
82. Daniel delivered from lion's den – Daniel 6:16–23
83. Preservation of Jonah in the belly of fish for 3 days – Jonah 2:1–10

New Testament miracles:

1. Water made wine in Cana – John 2:1–11
2. Son of nobleman healed in Cana – John 4:46–54
3. Christ passed unseen through crowd in Nazareth – Luke 4:28–30
4. Demoniac in synagogue healed in Capernaum – Mark 1:23–26
5. Peter's mother-in-law healed in Capernaum – Matthew 8:14–17
6. Draught of fishes in lake of Galilee – Luke 5:1–11
7. Leper cleansed in Capernaum – Matthew 8:1–4
8. Paralytic healed in Capernaum – Matthew 9:1–8
9. Impotent man healed in Jerusalem – John 5:1–9
10. Withered hand restored in Galilee – Matthew 12:10–13
11. Centurion's servant cured of palsy in Capernaum – Matthew 8:5–13
12. Widow's son raised in Nain – Luke 7:11–17
13. Demoniac healed in Galilee – Matthew 12:22–23
14. Tempest stilled in lake Galilee – Matthew 8:23–27
15. Two demoniacs cured in Gadara – Matthew 8:28–34
16. Jairus' daughter raised from dead – Matthew 9:23
17. Woman with issue of blood healed – Matthew 9:20–22
18. Blind men cured – Matthew 9:27–31
19. Dumb spirit cast out in Capernaum – Matthew 9:32–33
20. Five thousand supernaturally fed – Matthew 14:15–21
21. Walking on the sea – Matthew 14:25–33
22. Syrophenician daughter healed – Matthew 15:21–28
23. Four thousand supernaturally fed – Matthew 15:32–39
24. Transfiguration of Christ – Matthew 17:1–6
25. Tribute money supernaturally provided – Matthew 17:24–27
26. Deaf and dumb man healed – Mark 7:31–37
27. Blind man healed – Mark 8:22–26
28. Devil cast out of boy – Mark 9:14–29
29. Miracles by the seventy – Luke 10:17
30. Ten lepers cleansed – Luke 17:11–19
31. Jesus passed unseen through crowd in the temple – John 8:59
32. Man born blind healed – John 9:1–7

33. Lazarus raised from dead – John 11:38–44
34. Woman with infirmity cured – Luke 13:11–17
35. Man with dropsy cured – Luke 14:1–6
36. Two blind men cured in Jericho – Luke 18:35–43
37. Fig tree cursed and withered – Mark 11:12–14
38. Malchus' ears healed – Luke 22:50–51
39. Second draught of fishes – John 21:1–14
40. Resurrection of Christ – Luke 24:6
41. Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene – Mark 16:9
42. Christ's appearance to other women – Matthew 28:9
43. Christ's appearance to two disciples – Luke 24:15–31
44. Christ's appearance to Peter – 1 Corinthians 15:5
45. Christ's appearance to ten apostles (Thomas absent) – John 20:19–24
46. Christ's appearance to eleven apostles (Thomas present) – John 20:26–28
47. Christ's appearance to seven disciples fishing – John 21:1–24
48. Christ's appearance to eleven apostles in Galilee – Matthew 28:16–17
49. Christ's appearance to five hundred brethren – 1 Corinthians 15:6
50. Christ's appearance to James – 1 Corinthians 15:7
51. Christ's appearance to eleven apostles on day of Ascension – Acts 1:2–9
52. Outpouring of the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:1–14
53. Christ's appearance to Paul at his conversion – Acts 9:1–5; 1 Corinthians 15:18
54. Lame man cured by Peter – Acts 3:6
55. Death of Ananias and Sapphira – Acts 5:5, 10
56. Many sick people healed by Peter – Acts 5:15
57. Apostles freed from prison by angelic intervention – Acts 5:19; 12:7–11
58. Stephen's great miracles – Acts 6:8
59. Dying Stephen's vision of Christ – Acts 7:55–56
60. Philip cast out unclean spirit – Acts 8:6–13
61. Ananias' vision – Acts 9:10
62. Paul's sight restored – Acts 9:17–18
63. Aeneas healed of palsy – Acts 9:34
64. Dorcas restored to life – Acts 9:40
65. Cornelius' vision – Acts 10:3–4, 30–32
66. Peter's vision – Acts 10:9–20
67. Agabus' prophecies – Acts 11:28; 21:11
68. Peter released from prison by angelic intervention – Acts 12:7–11
69. Elymas blinded – Acts 13:11
70. Lame man cured by Paul – Acts 14:10
71. Damsel delivered from evil spirit – Acts 14:10
72. Paul's vision on the way to Damascus – Acts 16:9
73. Earthquake released Paul and Silas – Acts 16:25–26

74. Gift of tongues – Acts 19:6
75. Special miracles by Paul – Acts 19:11–12
76. Evil spirit overpowered Sceva’s seven sons – Acts 19:13–16
77. Eutychus restored to life – Acts 20:10
78. Paul unharmed by viper’s bite – Acts 28:5
79. Publius’ father healed – Acts 28:8
80. John’s vision on Patmos – Revelation 1:9; 22:21
81. Innumerable miracles of Christ not recorded but witnessed by the apostles – John 20:30; cf. Acts 10:38–39

To emphasize, let’s look at some of the miracles in the Old Testament. In Genesis 1:1 it states that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The beginning refers to the beginning of time as we know it. God is not bound by time because He is all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), and all-present (omnipresent). The creation of time was for our benefit, not God’s. This verse also implies that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. That speaks to His power which we cannot comprehend. When we say that we can make a wooden chair, we use something that already exists (wood). God, in His limitless power, can create anything out of nothing. So in this case, He created what we would describe as the galaxies, filled with space and what we would call “heavenly bodies” (planets, stars, asteroids, etc.).

Another miracle was the disappearance of Enoch at the end of his life (Genesis 5:21-24). Enoch “walked faithfully with God.” That is, Enoch honored God and desired to obey Him. After 365 years, God decided to take Enoch from this earth. However, he did not physically die as most mortals do. Instead, he disappeared. When a loved one ceases to live, we can see their body without their spirit. But in Enoch’s case, both body and spirit were taken by God.

A more popular miracle is the Flood (Genesis 7:17-24). In this story, Noah “walked faithfully with God” (Genesis 6:9). However, “the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence” (verse 11). God told Noah that He was going to destroy all creatures except for Noah, his family, and those animals admitted into the ark (verse 13). He then instructed Noah to build an ark and

bring two of all living creatures at that time into the ark (verses 14-22). Chapters 7 and 8 describe the event of the Flood. When the waters receded and the ark was opened, only Noah, his family, and the representative animals on the ark survived. God promised Noah that He would never flood the earth again (Genesis 9:11).

Even after the Flood, people had a spirit of pride. All of those alive at the time had *one* language. They were so confident in themselves that they decided to build a city with a tower that reached high into the sky (11:1-9). The danger here is that they were placing themselves above God. God decided to “confuse their language so that they will not understand each other” (verse 7). It’s hard to imagine how various languages developed, but God introduced multiple languages so that the people would scatter or form their own groups according to each language that they spoke. Thus, God confounded the plans of the people so that they stopped building the city with the tower. God’s intention was to draw people to Himself rather than themselves.

In yet another story, God sent two angels to pronounce judgment for the wickedness in Sodom (Genesis 19:1-29). When they arrived there, they met a righteous man by the name of Lot. Lot offered them to stay at his house instead of the dangerous city square. That night, the men of the town surrounded Lot’s house and demanded that he send out the two men (the angels) so that they could have sex with them. The two men pulled Lot back into the house and struck the men at the door with blindness so that they could not find the door. The two angels then ushered Lot and his family to safety.

In addition to miracles, **Prophecies** give proof to the divine nature of God’s Word. But do we really give credence to the divine nature of the prophecies themselves? If prophecies were fulfilled in God’s Word, is that sufficient for us to trust it? A.W. Pink provided a nice contrast between our attempts at prophecy and God’s:

Man stands before an impenetrable wall of darkness, he is unable to foresee the events of even the next hour. None knows what a day may bring forth. To the finite mind the future is filled with unknown possibilities. How then can we explain the hundreds of detailed prophecies in the Scriptures which have been literally fulfilled to the letter, hundreds of years after they were uttered?¹⁸

The total number of prophecies in God's Word depends on how they are counted. One person may see a single verse as a prophecy whereas another might see multiple prophecies in the same section. J. Barton Payne's *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* lists 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament and 578 prophecies in the New Testament, for a total of 1,817.¹⁹

One example of prophecy in the **Old Testament** comes from the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah recorded a prophecy in Jeremiah 25:11-12 concerning the nation of Israel: ". . . 'This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,' declares the Lord, 'and will make it desolate forever.'" In 586 B.C., the king of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar invaded the nation of Israel after conquering her surrounding nations. The king took into captivity some of the notables but left the rest of the people in Israel to work the land. In 516 B.C., seventy years later, King Cyrus conquered the Babylonians and the Babylonians ceased to exist as a nation.

Another example of prophecy in God's Word is found in Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." The Hebrew word *Immanuel* means God is with us. The fulfillment of this prophecy is as follows:

¹⁸ Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1917), 32.

¹⁹ Barton J. Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1973) in Wayne Jackson, "How Many Prophecies are in the Bible?" accessed 8/6/21 <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/318-how-many-prophecies-are-in-the-bible>.

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and he did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sin.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us'). (Matthew 1:18-22)

The original prophecy in Isaiah occurred in the year of 790 B.C. as was fulfilled with the birth of Jesus Christ in 0 A.D.

Yet another prophecy was given by the prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament (c. 740 B.C.): "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). This was fulfilled when Jesus Christ was persecuted and crucified on the cross for our sins. This occurred in 33 A.D. after Jesus concluded his three-year ministry bringing the news of God's love and care for all those who would trust in Him. He was "pierced" on the cross when a Roman soldier pierced His body with a spear. He died this death "for our transgressions" – that is, our sins. He took the place of death for our sin so that we would not suffer an eternal spiritual death for our sins. This resulted in "peace" and the fact that "we are healed" (spiritually).

In a similar fashion, Jesus willingly took upon Himself our punishment without complaint as recorded in Isaiah 53:7: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." He did not argue in His own defense regarding punishment and death. Most people would put up some kind of fight before succumbing to this kind of tragedy. Yet, Isaiah foretold how Christ would endure this tragedy over 700 years in advance.

And finally in Isaiah 53:9, “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.” Jesus Christ is a deity,²⁰ however, He was buried among the graves of mortals. This does not minimize God or relegate Him to ourselves. Rather, it shows that God gave Himself up to mortals to be persecuted, crucified, and buried among them as a sacrifice for their sins. He committed no violence and embodied no deceit in his mouth. He was the perfect sacrifice for our sins because He is a perfect God.

One example of prophecy in the **New Testament** (which was actually forwarded from Joel 2:28) is in Acts chapter 2. In the first part of verse 17, Peter explained to the crowd (about 600 years after Joel’s prophecy) that God said in the last days that He would “pour out my [His] Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. . .” This prophecy was fulfilled immediately when Peter (empowered by the Holy Spirit) prophesied about the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He also encouraged the crowd to “repent and be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v.38). The whole purpose of prophecy is to share the message of Jesus Christ with another person or with others in a group. God’s plan is that all people would have a chance to ask Him for forgiveness of their sins. The imparting of the Holy Spirit was, and still is, necessary for a Christian in Christ to share this message with others.

In yet another example, the prophet Agabus prophesied in Antioch (present day Syria) that a severe famine would spread throughout the entire Roman world – that is, throughout Asia Minor beyond Rome itself and portions of the Middle East including Judea or what is known today as the western portion of

²⁰ Jesus Christ is one of the three manifestations of God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Christ is the manifestation of God the Son. These three manifestations still represent one God.

the Middle East (Acts 11:27-28). One historical record identifies the fulfillment of this prophecy in this manner:

During the reign of Claudius, several different famines are known to have occurred. The first famine during this period was centered around [sic] the city of Rome in the years 41 and 42 A.D. The second famine known to have occurred during the reign of Claudius was in the fourth year of his office (45 A.D.), and was particularly centered in Judea.²¹

Jesus Christ prophesied in Matthew 24 that His disciples “will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you [His disciples] will be hated by all nations because of me” (verse 9). From various sources (biblical and extra-biblical), each of the disciples were murdered for their faith in Jesus Christ except for John, who died naturally on the island of Patmos during his exile around 95 A.D. (he was nevertheless persecuted for his faith, and hence, his exile).²² We know that at the end of his ministry, Peter was crucified upside down in Rome around 64 A.D., so as not to be considered in the likeness of Christ, who was crucified right-side up. Andrew was crucified on an X-cross instead of a T-cross so as not to mimic Jesus in the Greek city of Patras around 60 A.D. James, son of Zebedee was killed by the sword in Jerusalem in 44 A.D. Philip was martyred near Judea. Bartholomew was martyred in India. Thomas was martyred in Mylapore in 72 A.D. Matthew was martyred in Nadabah in 60 A.D. James, son of Alphaeus was stoned to death in Jerusalem. Thaddaeus was martyred near Jerusalem. Simon the Zealot was martyred, but conflicting records indicate this took place in either Iberia, Samaria, or Persia in 65 A.D. Mathias was either martyred in Aethiopia (Georgia) or Jerusalem. Thus, each of the disciples faced persecution or death 30-60 years after Christ’s prophecy.

²¹ Luther W. Martin, "Famines in the Days of Claudius Caesar," accessed 9/1/21 www.wordsfityspoken.org/gospel_guardian/v7/v7n30p2-3a.html.

²² Staff, "How Did the Twelve Disciples Die?" accessed 9/2/21, <https://bibleask.org/how-did-the-twelve-disciples-die/>.

An unfulfilled New Testament prophecy is found in 2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” We do not know when the judgment seat of Christ will occur. This also concurs with Revelation 20:11-15:

Then I [the apostle John] saw a great white throne and him [Christ] who was seated on it . . . and the books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done . . . Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

The assurance that anyone can be saved from such a calamity is found in Romans 10:9: “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved.” At some point in time, we do not know when, this judgment will occur. This prophecy will be fulfilled. It is arguably the most important prophecy for each and every person who was born.

The numerous miracles and prophecies in God’s Word cannot be disputed, but yet reveal God in all of His glory as He deals with both people and circumstances. These events show that the Bible is truly the divine Word of God.

But one may ask, “How is God’s Word infallible?” We need to identify how God’s Word matches up to this determination. First, we must state the fact that there are some typographical errors, particularly in the case of some names and numbers.²³ This is because copies of the Old and New Testaments were made over the centuries by the human hand. Keep in mind that there were no

²³ C.E. Stowe, *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible* (Harford, CT: Hartford Publishing Company, 1868), 12-13.

Microsoft Word spellcheckers or other word-based tools to help guide the copyists. We are dependent on the acuity of their attention and alertness to ensure as much as possible that every letter was copied exactly. Because of human imperfection, therefore, there are some instances where names and numbers do not match. For example, 2 Kings 24:8 says that Jehoiachin succeeded his father as the nineteenth king of Judah at the age of eighteen, whereas 2 Chronicles 36:9 informs us that he was "eight years old when he became king" (according to most Hebrew manuscripts – that is, not recent translations). In another example, King Saul was fatally wounded during a battle with the Philistines and decided to fall on his own sword or kill himself (1 Samuel 31:4) but in 2 Samuel 1:10, Saul was mortally wounded and asked an Amalekite nearby to kill him so that he would not be tortured by the Amalekites. It is possible the Amalekite declined the king's request to kill him whereby Saul decided to kill himself.

Secondly, there are changes in the meaning of words across translations.²⁴ In particular, there are some changes in the translation from the King James Version (KJV) to the American Standard Version (ASV) to the Revised Standard Version (RSV). For example, in 1 Samuel 2:17 the word "abhor" in the KJV becomes "despise" in the ASV and "treat with contempt" in the RSV. In another example, in Deuteronomy 24:11 the word "abroad" in the KJV becomes "without" in the ASV and "outside" in the RSV.

These changes were made in the English translations to account for changes in meaning to words over the centuries. This, however, does not detract from the fact that the Bible or God's Word is infallible. The content itself is still divine and perfect in nature, even though it was transcribed or copied over centuries. The message itself is pristine and accurately reflects God's Word.

²⁴ Geddes MacGregor, *The Bible in the Making* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1959), 391.

Arthur Pink subscribes to this: “Grant that the Bible is (in its original manuscripts) inerrant and infallible and you reach the place where study of its contents is both practicable and profitable.”²⁵

One of the most intriguing tenets of why the Bible is the Word of God is the frequent usage of the phrase, “This is what the LORD says . . .” This phrase occurs 426 times in the Old Testament. It reflects God’s dealings with people almost to the time of Christ. It is one thing if a person says something to someone else. But when a deity like the LORD says it, it then carries a special meaning. Whatever is being said is now viewed as important, truthful, and absolute. There can be no doubt about what the LORD has said, because He is God. Perhaps this is one of the most qualifying reasons why God’s Word is the absolute truth – because it comes from an absolute, true God.

Jesus is the Word of God

How can we identify Jesus Christ? He is one of the manifestations of the triune God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – see 2 Corinthians 13:14, Matthew 28:19, and 1 Peter 1:2). But what is His relationship to human beings? In Matthew 1:20-23, the virgin (Mary) gave birth to a son, as the angel foretold, and Mary and Joseph were to give him the name of Jesus. So here we see that Jesus is both God and man. In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he described Jesus in all His humility as an example of sacrifice to others: “In your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus . . .

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own
advantage;

²⁵ Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1917), 5.

rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness. (Philippians 2:5-7)

How Jesus can be both God and human is a mystery to us. We do not have the intellectual capacity to determine how this occurred. We simply accept it by faith, since we have an inferior intellect and existence compared to God's.

How can Jesus be both the written Word while He is both God and man? The final authority for this is God Himself. In Revelation 1:1, the apostle John recorded these words, "The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place . . ." The word revelation comes from the Greek word, *apokalypsis*, which means to reveal or uncover. We can take this on the basis that God intended for us to know about the events in the book of Revelation before they happen. In other words, God had something that he intentionally wanted to convey to all those who would listen. The author is clear (God) and his message was intentional (to reveal future events). This was not a second order of communication passed around among people, but rather, a first order – one that a particular author (God) communicated to a particular group of people (those who would listen). On this basis, we can take God's Word as being authoritative and connected to Jesus, the Son of God.

This identification of Jesus as the Word of God is eternal. Psalm 119:89 speaks of the eternity of His Word: "Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens." Most work that we are familiar with is temporal. That is, an author or artist created the work at a certain point in time. However, God's Word has no beginning or a time at which it was created. It always existed. What we read in God's Word is the Word that he impressed on the authors to write. But God's Word itself had no beginning and it has no end as is the case for Jesus. This further ascribes to the fact that it is authoritative.

Jesus is both God and man as well as the Word of God. In John 1:1, the apostle John also noted that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was

with God, and the Word was God.” That is, before creation, the Word of God existed. Then John expressed in verse 14 that “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” This was accomplished when Jesus Christ was born as baby (Matthew 2:1). So the phrase, “the Word was God” clearly ties God’s Word to Himself. The phrase, “The Word became flesh” ties the Word of God to Jesus. Since Jesus is the Word and the Word is God and the Word became flesh, we now see the connection between Jesus, God, man, and the Word of God.

Finally, God’s (Jesus’) omnipotence (all-powerful) defines his authority when it comes to His Word. If we truly subscribe to the fact that God created everything out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), then it follows that His Word is also true, accurate, and authoritative. Certainly as human beings, we must accept the fact that we are imperfect, and thus, not in a position to question the all-powerful God. Richard Muller noted this as follows, “. . . the word is also employed to denote God’s infinite excellence above all that is low and created.”²⁶ This speaks to how we should examine ourselves and determine that God is superior to us (and we are not superior to Him).

In the final analysis, Jesus Christ is the Word of God. The apostle John opened his gospel with these words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). This verse equates the Word of God with God Himself. This is not an unusual equality. After all, we might say that someone named Harry is a policeman. Both Harry and a policeman are people. But when it comes to God, we cannot equate Him with someone else. That is because He is supreme above all other beings – there is none other like Him. But regarding Harry the policeman, we can say that he

²⁶ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy*, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725. Volume 3: The Divine Essence and Attributes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 499, in Peter J. Gentry, "The Meaning of 'Holy' in the Old Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 70 (October-December 2013): 400.

upholds the policies of the local district. In a similar way, we can say that God upholds His own policies, namely His Word which is unique and distinctive from anything else.

The actual equality between the Word of God and Jesus Christ is made clear in verse 14: “The Word became flesh.” We already noted in verse 1 that the “Word was God.” Here, the Word or God became flesh. This is a direct reference to the birth of Jesus Christ as noted in Luke 2. Also, John noted in Revelation 19:11-13 that a rider on a horse would come, “He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.” The phrase, “the robe dipped in blood” is a reference to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, His blood being poured out for our sins. So these verses show that the Word of God is Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ is God Himself.²⁷

²⁷ Jesus Christ (God the Son) is one manifestation of God. The other manifestations are God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. So there are three manifestations of God, but still just one God. Each manifestation is governed by how God presents Himself to humanity.

Chapter 2

The Word of God: Characteristics

How do we know that the Word of God is exact? Are the words trustworthy? If so, then we should give them the utmost consideration. Perhaps one of the biggest concerns is knowing what the Word of God tells us. We cannot possibly evaluate its importance in our lives until we first read and become acquainted with it.

Once we are aware of the contents of God's Word, we can then ascertain how effective it is, particularly in our own lives. What does His Word tell us about sin and the affect it has on our relationship with God? What are the ramifications of sin when it is unchecked in our lives? After sin is dealt with according to God's Word, we can then evaluate how His Word can transform our lives.

Every Word of God is Pure

How do we know that the words written in God's Word are what God intended them to be? Some of the authors in God's Word indicated that they and others were inspired by the Spirit of God to pen those words. The apostle Paul wrote these words to the church in Corinth: "What we received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words" (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). God's words are not from this world, nor are they from human authors (even though they were penned by these authors). God inspired the authors to write His words.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy later wrote these words to the church at Thessalonica: "And we also thank God continually because, when you received

the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Is it possible, then, that God’s Spirit did influence these writers? Jesus instructed the disciples that “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). So it is not a man-made concept that human authors decided that they would claim their words were God’s, Jesus Himself indicated that these authors would write as they were led by the Holy Spirit. Even King David, nearly a millennium earlier, confided in God’s Word: “And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver purified in a crucible, like gold refined seven times” (Psalm 12:6). This purification speaks of God’s Word as holy, perfect, and without error. They cannot be words which originated with human thought.

But what does it mean that the Word of God is trustworthy? Merriam-Webster defines it as “worthy of confidence: dependable.”²⁸ This speaks a lot about how one can feel when reading, meditating on, and incorporating the Word of God into one’s life. Do we guard ourselves whenever we read a news clip or something from social media? Hopefully, we are careful about what we read. When God promised the earthly kingdom forever to King David, David’s loving response was: “Your [the LORD’s] covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant” (2 Samuel 7:28). This was accomplished through David’s lineage down to the birth of Jesus Christ, who lives forever. David had a close relationship with God, but that relationship depended on David’s confidence in what God said. When David later wrote his psalms, he recalled that “The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple” (Psalm

²⁸ “Merriam-Webster Since 1828,” Merriam-Webster, accessed November 22, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

19:7). David realized that the Word of God was, and still is, absolute. It has innumerable powers, which can make a simple person wise. When people subject themselves to the Word of God, they are elevated to a life of contentment and understanding. They see things from God's perspective rather than a human perspective. God's Word is so powerful that it can even save sinners from eternal separation from God. Note the words here from the apostle Paul as he wrote to his protégé Timothy: "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst" (1 Timothy 1:15). We can depend on God's Word to give us eternal life when we confess our sins, accept the mercy for us that Christ paid by dying on the cross for our sins, and placing our trust in His Word. His Word, because it is trustworthy, guarantees this.

We can also appreciate the trustworthiness of God's Word because it uncovers immoral acts done by some of the biblical heroes. God inspired authors to write not only about the heroes of old, but also their imperfections.²⁹ One example is Moses' brother, Aaron. When Moses was on top of Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, Aaron lost control of the crowd at the bottom of the mountain. Aaron was responsible for a golden calf that was created, and thus, fell into idolatry, a grievous sin against God (Exodus 32:1). In another example, we recognize King Solomon as one of the most endeared forefathers in Israel. God gave him wisdom and riches beyond imagination. He wrote numerous spiritual psalms and articles on all sorts of topics of nature. He was devoted to God early in his reign, but faltered later on as some of his numerous concubines turned his soul to worship idols: "Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the Children of Amon. And

²⁹ Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1917), 17.

likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods” (1 Kings 11:7, 8). Do we tend to think of George Washington’s moral failures, or that of Abraham Lincoln? We hold these men in high regard, as we should. But we all have “sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). However, the Bible is trustworthy, because it records both the heroic feats and the moral misgivings of its leaders.

Textual Accuracy

We can also appreciate the trustworthiness of God’s Word from an archeological perspective because of a number of scrolls which were found in caves situated near the Dead Sea in modern day Israel. In 1947, a shepherd boy discovered a jar in one of the caves containing scrolls inscribed with the words we have today pertaining to many of the books in the **Old Testament**. These scrolls were manufactured by the Essenes, a monastic group of people who were engaged with the preservation of documents meaning scrolls. Just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman ruler Titus in 70 A.D., the Essenes were tasked by the local rabbis to manage and preserve the scrolls of the Old Testament books so that they would not be destroyed by the Roman invaders.

What is amazing is that the words contained in these scrolls have little to no variation when compared with the Bibles we now have today. In one of the scrolls, the book of Isaiah had minor, but insignificant variations:

Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only seventeen letters in question. Ten of these letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word, "light," which is added in verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly. Furthermore, this word is supported by the LXX [the Greek translation of the Old Testament] and IQ Is (one of the Isaiah scrolls found in the Dead Sea caves). Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission - and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage.³⁰

³⁰ Bill Bright, "Is the Bible Trustworthy?" last modified May 20, 2004, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/is-the-bible-trustworthy-1262196.html>.

Now let's consider for the moment the textual accuracy of the **New Testament**. The twenty-seven books in the New Testament were written between 65 and 100 A.D. The authors hired professional scribes to record the words of the authors in what we would call the original manuscript. There were then numerous copies made in the first few centuries (24,300, in fact³¹). Today, textual experts from the Middle East studied these copies and found only minor variations which did not change the meaning of the passage.

Examples like this indicate that God's Word has been preserved over many centuries and is trustworthy.

Further archaeological discoveries

There are other documents which are still extant (or still in existence).³² For example, the Ebla archive was found in northern Syria in the 1970s. It comprises the true stories about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the forefathers or Patriarchs of Israel), as recorded in the book of Genesis (chapters 17-32). These accounts were written on clay tablets dating back to about 2300 B.C. – the time of the Patriarchs.

Furthermore, some archaeologists working in northern Israel found a stone tablet dating back to the ninth century B.C. It described Israel's enemies and used phrases such as "king of Israel" and "house of David." These accounts refer to King David (see 1 Samuel 20:26; 24:14; 26:20; 2 Samuel 3:1 and 6; 6:20; 1 Kings 12:19, 20, and 26; 13:2; 14:19; 15:9, 16, 17, 19, 25, and 31; 2 Kings 1:18; 3:1, 4, 5, and 9-13; 2 Kings 5:5-8; 6:9-12; 6:26; 7:6).

³¹ David B. Curtis, "Is the Bible Trustworthy?" last modified January 7, 2001, accessed January 11, 2022, https://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/2timothy/is_bible_trust.htm.

³² Ibid.

There are numerous other archaeological findings which trace back to God's Word, and there are new ones that are being discovered all the time (see <https://cbn.org> and search on "archaeology").

Prophecies

Do you know of anyone who can accurately predict the future? Let's consider the prophecies in the Word of God which at the time, predicted the future. Many Prophecies were uttered in the Old Testament by both men and women. The key component to a prophecy is whether or not it was fulfilled (i.e. a true prophecy). Prophecies given by human beings themselves are not likely to happen because, as we all know, human beings are not perfect. However, God is perfect and it is His Spirit that can speak through a person just as His Spirit could move an author to write a portion of God's Word. God provided a mechanism to determine whether or not a prophecy was true: "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed" (Deuteronomy 18:22).

Prophecies are critical to God's Word because they speak of the purity of the Word. There are approximately 2500 of them. About 2000 have been fulfilled,³³ the rest will be fulfilled by the time we all arrive at our eternal state as recorded in Revelation 21-22. Here are some examples of prophecies related to Jesus Christ as prophesied in the Old Testament (OT) and fulfilled in the New Testament (NT):

Prophecy about Jesus	OT Reference	NT Fulfillment
Born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Luke 1:26-28
His ministry in Galilee	Isaiah 9:1	Matthew 4:12-15

³³ Ibid.

Teacher of parables	Psalm 78:2	Matthew 13:34
Crucified with thieves	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38
His resurrection	Psalm 16:10	Acts 2:31
His ascension	Psalm 68:18	Acts 1:9

For the Word of God is Quick

Merriam-Webster's definition of quick is, "living, alive."³⁴ Is this how we perceive the Word of God? Sadly, our society today does not put a precedence on reading and abiding by God's Word. Our society is structured so that people are expected to govern their activities themselves. There is no precedent or guidance from God's Word. People prefer to live their lives themselves in accordance to their own desires, without direction from God and His Word. However, Patrick Henry's father had a different viewpoint. After coming to America from Scotland in the 18th century, Henry viewed faith in Christianity as essential for living. This freedom was only possible when based "on the Gospel of Jesus Christ [God's Word]."³⁵ It is clear that the forefathers of our country relied on the Word of God for daily living. Consider the book of Ecclesiastes, for example, with the following topics: education, vocation, laziness, patriotism, politics, materialism, womanizing, futility, and aging. That is why we can deem God's Word as "living" and "active," because it is certainly relevant today. It can affect the various aspects of our daily lives if we allow it to.

³⁴ "Merriam-Webster Since 1828," Merriam-Webster, accessed November 22, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

³⁵ Inspiration Ministries, "Free Indeed," accessed January 13, 2022, <https://inspiration.org/daily-devotional/free-indeed-in-jesus/>.

Relevance Today

Can we say that the Word of God was only alive as both Jesus and the apostles proclaimed it nearly 2000 years ago, or does it continue to make an impact on people since then? Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President of the United States, seemed to think so about 1800 years after the time of Jesus and His disciples. In Lincoln's words, "In regard to this Great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book."³⁶ The Word of God continues to impact people. It is a living document in the sense that it continues to govern and impact the lives of people. This author has been impacted by God's Word when he confessed his sins to Jesus Christ and accepted His suffering and death on the cross as a substitution for his sins. This author can personally attest to how God has turned his life around morally, and provided for his wife and family today.

Discerning Sin

It would be appropriate here to decipher the origin and provocation of sin. After God created the "heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), He saw what He had made and said it was "good" (verse 31). Later in chapter 2, Adam and Eve were created. Thus, God created Adam and Eve, and they were "good." We can interpret this as meaning that they were not in rebellion to God, but rather in unity with their Creator. Along with this creation, God gave Adam and Eve certain freedoms. For example, God gave Adam the freedom to name the wild animals and the birds of the sky (Genesis 2:19). This is the freedom to make a choice. Adam and Eve had the flexibility to make their own decisions apart from God. Even though they were created by God, they could choose what they

³⁶ Abraham Lincoln, "Reply to Loyal Colored People of Baltimore upon Presentation of a Bible," September 7, 1864, Roy P. Basler, ed. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. VII (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 542, quoted in Creig Marlowe, "Is the Bible Still Relevant?" accessed January 13, 2022, <https://www.exploregod.com/articles/is-the-bible-still-relevant>.

wanted to do by their own initiative. However, God told them that they could eat from any tree in the Garden of Eden except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). The repercussion for disobeying this command would be physical death. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God's command by eating of this tree, and so, disobeyed God's command. This disobedience is the origination of not only the word sin, but the origination of sin in all the lives of people born after them. Romans 3:23 tells us "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." So in Genesis 2, we see the advent of freedom for the human race, but also the advent of responsibility to the Word of God. For further descriptions of sin in the Bible, see my book, "The Message of Reconciliation."³⁷

God's Word is living and active with respect to sin. Why is sin important and why should it be dealt with? The prophet Isaiah wrote that "our sins have separated us from God" (Isaiah 59:2). This fact should not be minimized. Separation from God in this life means that we do not receive His blessings, especially in time of need. Separation from God for eternity means that our spirits will exist in a lake of fire (Revelation 20:15). Do we really want that? What is sin? Merriam-Webster's definition of sin is, "transgression of the law of God."³⁸ The apostle John wrote, "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Do we really know what sin is today? How can we claim we know what is sin if we do not know what the law is in the Word of God? A certainly relevant question is, "What kind of morality can we expect in our society if we do not know God's Word?" Our judicial system is based on a set of laws and regulations, but who determines what those laws are? What are those laws based on? A District Attorney's interpretation? Surely,

³⁷ Paul Lagasse, *The Message of Reconciliation: How to Have a Relationship with Jesus Christ*, published 2020, <https://newtestamentevangelism.com>.

³⁸ "Merriam-Webster Since 1828," Merriam-Webster, accessed January 18, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

there should be one standard that can be applied consistently across our society. However, this is the dilemma we face when some newly elected officials determine for themselves what type of actions will be prosecuted. However, God's Word is the standard that should be used to understand sin and its effect on people.

But why do we have to expose or realize our sin? Romans 6:23 tells us, "For the wages of sin is [spiritual] death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Our eternal existence is either life with Jesus Christ forever or eternal separation from Him (see Isaiah 59:2). God's Word gives us a hint about what eternal life might look like as Jesus Christ spoke and John recorded in the book of Revelation:

Look, I [Jesus Christ] am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. (Revelation 22:12-15)

A.W. Pink shared a story about a Buddhist priest who knew nothing about the Christian faith.³⁹ One day he came across a transcription of the book of Matthew. He admired the verse, "Blessed are the pure of heart; for they shall see God." Even though he was convicted by the words written in the book of Matthew, he would say to himself, "I shall never see God, for I am impure in heart." Finally, the Buddhist priest fled the temple and went to a town where a Christian missionary resided. The priest asked, "Is it true that only those who are pure in heart will see God?" "Yes," replied the missionary, "but the same book which tells you that, also tells you how you may obtain a pure heart." The

³⁹ Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1917), 57-58.

missionary shared how that “the blood of Jesus Christ His [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin.” The Spirit of God quickly came upon the priest’s spirit, and he rejoiced that he could then see God in his spirit, since it’s the blood of Jesus Christ that can make us all pure. The Word of God was alive that day in the priest’s spirit, actively changed him forevermore, and introduced a relationship with Jesus Christ which would last for eternity. We each have a choice to make about our eternal destiny. We can choose to acknowledge God’s Word and the Lord Jesus Christ, or not. But if we do choose to acknowledge Him and His Word, then that relationship starts by realizing our sin nature, confessing it, asking Christ for forgiveness of our sin, and then trusting Him and His Word.

One might ask, “How does God bring people to Himself?” The apostle Paul shared in his letter to the Romans that it is the Lord Jesus Christ “through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Romans 5:11). God has already reconciled us to Himself through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, nearly 2000 years ago. It is by faith that we obtain what God has already provided – forgiveness for our sin and an eternal state with Him. The work was done by God, but it is realized by those of us who would believe. The result of this reconciliation is that God does not count people’s sins against them upon confession and forgiveness (2 Corinthians 5:19). The penalty of sin is eternal death, but those of us who are trusting in Christ for forgiveness of our sins will experience eternal life.

We do have a relationship with Christ if we are trusting in Him and His Word. We can trust His Word since it is a consistent standard. First of all, it is divinely inspired as mentioned [earlier](#). Secondly, God’s Word is consistent with itself. We looked at [prophecies](#) recorded in the Old Testament that were actually fulfilled in the New Testament. This is one type of consistency, but there are others as well. For example, the accounts involving the birth, life, and death of

Jesus Christ as recorded in the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are in agreement. Each gospel was written by a separate author and recorded the accounts of Jesus Christ from their point of view. However, regarding common events (e.g. Christ's birth and death), there are no inconsistencies between the gospels. In fact, more information is presented. It is important to recognize the consistency of God's Word if we are to rely on it as the one and only standard by which we are to determine moral laws in our society and to govern our own living habits with respect to God. That is, we need to determine when we transgress God's Word (and thus sin against Him) so that we can repent and ask forgiveness. If we don't do this, then we either do not have a relationship with Him, or our relationship is waning.

God's Word in a Person's Life

Is it possible that God's Word refers to events and a "religion" that occurred millenniums ago, or is it relevant today? In particular, can it apply to an *individual's* life today? If we try to consider whether or not God's Word applies to us, then we are only looking at it subjectively from our own perspective. Sometimes what we think is true, may not be true. That is, we are not always right. This is because we are imperfect beings. Some people think they know everything, but yet, they are fooling themselves. We cannot claim omniscience (knowing everything), because only our Creator, knows everything. This puts us in a delicate situation where we must humble ourselves and listen to what God's Word says. This is an important step if God's Word is to work in a person's life.

When Jesus counseled His disciples, He told them, ". . . whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, . . . you may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:12-14). God's Word now crosses over from an *identification* with Christ to *performing works* in Christ's name. When a person

repents of their sin and believes in Christ, that person then is endowed with God's power to accomplish what He wants to accomplish (not us). Sometimes what He wants is not what we want, but nevertheless, we trust in Him. Since [Jesus is the Word of God](#), His Word empowers us to do His work. This is why new believers in Jesus Christ might wonder, "Why am I still here on the earth when I could now be with Christ forever in heaven?" The reason why we are still here is that He has His work for us to do. Our response should be, "We are unworthy servants, we have only done our duty" (Luke 17:10).

God's Word is effective in a Christian's life, but there are some guidelines. God's Word is not something that we "name and claim" as some have supposed. We should not point to a particular Scripture in God's Word and then expect God to miraculously give it to us at that moment. It is not a book of magical tricks. For example, Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask and it will be given to you." This is not a recipe for asking God for anything we want. However, if we are abiding by God's Word then over time our will and desire will be aligned with God's intentions in His Word. The only way we can accomplish God's work is if our wills are aligned with His.

But this process requires two elements: (1) a complete submission to God's will, and (2) an increasing knowledge of God's Word. How can our wills be aligned with His unless we know what His will (Word) is? C.E. Stowe put it this way,

It is the principles of the Bible which must be brought into contact with the soul, which must be interwoven with the very texture of our minds, which must be made a part of our moral nature. This is the way and the only way in which it promises to benefit us, in which it has done any good; and it does not operate by its mere presence like a charm or relic.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ C.E. Stowe, *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible*, (Hartford, CT: Hartford Publishing Company, 1868), 11.

Clearly, our goal each day should be to grow in knowledge of God’s Word and to align our souls with His Word so that He can work through us. In only this way will we be endowed with His power and allow Him to work in our lives. Christ aims to work in our lives, but this takes faith on our part. Jesus said that “. . . whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these . . .” (John 14:12). Jesus Christ promised that He will accomplish great works in our lives if we have unwavering faith in Him.

Our faith, however, is built on subjection to His Word. Subjection is a difficult task for a Christian to adopt. It requires that one minimize their own will and desires and maximize Christ’s will and desires according to His Word. Our nature tendency is to act on our own will. By nature, we are selfish and automatically think of ourselves first before we think of others. We must put Christ first before our own will and desires if we are to submit to His Word. Only then can we be empowered by Him to accomplish His will. The apostle Paul put it this way, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13). We must remember that God has a plan for us, and it would be wonderful if we submit to His plan and His Word. The apostle Paul shared these words with the Ephesians: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

Active Judgement

Merriam-Webster defines judgement as “the process of forming an opinion or evaluation by discerning [*recognizing* or identifying] and *comparing* [italics mine].”⁴¹ The evaluation is first performed by *recognizing* what is being judged, and then *comparing* it to a standard. In our society, for example, a court judge would recognize or identify someone’s act, and then compare it to a

⁴¹ “Merriam-Webster Since 1828,” Merriam-Webster, accessed March 17, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

societal law. After the judge compares the act with a societal norm, the person is either judged as a violator of the law or not.

In the spiritual realm, God is the Judge of all spirits when He makes His final judgement at the end of this age:

Then I [the apostle John] saw a great white throne and him [God] who was seated on it. . . And I [John] saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were *judged* according to what they had done as recorded in the books . . . and each person was *judged* according to what they had done . . . Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

The beliefs of every person will be presented before God. He will recognize these beliefs and then compare them with the Word of God. Those who violate the Word by not confessing their sin and having a relationship with Jesus Christ will not have their names recorded in the book of life and will be cast into the lake of fire.

Romans 6:23 tells us that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Obviously, this is a very serious situation and is one I hope everyone will take seriously. We only get one shot at this so we want to make it right. Have you ever asked Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins, trust Him as your Lord, and decide to follow the Word of God? If not, then please consider doing so. Whether or not we make this decision will affect our final judgement before God.

The Word of God is Sharp

One of the interesting aspects of reading any document is the content itself. When we read, we are looking for content that impacts us, that has special meaning, and in some instances empowers us. Our goal upon reading any document is that we are better learned or just a better person after having read a document.

A Powerful Weapon

The Word of God is no exception. God's Word is a *powerful weapon* at the human race level, at a national level, and at an individual's level. It can actually transform the human race, a nation, and an individual. Take for instance these verses from 2 Corinthians 10:3-5:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Everything we do is centered around our thought life. Our thought life is what we use subconsciously to develop our patterns of behavior, resulting in which actions we take. Obviously, we want to have a proper thought life so that we can take proper actions. However, the "strongholds" and "pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God" are constrained by three elements: (1) the societal beliefs of the world, (2) our own selfish desires, and (3) Satan himself.

Our societal beliefs follow the norm of human behavior. We know that we make mistakes. We know that we are imperfect. Whenever we attempt a job, there's always the chance that it could be done better. If we were to consider for a moment that our society is made up of millions of imperfect people, it would not be an exaggeration that the collective effort of millions of people would result in an imperfect society. We do have certain laws that attempt to govern peoples' behavior. Nevertheless, we are still an imperfect society.

Collectively we behave according to the mass effort of everyone's behavior, but what type of norms are the masses abiding by? We know that our forefathers left England in the 16th century to freely worship God as they saw fit. The printing press was then active and numerous copies of the Bible were available. People for the first time could read, understand, and abide by biblical

principles themselves instead of being told by a preacher what to do. The Puritans who arrived here in New England left England, a government dictating religious beliefs, to find religious liberty in a new land.

However, our human nature has become self-centered, resulting in a gradual deviation from God's Word. Earlier in this book, we acknowledged that God's Word is [\[without error\]](#). It is the perfect, immutable compilation of God's words. Because of our human nature, we have drifted from what is perfect (from God) to what is imperfect (from ourselves). Worldly societal belief(s) is the first element of a "stronghold" and "pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God."

The anecdote for this is Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). A couple of observations about this. One, Jesus Christ has a different perception than what we view in this world. He existed before the world began and there is no end to His rule. He is omnipotent (all-powerful) and omniscient (all-knowing). He is not bound by money, time, or any other influences in this world. Secondly, He is all-loving. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Christ is that manifestation of God who loved us so much that He allowed Himself to be crucified for our sins so that we (who believe in Him for the forgiveness of our sins) would have eternal life. God's viewpoint is one of love, and His power is derived from it. That is why He is the "light of the world," and those who follow him will not walk in darkness or the "strongholds" of this world.

The second "stronghold" is our own selfish desires. Have you ever driven on a two-lane road which merged into one lane, and then wondered why some people speed in front of you so that they are ahead of you? The other day, I was in the left lane on a two-lane road stopped at a red light. After the light

turned green, I gradually increased speed and realized I was a little ahead of the car on the right indicating that we would carefully merge. I then heard a loud engine. I checked my side view mirror to see if the car on the right was still merging in gracefully behind me and I noticed that a motorcycle passed in between our two cars! Sometimes we act according to our own desires. Perhaps we are trying to get ahead of someone else, but to what avail? Fortunately, we live in a world where not everyone is selfish all the time, otherwise there would be chaos! We have inherited our selfish desires (sin) from Adam and Eve (Genesis 2-3), but yet we are still responsible for our own sins. They saw that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was desirable, so they ate from it, disobeying God's command not to. This type of behavior leads us to believe that we can put our own desires above God's. Selfish desire is the second element of a "stronghold" and a "pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God."

The anecdote for this is a different perception about dealing with others. The apostle Paul offered these words, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:3-4). We are not going to eradicate all of our selfish desires while we are on this earth. However, we can mitigate them to a certain extent if we are willing to look to others' interests. Since we are involved with other people every day of our lives, it is important that we refocus our thinking to think of others first.

The third "stronghold" is Satan. Not much is said about Satan in everyday life because Satan lives and operates from the spiritual realm. But a great deal is said about him in God's Word. Here are some occurrences:

- "Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel." (1 Chronicles 21:1)

- “So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head.” (Job 2:7)
- “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, ‘The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you? Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?’” (Zechariah 3:1-2)
- “Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” (Matthew 4:10)
- “. . . and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan.” (Mark 1:13)
- “Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.” (Mark 4:15)
- “He [God] replied, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.’” (Luke 10:18)
- “Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?” (Luke 13:16)
- “Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve.” (Luke 22:3)
- “Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?’” (Acts 5:3)

- “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”
(Romans 16:20)
- “And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.” (2 Corinthians 11:14)
- “For we wanted to come to you – certainly, I, Paul, did, again and again – but Satan blocked our way.” (1 Thessalonians 2:18)
- “The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.”
(Revelation 12:9)
- “And the devil [Satan], who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10)

These references show that Satan has a great deal of influence, both throughout the centuries, and still today. The point here is that he is a “stronghold” and a “pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.”

The anecdotes for dealing with Satan are: (1) serving with the commission that God has given us, (2) being obedient to God’s Word, and (3) observing God’s power in confronting Satan. Regarding the first point, we can look to the apostle Paul. Paul had a unique experience which affected the rest of his life. He was a Pharisee tasked with persecuting Christians in an attempt to eradicate the Christian faith. He was on his way to Antioch when suddenly a light brighter than the sun encompassed his entire party that was with him and they all fell to the ground. The voice claiming to be that of Jesus Christ spoke specifically to Paul, claiming that Paul was persecuting Christ Himself. Christ further spoke these words to Paul: “. . . I am sending you to them [both Jews and Gentiles] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from

the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:17ff-18). God specifically commissioned Paul to spread the good news about Jesus Christ to others. Note here that Paul’s new commission replaced his old commission of persecuting Christians. One anecdote for dealing with Satan is to abide by the commission that God has given each of us. If each of us is faithful to our commission, then Satan will be repelled. If many of us corporately are faithful, then this will significantly repel Satan’s plans.

The second anecdote for dealing with Satan is being obedient to God’s Word. Satan is a powerful angel who fell from God’s grace by separating himself from God and going his own way. His lack of obedience to an all-loving God was, is, and will forever be his downfall. After Jesus’ baptism, He was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days. After this long duration, Satan came to Him and tempted Him, figuring that Jesus would be caught off guard. Satan took Him to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. He offered these to Jesus if He would just bow down and worship him. Jesus replied, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’” (Matthew 4:10). Jesus showed Himself to be obedient to God’s Word by claiming “it is written.” Once He pointed to the Word of God, Satan relented from the temptation. The same applies for us: if we continue to abide by God’s Word then we will repel Satan.

The third anecdote for dealing with Satan is observing God’s power in confronting Satan. Some associate Satan with evil thoughts and deeds. These thoughts and deeds can occur at a personal level or a corporate level. However, a more accurate definition is that Satan is a divider. He once was an archangel (high-order angel) who broke away from God’s Kingdom. He chose to separate himself from God. In a similar fashion, he chooses to divide us between what is right and wrong. He chooses to do the same thing with nations. Even in

Christianity, he chooses to separate the Christian church from God. The apostle Paul exhorted the church at Rome “to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned” (Romans 16:17). What Paul is referring to here is the subtle work of Satan even in the Christian church. Paul encouraged the church at Rome that “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (verse 20). We can do our part with the two anecdotes mentioned above, but the third anecdote belongs to God. He is more powerful than Satan. Eventually, God will throw Satan into his final destination - the lake of burning sulfur (Revelation 20:10). But in the meantime, Satan is permitted to roam the earth, causing divisions.

Transformational Power

Is the Word of God sharp enough to work in a person's life? That is, is it powerful enough to bring a person's spirit to penitence by changing their spirit so that they confess their sins and put their faith in Jesus Christ? Is it strong enough to change a person's outlook on life so that they think and act according to it? Certainly, anything that can change a person's life in this dramatic fashion is much more powerful than what we can imagine.

Arthur Pink told a story of a friend who was in the Royal navy on his way to China.⁴² Before embarking the ship, a gentleman was handing out Bible tracts to sailors on the dock. The friend received a tract, crumpled it, and put it in his pocket. Three weeks later, while reaching in his pocket for something to light his pipe, he pulled out a piece of the tract which said, "Prepare to meet thy God." The man was struck by the saying, but could not get it out of his mind. After sleepless hours and pacing the ship's deck, he was torn about his own state of mind because he was a strong drinker. He wondered, "How can I prepare to meet God, when I am so powerless to overcome my besetting sin?"⁴³ Finally, the man got down on his knees and asked God to have mercy on him, to save him from his sins, and deliver him from the power of drink so that he could meet him. This friend told Arthur Pink that he accepted Christ as his Savior from sin and never from that moment tasted liquor.

This story illustrates the power of God's Word to transform a person even when they cannot transform themselves. As adult beings, we think we can determine situations and overcome even our own concerns. However, there are some things which we cannot handle ourselves. One of those things is the stain of sin. It cannot be washed away with soap or a cleansing agent. Sometimes it presents itself as an addiction. But no matter what the form, sin separates us

⁴² A.W. Pink, *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot Publishers and Booksellers, 1917), 58-59.

⁴³ Ibid.

from God and that is a debilitating situation for all of us. Only Christ's sacrifice of Himself on the cross as defined in God's Word can remove the stain of sin in our lives and prepare our spirits for eternal life.

This transformation is a spiritual one. The apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians with these words from 2 Corinthians 5:15-17: "And he [Christ] died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again . . . if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!" The reason that we should live for Christ is that He died for us. If we really comprehend the sacrifice that Christ made in the brutal beatings and the crucifixion that He endured for all of us, then we have no choice but to humbly offer ourselves back to Him. He died for us so that we can have a relationship with Him both now and forever. That is significant enough to transform anyone from what they were before to what they are, or can be, now.

The Word of God is a Sword

Notice that this section title does not say "The Word of God is *like* a sword." We can attribute the title as such because God's Word does some cutting in our souls. For those of us who have been touched by God, we can acclaim that He has removed some things in our lives. We no longer do things to serve ourselves but to serve Him and others. The notion of serving ourselves has been "cut" out of our lives.

When Jesus taught the people near Nazareth He said,

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear even worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved (Matthew 9:16-17).

The garment spoken of here is a reference to our spirits and the wine is the Spirit of God. Our spirits, before we knew Christ, are a reference to old garments. It is impossible for the Spirit of God to inhabit our old spirits. This is because our old spirits inhabited a sin nature which is opposite to God. The Word of God acted as a *sword* by cutting out the sin nature in our spirits so that we can receive His Spirit. The Word of God acts as a sword not only when we first come to Christ to rejuvenate our spirits, but each and every day forward to guide our souls. His Word looks into our souls for areas that need to be cut out by His Word so that we become (more and more) like vessels that He can use.

But how does God's Word expose a soul? Hebrews 4:12 tells us that, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." I have a concrete slab in my driveway that needs resurfacing. In order for me to apply the bonding material and the resurfacing concrete, I must first grind down most of the surface to get close to the bottom of the cracks and ridges in the concrete. (This is concrete that is severely weathered over 70 years.) The bonding agent and the concrete will not be effective unless it can reach the bottom of the cracks – essentially the entire surface of the old concrete. God's Word itself tells us that it penetrates our souls. It knows our thoughts and attitudes – it can sink down into the crevices of our minds. Unless God's Word does this, it will not be effective in our lives. Clearly, God can see right through us. There is nothing hidden from Him. More importantly, He is able to use His Word, a mighty Sword, to work in our souls if we allow Him to.

It is important to understand this because we must give an account for our souls. That accounting will occur in the day of judgment, when God will ask each individual soul what they did with the mercy that comes from Jesus Christ (Revelation 20:11). Those whose names are written in the book of life will enter

eternal life. Those whose names do not appear in the book of life will enter into an eternal state separate from Christ in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

Those who confess that Jesus is Lord and believe in their spirit that God raised Him from the dead will be saved from the lake of fire, that is, enter eternal life with Christ (Romans 10:9).

This message is not generally promoted well because of the negative aspect of being thrown into the lake of fire. People are less willing to accept a message (as the perception of some) unless it has a good ending. However, the negative aspect of judgment as mentioned in the previous paragraph is important because it brings to the forefront the message of eternal life.⁴⁴ The contrast of eternal life versus eternity in the lake of fire makes God's message of love and forgiveness even more important. What does eternal life mean to someone unless they are faced with the risk of eternity in the lake of fire? Shouldn't they be warned of the impending doom? Certainly this warning has merit and should be promoted to all people!

The Word of God is Alive

Once we have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ what kind of transformations can we expect in our lives? How are we going to be different in thought and action? One thing for sure, people who are close to us will notice a difference and that will speak loudly to their own souls.

First of all, if they have known us for a long time they may observe a transformation. In Romans 3:10-11, Paul declares that "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God." This describes the behavior of all people before they have committed their lives to Christ. People knew who we were before we came to

⁴⁴ Staff, "The Account We Must Give," accessed June 16, 2022, <https://www.bible-truth.org/Judgment.html>.

Christ and now they know how we think and behave with the Spirit of Christ living in us. We are different – we used to enjoy things that were counter to God’s Word and now we enjoy those things that are governed by God’s Word. For example, we may have used foul language in the past but no longer do so. We may have enjoyed lewd pictures but now we don’t. Our priorities and interests are fixed around those things that God’s Word portrays. It is hard for people who know us not to see these things.

But how does God work in our lives? One way is that Christ speaks to us. In John 10:27, Jesus said that “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” One of the saving characteristics for sheep is that they know the shepherd’s voice. Sheep cannot protect themselves from danger on their own. They are defenseless. However, they instinctively know their shepherd’s voice and respond when called. Jesus used an analogy to describe our relationship with Him. There are many ways that we avoid danger – God has given us some instincts that we can use on our own. However, we cannot see or know everything and we certainly cannot tell the future. Jesus Christ guides those who have a relationship with Him. He works through their consciences, speaking to us as sheep, and guiding us in our life journey. That is why reading, listening, studying, and knowing God’s Word is so important so that we can “hear” His voice speaking to us.

Additionally, God has given us His Spirit. In John 14:16-17, Jesus said “And I will ask the Father [God the Father], and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” This Spirit is the Holy Spirit, the third manifestation of God (after God the Father and God the Son – that is Jesus Christ). Once we have a relationship with God, He then sends the Holy Spirit into our lives to guide and empowers us. The Holy Spirit works best in our lives

when we have regularly confessed our sins to God and submit ourselves to His Word. The Spirit then guides our thoughts, speech, and actions and holds us accountable if we stumble by disobeying His Word. Our thoughts, speech, and actions are then influenced by God in a supernatural sense to sustain our relationship with Him as well as with others. It can be said that the “good” in our lives is being accomplished when the Holy Spirit is working in us.

Another transformation in our lives is the act of service. The Holy Spirit works in us to perform acts of service. The apostle Peter noted the following:

Each of you [speaking to the Jewish believers] should use *whatever gift you have received* [italics mine] to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so *with the strength God provides* [italics mine], so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

We note here that we actually receive gifts from God. They are not something that we acquire ourselves during the course of our lives, but we actually are born with innate gifts that God uses in us. They lie dormant inside of our spirits until the time that we repent of our sins, receive Christ’s forgiveness, and establish a relationship with Christ. At that time, they are unleashed in our lives and are available for us to use – serving others to the glory of God. The second phrase in italics in the above passage tells us that God provides strength while using these gifts. They are divinely inspired by a powerful God, working through us and used for His purposes. Consider, for example, 2 Timothy 1:7-8 where the apostle Paul encouraged Timothy with these words: “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord . . .” This power gives a person the ability to share or tell someone else about Jesus Christ. It is an opportunity for someone else to come to Christ for forgiveness for their sin. It is an opportunity for them to experience eternal life with Christ. This type

of power or enabling only comes from God Himself and not a person. But how many local churches are actually reminding their parishioners about God's enabling them with His power to speak to someone else about Christ? Paul encouraged the local church at Philippi that he [Paul] "I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). God's power is available to Christians to do supernatural work, but the Christian must acknowledge God's power to do this and then pray in humility that God will enable them to share Christ with someone else. Out of all the churches I have known throughout the decades, only one pastor has endeavored to encourage his parishioners this way but he was met with stiff resistance.

Ironically, some Christians do not choose to use the gifts that God has given them. There are a number of reasons for this, but every Christian should explore and endeavor to use the gifts that God has given them. They may seek godly wisdom from a trusted biblical leader. A Christian seeking to use the gifts that God has given them should initially seek guidance from their pastor. However, not all pastors have this level of guidance as mentioned in the previous paragraph. In this case, a Christian could look for guidance at www.proclaimcourse.org.

Finally, the universal gift that every Christian has is love. We demonstrate love by putting others first ahead of ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Meeting the needs of others is analogous to Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our sins. He gave His life for us as a demonstration of love (as well as for our eternal lives). His expectation is that we give of ourselves to others. The apostle John followed up on this thought by saying, "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person" (1 John 3:17-18). It is imperative that every believe act in humility and practice loving others.

Chapter 3

The Word of God: Action

Once we understand the construct of God's Word, how can it be employed particularly in our own lives? This begins with "hearing" what His Word has to say to us. When we read an article in the media, the author has something in his or her mind that they are trying to convey to us. It is usually something that is important to them and they would like the reader to understand what they are writing. The same is true with God. His Word records what He is trying to say to us. It is important to us to understand or "hear" what He is saying.

Once we have heard His Word, we have the opportunity to meditate on it. What implications does a particular passage in His Word mean to us? How can I adapt my thinking and behavior according to what He is telling me? This is where a Christian reaps the eternal benefits of God's Word. It is actually a life-changing experience. We are then in a state where we are prepared to share our faith in God's Word with others. How can we effectively teach and proclaim His Word the way He wants us to? God's Word itself teaches us these principles.

Hearing Comes by the Word of God

In order to be active with God we must hear God's Truth. His Truth is paramount to our faith and guides us daily in our thoughts and actions. The only way to effectively *hear* God's Truth is by regularly meditating on His Word. It is not enough just to read passages from the Bible. After reading a specific passage or section, we must stop and think about what we read. We must recognize what it is saying in the context of the rest of the Bible. In other words, is it consistent with other passages previously read.

Seeing the Truth

We certainly want to make sure that we are hearing the “truth” in God’s Word (also known simply as the Truth). Truth can be described as “the knowledge of the Law of God and its application.” This is a simplistic view because it presents the Word simply as it is written in the Old and New Testaments. It means reading the words just as they are written and interpreting them using our 21st century view. It does not take into account the historical settings and grammar used by the authors. Therefore, a misconstrued meaning may be obtained even before one attempts to make an application of God’s Word in their life.⁴⁵

A more in-depth understanding of Truth is: (1) realizing the source of Truth, and (2) understanding that God is perfect and is separate in nature from us, but yet connected with us in His dealings.⁴⁶ Since we were created by God, God not only has predated us but is responsible for the guidelines by which we must follow. This is especially true in the case of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. God sent Him to die on the cross for our sins so that we could be reconnected with a sin-less God. Christ then is the embodiment of Truth. God’s perfection puts Him at a different, perfect level than us but His Son Jesus Christ has reconnected us to Him - that is the Truth.

One of the challenges today for those who read the Bible is to gain a *view* that is consistent with God’s Word, and not some other view. Some of us have a tendency to introduce what we want to hear or to “twist” what we are reading to suit our own beliefs. We must be careful to ascertain what the author is saying (understanding that the author is moved by the Holy Spirit to write

⁴⁵ Conforming To Jesus Ministry, "What is the Meaning of Truth in the Bible?", accessed October 10, 2022, https://www.conformingtojesus.com/truth_sets_you_free_meaning.htm#:~:text=The%20meaning%20of%20Truth%20in%20the%20Bible%20can,sin%20brings%20only%20confusion%20and%20causes%20only%20destruction%21.

⁴⁶ Bible Questions: Answers for Christians, "What is Truth? What Does Knowing Truth Have to Do with Welcoming the Lord?", accessed October 11, 2022, <https://answerforchristians.org/what-is-truth.html>.

accordingly). Careful attention must be made to the author's situation amidst the historical events of the time. These accounts can then be cross-checked against other accounts in God's Word to determine the overall context of what God is telling us.

The source of information must also be considered. God's Word as recorded by the authors is true because that is what the original author, God, intended.⁴⁷ In this context, the biblical authors are simply recording what the Holy Spirit impressed upon their souls. They are the conduits by which God forwarded His thoughts and intentions to us. This is a holistic view of the Truth of God's Word, a very important one, since our faith depends on accurate information being passed onto us by God. What we actually read in God's Word are the thoughts and intentions of what God is telling us. He is not telling us any more or any less about what we need to hear. And His thoughts and intentions are true – what we call the Truth.

From a biblical perspective, God has already made His truth known to us. Paul wrote the following excerpt to the Romans:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the *truth* (my italics) by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:18-20)

We already have the tools to attain God's Word. The printed or electronic copies are known as the Bible. God Himself proclaims His Word as truth as noted above. We are without excuse. According to Psalm 51:4, God is right in His verdict and justified when He judges (David's confession after his sin with

⁴⁷ Norman L. Geisler, "The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Oct-Dec 1980), 329-330.

Bathsheba). David recognized God's Truth and remained in subjection to it, even after confessing his sin.

The attainment of the *truth* is only possible through an identity in Jesus Christ. Some may question the validity or even the precepts of truth, but they do so because they do not identify with Christ. In response to a question by one of His disciples Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Just as Jesus provides eternal life and the way to obtain it, He also provides truth. We can only access His truth if we have a relationship with Him; that is, if we confess our sins, ask Him for forgiveness, and trust Him as the Lord of our lives.

However, an identification with Christ is not nearly enough to *hear* God speak to us. **We must be totally in tune with His Word** if we expect to hear Him. If we disobey His Word, then we cannot expect Him to impress upon us His Word, His will, and His plan for us. Some look to Him for direction in their lives, but they will not attain it until they are in tune with His Word. This close association was addressed by Dallas Willard:

*Are we ready to be in business with God? If you find yourself in a position where you can honestly say, "God has never spoken to me," then you well might ask, "Why *should* God speak to me? What am *I* doing in life that would make speaking to me a reasonable thing for him to do? Are we in business together in life? Or am I in business just for myself, trying to 'use a little God' to advance my projects?"*⁴⁸

What Willard is pointing to is our focus in life. Selfishness if not going to allow us to hear God speaking to us. Like the apostle Paul, we must consider others more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). In this case, we must value God as more important than ourselves. His Word matters more to us than our own desires. If we can truly say that, then we are in a position to hear Him.

⁴⁸ Dallas Willard, *Hearing God*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1984), 70.

Furthermore, God may not use audible words like what we are accustomed to hearing when listening to someone else. In fact, we may not be conscious that God is actually speaking to us.⁴⁹ According to Romans, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ” (Romans 10:17). Many times, God speaks or impresses His Word on us when we are reading His Word. Sometimes when we read His Word it strikes us in a certain way. It makes an impact to our way of thinking. This is an aspect of God speaking to us. Remember, His ways are not our ways. Since He is supernatural, He can impress His thoughts upon us even when we do not actually recognize that He is doing it.⁵⁰ It is to our benefit that He speaks to us. Our thoughts and actions as true Christians are from his viewpoint, not ours. That is why we must be allied with God’s Word and not fall prey to the wiles of this world.

God has assured us with these words:

Indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; *from his mouth* come knowledge and understanding. (Italics mine; Proverbs 2:3-5)

These verses indicate that we must first look for insight and understanding. Where? From His Word. Only when we are applying His Word to our thoughts and actions can we expect Him to speak to us. Later in the book of Isaiah, God is quick to assure us that our souls must be in tune with Him. It’s like we must be in tune with His Word while at the same time tuning out the influences of the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 89.

⁵⁰ God actually sets us apart when we are in our mother’s womb (Jeremiah 1:5). He can therefore impress upon us His words or even configure us if He likes. We should not be reluctant about this since we know that He loves us and has our best interests in mind. We can trust Him.

world. We have to be subjective with God's Word, not allowing any outside influences to affect our what we believe in our souls:

These people [the Israelites at that time] come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught. Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish. (Isaiah 29:13-14)

Our souls must be honest with God if we are to hear Him.

A Personal Relationship with God is Possible

One must realize the necessity of a relationship with God if His Truth is to be heard. This relationship, as mentioned previously, is only possible by asking Jesus Christ for forgiveness of our sin and trusting Him to be the Lord of our lives. Once we have done that, we have then entered into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Since this is a new relationship one might ask, "How is this relationship developed?" Renee Dugan offered these ideas:⁵¹

How God Relates to Us

1. With Patience – mercifully, forgiving us
2. With High Expectations – instructing us (with His Word)
3. With Discipline – correcting us
4. With Love – sent Christ to die for our sins, giving us eternal life

How We Should Relate to God

1. With Worship & Praise – worship Him above everything else
2. With Obedience – obey His Word
3. With Fear – respect the awesome, mighty power of God
4. With Love – live selflessly, giving ourselves back to Him

⁵¹ Renee Dugan, "How to Relate to God," March 1, 2021, accessed January 4, 2023, [How to Relate to God | Spirit & Truth \(spiritandtruthonline.org\)](https://www.spiritandtruthonline.org).

This framework is necessary for us to understand both God's attributes and our responsibilities in this relationship. Once we have this understanding, we need to commune with Him on a regular basis. Communing with God involves the aspect of prayer. It is an opportunity (actually a requirement according to Philippians 4:6-7) for us to spend time alone with Him, thanking Him for our provisions and asking for our needs. It can be done verbally or silently. I prefer silently since it helps me to reflect in full detail what I am thinking of. Usually God impresses upon my thoughts His answer and He leaves me with a sense of peace and confidence in that answer. We can base this on the fact that God spoke to our ancestors according to the gospel to the Hebrews: "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son . . ." (Hebrews 1:1-2). This relationship with God is real and we can expect him to speak to us in various ways. This can be a very personal, day-to-day communication. The psalmist recorded these words, "I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me" (Psalm 120:1). What worth is prayer if it is not answered? Yet our God is loving and caring and desires to meet our daily needs if we were to call on Him.

The Word of God Speaks

Once we understand the Truth of God's Word and we have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, it is important to recognize God working in our circumstances. Part of having faith in God is to realize that He is always with us, loving us, and He is in control of our circumstances. So the Word of God actually speaks in our lives when He controls our circumstances.

How to Discern the Thoughts and Intentions of the Soul

The nexus of our circumstances with respect to God occurs in our souls. The battles or contentions that we are involved in on a daily basis begins in our souls. Every day we rise, our minds and souls are concerned with whatever lies ahead. Our family and work concerns are present before us. Since we come into contact with other people on a regular basis, our relationships are important. So our thoughts and attitudes are important between ourselves, God, and others.

D. Bruce Lockerbie focuses on what he calls the “system of values.”⁵² This system defines how a person thinks and how they view the world. Our thoughts and attitudes are derived from this system. The key point here is, “How do we determine how this ‘system of values’ is developed?” In order to do this, a person must not only subject themselves to a relationship with Christ as previously mentioned, but they must adhere to God’s Word. In order for a “system of values” to develop naturally from God’s viewpoint, a person must subject themselves to the reading and studying of His Word on a regular basis. Only then will a person’s thoughts and attitudes develop into a “system of values” that would reflect God’s intentions. By the way, the egotism and self-centeredness of the world does not correlate with God’s Word. Philippians 2:4 tells us that we should not only look to our own interests, but to the interests of others. This is an altruistic focus.

So what values serve God’s system? We find in 2 Peter 1:5 the following:

Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵² D. Bruce Lockerbie, "Thinking Like a Christian Part 1: The Starting Point," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Jan-Mar 1986), 4.

These are the values we should focus on. Our daily lives should endeavor to improve in these areas. If we follow this recipe over time then we will notice that the thoughts and intentions of our souls become more godly like Christ's.

A study engineered by Brian Richardson showed that there is a correlation between Bible knowledge and how people treat themselves and others.⁵³ Over 1,148 adults over the age of 18 were asked to complete a 45-minute form. Four groups were selected for the survey: seminary students, adults at the Baptist Good Will Center in Fort Worth, Texas, deaf adults, and prison inmates. The result was a correlation coefficient of 0.567 between Bible knowledge and people treating themselves and 0.621 for how people treat others.⁵⁴ We can derive from this test that those who subject themselves to God's Word on a regular basis actually improve their thoughts and attitudes, or their "system of values."

It is no surprise that people who subject themselves to God's Word on a regular basis improve the thoughts and attitudes of their souls. The writer of Hebrews puts it this way, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). God's Word can and will search out our deepest thoughts and convict our consciences so that we adapt our thoughts and attitudes according to His Word. This is a good thing since our relationships with both God and others will continue to improve.

How Our Circumstances Are Changed

Our circumstances are very important to us. Our goal each day is that things will go well for ourselves and our families. In many instances, we cannot

⁵³ Brian Richardson, "Do Bible Facts Change Attitudes?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Apr-Jun 1983), 165-166.

⁵⁴ A coefficient of 1 indicates a perfect correlation and a coefficient of 0 indicates no correlation ([Pearson correlation coefficient - Wikipedia](#)).

control our circumstances so we pray and hope for the best. However, we can draw near to God and depend on Him each day. We can draw upon His power and compassion to guide us each day with our circumstances and how we approach them.

First of all, how do we perceive our circumstances? This is important because it not only affects our relationships with others, but also our relationship with God. Our perceptions are based on: (1) what interests us, (2) what is important to us, and (3) what is familiar to us.⁵⁵ Simply put, if we are not interested in God then we are not likely to seek a relationship with Him or even read His Word. But if a relative dies, especially one close to our own age, then we might start to think about “What happens to me when I die?” “Do I cease to exist after this life or if I continue to exist, where will that existence take place?” Our perception about the after-life now changes because of the circumstance with our relative.

How about what is important to us? What are our moral values? Do we care about set principles of right and wrong? Are we egocentric about our thoughts and values or are we open to improving them? If a person does not think that morality is important then the concept of God and His Word does not matter to us. A person’s egocentrism trumps over altruism resulting in a lack of interest in God and His Word.

Our perceptions are also based on what is familiar to us. Take for example a person who is raised in a Christian family. This person is more likely to consider God and His Word. After all, they attended church since they were little. They sang numerous Christian songs, studied God’s Word in Sunday School, and built relationships with other Christians. Their perceptions are focused on the morality set forth in God’s Word.

⁵⁵ Business Communication for Success by the University of Minnesota, "Differences in Perception," accessed January 26, 2023, [3.3 Differences in Perception – Business Communication for Success \(umn.edu\)](#).

But are our perceptions reality or are they divorced from it? As already mentioned, we each have our own perceptions. But would we classify our perceptions as being more important than reality or vice versa? There is only one reality when it comes to God and His Word. Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins nearly two thousand years ago so that we can have eternal life, and that is reality. According to our perceptions, we can either believe it or ignore it. But we certainly cannot change the reality of it. To alter or maintain a perception against it would be to our detriment. Jim Taylor put it this way,

The challenge we face with our own thinking, as well as the thinking of others, is how to ensure that perceptions remain close to reality. This alignment is essential for us to live in the real world, find consensus with others, and maintain the individual, governmental, and societal structures that are necessary for life as we know it to exist.⁵⁶

He then made this suggestion: “Seek out validation from experts and credible others (don’t just ask your friends because they likely have the same perceptions as you).”⁵⁷ To continue with our own perceptions when they are divorced from reality could and likely will affect our eternal destiny. We should make a decision to ask Christ for forgiveness of our sins and trust in Him as our God as well as His Word.

We can look at our circumstances over a period of months or years to establish God’s plan.⁵⁸ By looking at our track record over time, we can see where we were headed and how God intervened. This provides inspiration in two areas: (1) we may have been headed in a wrong direction with respect to God and He subsequently intervened to bring us into a relationship with Him or

⁵⁶ Jim Taylor, “Perception Is Not Reality,” Psychology Today, last modified August 2019, accessed January 27, 2023, [Perception Is Not Reality | Psychology Today](#).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ron Edmondson, “God’s Voice Through Our Circumstances,” Ministry International Journal for Pastors, April 2007, accessed January 30, 2023, [Ministry Magazine | God's voice through our circumstances](#).

to renew that relationship, and (2) since we have this track record with God, we can now trust Him with our present and future circumstances. This is a source of hope each time we come to Him in prayer.

If we want to see our circumstances change in a positive way then we must spend quality time with God. Notice I said quality rather than quantity. You will know if you have spent enough time on a regular basis with God if you sense spiritual quality with God. Do you feel closer to God or more distanced from Him? Like time with a good friend, do you feel that you are missing God or do you feel satisfied in your relationship with Him? Your answers to these questions will indicate if you are having quality time with Him. If not, then consider how regular your time with Him is in prayer and reading His Word. Are you somehow spending time with Him each day? Like being with friends, the more time we spend with them then the more we feel satisfied in our relationship with them. If you are still struggling spending quality time with Him, then consider making a time commitment with Him. Make sure you seriously consider the commitment before starting it and then keep that commitment.

After establishing or re-establishing a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, consider the condition of your soul. Are you the type of person who is self-centered or are you humble? James 1:9 tells us, “Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position.” This is not saying that a person should avoid being the President of the United States or being a pastor or elder in a church. This Scripture is identifying with Jesus Christ who humbly gave Himself physically and spiritually as a sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Jesus, even though He is God, showed us what it means to be humble in a circumstance to achieve great results. It was not about Him – it was about His obedience to God the Father in achieving the end result – the salvation of our spirits. Can a pastor or elder maintain their “high” position and

serve others properly? Yes, if they have a humble soul and are putting others first and not themselves. They must be completely altruistic if they want to see positive circumstances in their church. Too many times have I seen elders who considered their own interests first much to the demise of the local church they were serving.

Those of us who have lived on this earth for a while know that there are plenty of good times and there are a number of difficult times. Somehow, we endure the difficult times but it depends on our perception at the time. If we have a relationship with Jesus Christ then He sustains us through those difficult times. The apostle Paul was one who was subject to a number of beatings and threats on his life just because of his faith in Christ. He also endured shipwrecks and many times without food. It is hard for us to put ourselves in his shoes because many of us have homes, incomes, and enough food. We are not itinerant preachers on the road all the time without a home. Here is what Paul had to say about enduring difficult times:

. . . I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.
(Philippians 4:11-13)

Right now I am waiting for a dentist's appointment. I know I need restorative work but I prefer something basic even though my dentist recommends something more substantial. I am using the time between now and then to trust God that I will have a gentle answer for the dentist (Proverbs 15:1). I am not anxious because I know that God takes care of my situations.

In being content in every situation, God's Word tells us to ". . . give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). This is a point that is often overlooked. When we spend time with our one-year-old granddaughter and she offers us something, we

always say “Thank you.” We are trying to teach her gratitude for things she receives. It is the same between us and God. We can consider many things that God has and continually provides us, starting with life itself. And of course, the contentment He gives us in all situations should be something we are thankful for.

Much has been said about whether a person chooses their own paths or God chooses them. Psalm 25:12 has this to say, “Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him” (New International Version). Also consider what God said about the prophet Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). It is clear from our own perceptions that we are the ones who make our daily choices. However, from an overall perspective, God actually chooses our paths. For example, I came into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ when I was 25. God knew that before I was born. He actually chose me – I did not choose Him. The apostle Paul was more explicit about this when He wrote to the Ephesians in Asia Minor: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God . . .” (Ephesians 2:8). Another example is a boat on course to a specific destination. The crew is responsible for seeing that power is supplied to the engine to move the boat, but it is the rudder that determines the direction of the boat and where it will arrive. Jesus Christ is the rudder in the lives of those who have a relationship with Him.

The Benefits of Meditating on the Word of God

Having the Word of God in our lives brings numerous benefits. The book of Psalms describes these benefits in detail and context. One of those benefits is sustaining our souls. Our souls are used to interact with other people in this world and live in our physical bodies only for a certain time until our

physical bodies perish. Then our spirits live on forever. Proper maintenance needs to be applied to our souls (to interact and encourage others with Christ) which can only be derived from the Word of God.

Another benefit that we receive from the Word of God is the resistance to temptations. We are all tempted in this life because we are imperfect beings. Temptations also come from multiple sources⁵⁹. However, God provides resistance to these temptations in His Word.

The Benefit to the Soul

Our spirits are the most important component of our lives. Even though our bodies and the maintenance of them are important in this life, our spirits will last forever.⁶⁰ When we confess our sins and ask Jesus Christ for forgiveness, our spirits are brought to spiritual life in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

However, our *souls* should be maintained properly so that we can enjoy our existence in this life to the fullest. We then nourish our souls when we expose ourselves to God's Word. This is a continual process but starts with the interaction between our spirits and our souls. God's Spirit dwells within our spirits and then interacts with our souls (or personalities). We then have an opportunity to help nourish our souls with God's Word.

There is a parallel between our souls and our bodies. The apostle Paul summed up a life in which the soul was nourished: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day . . ." (2 Timothy 4:7-8a). Our physical bodies require exercise or

⁵⁹ Temptations are from three sources: (1) Satan, (2) worldly influences, and (3) lust.

⁶⁰ It is important to note that a person's spirit is separate from their soul. A person's spirit is what comes into contact with God. A person's soul is their personality. Our souls perish along with our bodies at physical death, but our spirits however live on forever. (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12, and John 4:24. Also see Staff, "What Is the Difference between the Soul and the Spirit?" Bibles for America, last modified February 23, 2021, accessed February 14, 2023, [What Is the Difference between the Soul and the Spirit? \(biblesforamerica.org\)](https://www.biblesforamerica.org/what-is-the-difference-between-the-soul-and-the-spirit/).

the muscles will atrophy. Likewise, our souls require spiritual exercise or they will atrophy as well. We may notice selfishness, lust, or pride creeping into our souls. We may be more selfish rather than altruistic. Physical training results in a body that can compete to win the prize. Spiritual training will result in the “crown of righteousness” awarded by the Lord Jesus Christ.

But how do we train our souls spiritually? There are a number of spiritual disciplines, but they are all listed in God’s Word. So if we become students of His Word, then we will be made aware of what disciplines we should practice. But first, we must practice the discipline of studying God’s Word to unlock the other disciplines. Over the course of one’s life, there are different ways of studying God’s Word. When a person is young, Sunday School is offered. Adults have the opportunity to attend a Bible study on either a weeknight or Sunday mornings. These are the beginning stages. The psalmist is quick to note the discipline of studying the Word of God: “I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word” (Psalm 119:14-16).

However, the true discipline of studying God’s Word is an individual, personal time alone with God and His Word. I would suggest initially reading five chapters a day to read the entire Word in six months (or about 2 ½ chapters daily to complete the reading in one year). I would then recommend repeating this process at least three times. This will give a person a solid background about the historical events and the letters of encouragement. God’s involvement in these historical events speaks to us about His Character which is important to us. The gospels and letters in the New Testament, or latter portion of the Word, guide us with our spirituality.

Eventually, one can study the Word at a slower pace, perhaps ½ a chapter a day while consulting a Bible Commentary. A good commentary is

written by recognized theologians (The Moody Bible Commentary⁶¹ is one suggestion). Another source to briefly wakeup to in the morning is a devotion found at <https://inspiration.org>. A person's study pattern may vary over time but the main thing is to stay engaged in it. Here is some encouragement from the book of Joshua: "Keep this Book of the Law [God's Word] always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8).

The benefits of studying God's Word to the soul are numerous. Many are listed in the Word itself. Life will be worth living, relationships will be improved, and God's plan in our lives will be revealed to us. We will make a positive impact on others and we will hear the words of Christ when we depart this earth: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:23).

Resisting Temptations

As mentioned earlier, there are two non-tangible components to ourselves: our spirits and our souls. Our spirits are in direct contact with Jesus Christ but our souls are exposed to three types of temptations: (1) the wiles of this world, (2) Satan, and (3) our own lusts. Our souls are that component which comes into contact with other people as a witness for Christ to them. Therefore, it is important to protect our souls from temptations.

This world sets itself up against Jesus Christ. We know this is true because Christianity is not welcomed in this world. If it were, local churches would be established everywhere and everyone would be attending church on Sunday. Rather, this world welcomes sexual promiscuity over the internet and the media. The world recognizes the sex drive that men and women have and caters to it. This world also recognizes that people want to be important, so it promotes pride in one's life. Rather than looking out for others, people are

⁶¹ Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds., *The Moody Bible Commentary*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014).

encouraged to think of themselves first. This world also knows that people want possessions. Therefore, it seeks to draw people into buying and accumulating cars, houses, and other expensive items. And of course, people must lust after wealth to afford all these things.

Satan is the driving force behind the wiles of the world. It is not time yet for Jesus Christ to setup His Kingdom on this earth. Therefore, it is in Satan's hands and he has manipulated the masses of people to counter God's Word since he himself has countered God.

We must realize that our own lusts are the direct result of our sin nature in our spirits. Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Our sin nature has been handed down to us ever since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. Sin, which first manifested itself in Satan, has penetrated the world and each one of our spirits. Our spirits, then, have a direct impact on our souls. Consider also the lust of our nature in concert with the world:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

Therefore, we must be on guard and learn how to resist these temptations.

Jesus and His disciples were in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to being arrested by the chief priests and elders. He went off in a distance from His disciples to pray. Upon returning, He found them sleeping. He then told them, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh [soul] is weak" (Matthew 26:41). Two essential components here for a Christian are "watch" and "pray." A Christian now leads a new life governed by Jesus Christ and His Word. Therefore, the Christian should be

sensitive to nearby ideas and events that are averse to the Word of God. This is what we call “watching.” The other component is praying. This should not just be a momentary response to an emergency situation. But rather, the Christian should have a regular habit of prayer. Set aside time each day to be with God, asking Him for forgiveness for sins, sharing concerns for self and others, and thanking Him for all of His blessings. In this way, many temptations are thwarted.

When Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, He was tempted by Satan three times (Luke 4). In all three occasions, Jesus responded with God’s Word (in italics):

1. **Satan:** “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” **Jesus:** “It is written: *‘Man shall not live on bread alone [but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD]’* (Deuteronomy 8:3).
2. “The devil [**Satan**] led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, ‘I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.’ **Jesus:** “It is written: *‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only’*” (Deuteronomy 6:13).
3. “The devil [**Satan**] led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down from here. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”’ **Jesus:** “It is said: *‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’*” (Psalm 91:11-12).

The author to the Hebrews offers this encouragement about Jesus: “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). God allows us to deal with Satan if we are properly focused on Him [God] and His Word. The apostle Peter provided these words of encouragement: “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of Christians throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1 Peter 5:8-9). The apostle James followed with these words: “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). We must be in full submission to God if we expect the power or ability to repel Satan. Finally, Paul’s words to the people in Corinth indicate that God provides a way to avoid temptation: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Note here that temptations are common to people rather than the exception. It is important to understand that everyone deals with temptations. The key is submission to God and His Word, repelling Satan, and then looking for a way out.

God’s Word is a powerful tool in repelling the temptations whether they are from Satan, the world, or our sinful nature. This is why some sort of reading and studying God’s Word should be conducted throughout our lifetime. Because of these temptations and also the fact that Jesus was both human as well as God (Hebrews 2:17), “he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). We can call upon him during our regular prayer time regarding our temptations.

Rightly Dividing the Word of God

As mentioned earlier, we should read the Word of God on a regular basis. As we become more familiar with it, we tend to analyze what we read and make conclusions from it. What's important is to understand a concept called interpretation. Merriam-Webster defines the word interpret (referring to a document) as "to conceive in the light of individual belief, judgment, or circumstance."⁶² In other words, we need to process what we just read and make a judgment on what it means to us and to those around us. This is a serious task since it must be done correctly in order to be effective. Therefore, the process of "how" to interpret is most important.

When we interpret, we bring to the forefront our own experiences and perceptions. All of us, by default, look at life from our own perspective – we are subjective. It takes effort for us to let go of our own presuppositions and to allow the interpretation process to inform us, even if it means changing or updating our presuppositions. After all, that is why we read and study Scripture. We want to recognize who God is, what He has done, what that means for us, and how we should relate to both God and others. However, we must first recognize who the biblical author is, who he is writing to, and why he is writing. Karl Ellis put it this way: "The task of the exegete [reader or interpreter] is to attempt to look into the mind of the author in order to determine what he meant when he made certain statements to certain people."⁶³ This is a process that will take time. That is why I suggested reading the Word of God multiple times so that the context begins to make sense. Also, attending bible studies led by seasoned instructors is also helpful in understanding biblical authors, their audiences, and why they are writing. We must be completely objective when

⁶² "Merriam-Webster Since 1828," Merriam-Webster, accessed March 1, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

⁶³ Karl C. Ellis, "The Nature of Biblical Exegesis," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Apr-Jun 1980), 152.

interpreting God's Word. Lindsay Olesberg provided a checklist that can be used when interpreting the Word of God:⁶⁴

1. Does the text support this interpretation?
2. Does this interpretation take into account all the elements of the text, including its historical and narrative context?
3. Would the original audience agree with this interpretation?

This is a process that began in the first century when the famed Jew Apollos preached in Ephesus: "He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately . . . When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:24-26). We learn here that Apollos spoke about Jesus *accurately*. This is important since the audience must receive the accurate interpretation of God's Word. If they don't, then they will miss out on the opportunity for eternal life and God's blessings. We also learn here that Priscilla and Aquila taught him more *adequately*. Even a learned man like Apollos still had more to learn about the Word of God. This is true of all of us. We will never enter that point in this life when we can say, "I know it all." I'm quite sure that God will fill us in when we enter heaven.

Preaching the Word of God

One of the most important actions a Christian can take after becoming a Christian is to share the Word of God with others so that they can share in the same blessings. Hopefully, others will accept this great opportunity when we

⁶⁴ Lindsay Olesberg, "How Can I Interpret God's Word Faithfully?" Christian Bible Studies: Transformed by the Truth, March 19, 2013, accessed March 1, 2023, [How can I interpret God's Word faithfully? | Christian Bible Studies \(christianitytoday.com\)](https://christianitytoday.com/christian-bible-studies/how-can-i-interpret-gods-word-faithfully/).

share the good news of a new life with Jesus Christ based on confession and forgiveness of sin. In addition, we are then in a position to teach other concepts in the Word of God which will bring blessings to others. We must be prepared ourselves in order to preach (or share) and teach others.

Preaching the Word

Preaching comes from the Greek word, *kerusso*, which means to proclaim, declare, or announce. It can be done from a pulpit or it can be shared with a friend. Preaching the Word of God takes on various methods. Many believe that in order to preach, one must approach someone else and directly share the good news that they can confess their sin and have forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ, leading to eternal life for their spirits. Even though this is one method, many feel timid about approaching strangers going from door to door or at other locations. It is true that we must be bold and trust in God's power when we share Christ with others, but we must use the methods that God has instilled in us. He gives each of us certain skills, certain talents, and these are the methods we should draw upon. We are given authority to preach by Jesus Christ when He encouraged us to make disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:18-19a). We are not declaring God's Word by ourselves: it is the power of God that emboldens us. The apostle Paul confirmed this when he wrote the following words to the Corinthians:

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. *I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.* (Italics mine; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

These are wise words for us when contemplating how to share or preach. We often think of our own abilities. It is true that God does endow us with certain gifts and talents to be used for His work. However, it is *how* we use those talents that is important. Our attitude should be one of weakness or trembling (not because we are nervous) so that God's power can enable us. If we are trying to use our own wisdom then we will subvert God's power which will: (1) weaken our witness to others, and (2) will not give God the credit for working and providing the witness to others' spirits.

Consider these opportunities as put forth by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:⁶⁵

- Invite others to the church where Christ is proclaimed
- Confess our faith through song and word in worship
- Offer encouragement to a friend and others who are ill or in need
- Show Christ through our daily lives and work, which express thanks to God and care for the common good
- Talk about our faith in our homes and with others
- Live prepared to give a reason for the hope within us

This does not mean that we can relax and just get through life as before. We must be alert for opportunities. We should pray and ask God to make us more aware of opportunities to share about God with someone or to just encourage them, trusting that they will see God through us. The main component is that they see God, and not us. He is the one that can forgive their sins and give them eternal life.

Teaching the Word

Teaching others about God's Word is a quality that is imposed by Jesus Christ when He left this earth. We notice again from Matthew 28 that we should

⁶⁵ Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, "PROCLAIM the Good News of God in Christ Through Word and Deed," accessed March 6, 2023, [PROCLAIM the Good News of God In Christ Through Word and Deed - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America \(elca.org\)](https://www.elca.org/proclaim).

teach others everything that Christ has commanded us: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (italics mine; Matthew 28:18-20). There are two components here that we must adhere to: (1) teach others the Word of God (i.e. what Christ has commanded us), and (2) teach them to obey the Word of God. What use is it if someone reads or is taught God’s Word but does not obey it? How can the truths written in the Word make application in a person’s life unless they humbly accept God’s Word and obey it? The human reaction to this is to say, “What habits am I required to give up in my life if I obey God’s Word?” It is a worthwhile question, but since we are human we also must change some habit to respond to God’s Word. If others are not obeying the Word of God, then they should be corrected or rebuked (2 Timothy 3:16). Correcting a person involves showing their fault in private⁶⁶ (Matthew 18:15). It is the first step to take when a Christian is erring according to God’s Word. It should be done out of love and sensitivity. Sometimes, however, a Christian is involved in a blatant error and may need to be rebuked. Rebuking someone is an *attempt* to use power or authority resulting in a change in that person⁶⁷ (Matthew 8:26). It is sharper in its approach than correcting. In general, the goal of teaching is to urge or encourage others in their Christian faith (2 Timothy 4:2).

In order to be a good teacher we must first become good learners. It is not possible for anyone (and no one has ever admitted) to master God’s Word. This is because God’s Word is not of human origin but divine origin. It comes

⁶⁶ A Conquering Faith, “Reprove, Rebuke, and Exhort’ Church Discipline,” April 19, 2005, accessed March 6, 2023, ["REPROVE, REBUKE, AND EXHORT" CHURCH DISCIPLINE – A Conquering Faith.](#)

⁶⁷ Ibid.

from God Himself, and therefore, we are not able to understand it fully with our human intellect while we are on this earth. When we depart from this earth and are in His Presence eternally then we will fully understand His Truth. Having said this, in this life we must embark on a habit of regular study of God's Word. I would recommend that people who are going to preach from the pulpit or teach a class first develop for themselves a habit of studying God's Word. There are a number of suggestions available as to how to do this. I have read many books on this subject. My advice is for a person to develop their own habit that they feel comfortable with, they enjoy, and is fruitful in learning more about God's Word. For a more intensive study, try reading only a small section at one time instead of several chapters. Find a bible commentary that you like to reference after reading the small section in God's Word. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide your reading and understanding in light of the rest of God's Word to gain a fuller understanding. In doing so, you will eventually be more prepared as a steward to teach others. And of course, always say a prayer before at the start of the session to allow the Holy Spirit to guide the session.

Conclusion

The Word of God is one of the most intriguing works ever written. While its authors spanned a period of about two millennium, its historical and spiritual significance covers over six millennium – the span of humanity (and will continue to do so until the second coming of Jesus Christ upon this earth). It covers all of humanity and it has as its source the Kingdom of God. We can attribute it as the divine record instituted by God Himself as recorded by human authors.

God's Word is quick to unravel human nature. In fact, we learn the depths of human nature from the Word itself. It knows the corruption of sin upon the human spirit and provides forgiveness and eternal life upon confession

of that sin. It has keen insight into how a Christian life should live. It sustains the weak, it humbles the proud, and it heals those who are hurt.

When a Christian is subject to the Word of God, they enter into a relationship whereby they can “hear” what God is telling them. They actually “see” what Truth is and can contrast that amidst a world of confusion. They are the benefactors of a tool that helps them resist temptation.

Once a Christian is well-rooted in God’s Word, they have the opportunity to preach (or share) and teach the Word with others. This serves as an opportunity for others to come to Christ for forgiveness of their sin so that they too can experience eternal life.

If you have not yet experienced a relationship with Jesus Christ then I certainly hope you will confess your sins to Him and accept Him as the Lord of your life. If you have done this, then you should continue with a daily habit of reading God’s Word and praying with Jesus Christ. You should also find a local Christian church where you can find mutual encouragement and fellowship. The journey starts now for the remainder of our physical lives and then onto eternity, so why not take advantage of it?

Consider these words from A.W. Pink:

To neglect God’s Word is virtually to tell Him that He made a mistake in being at so much trouble to communicate it. To prefer the writings of man is to insult the Almighty. To say that human writings are more interesting is to impugn the wisdom of the Most High and is a terrible indictment against our own evil hearts. To neglect God’s Word is to sin against its Author, for He has commanded us to read, study, and search it.⁶⁸

And finally, from God’s Word itself:

My son, if you accept my [God’s] words

⁶⁸ Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1917), 78.

And store up my commands within you,

Turning your ear to wisdom

And applying your heart to

Understanding –

Indeed, if you call out for insight

And cry aloud for understanding,

And if you look for it as for silver

And search for it as for hidden treasure,

Then you will understand the fear of the

LORD

And find the knowledge of God. (Proverbs 2:1-5)

PUBLIC LAW 97-280-OCT. 4, 1982 96 STAT. 1211

Public Law 97-280
97th Congress

Joint Resolution

Authorizing and requesting the President to proclaim 1983 as the "Year of the Bible".

Whereas the Bible, the Word of God, has made a unique contribution in shaping the United States as a distinctive and blessed nation and people;
Whereas deeply held religious convictions springing from the Holy Scriptures led to the early settlement of our Nation;
Whereas Biblical teachings inspired concepts of civil government that are contained in our Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States;
Whereas many of our great national leaders-among them Presidents Washington, Jackson, Lincoln, and Wilson-paid tribute to the surpassing influence of the Bible in our country's development, as in the words of President Jackson that the Bible is "the rock on which our Republic rests;"
Whereas the history of our Nation clearly illustrates the value of voluntarily applying the teachings of the Scriptures in the lives of individuals, families, and societies;
Whereas this Nation now faces great challenges that will test this Nation as it has never been tested before; and
Whereas that renewing our knowledge of and faith in God through Holy Scripture can strengthen us as a nation and a people: Now, therefore, be it
Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President is authorized and requested to designate 1983 as a national "Year of the Bible" in recognition of both the formative influence the Bible has been for our Nation, and our national need to study and apply the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

Approved October 4, 1982.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY-S.J., Res. 165:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol 1280982):
Mar. 31, considered and passed Senate. Sept. 21,
considered and passed House.



[STATUTE-96-Pg1211.pdf \(govinfo.gov\)](#)

Bibliography

- Bible Questions: Answers for Christians. "What is Truth? What Does Knowing Truth Have to Do with Welcoming the Lord?" Accessed October 11, 2022. <https://answerforchristians.org/what-is-truth.html>.
- Bright, Bill. "Is the Bible Trustworthy?" Last modified May 20, 2004. Accessed January 11, 2022. <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/is-the-bible-trustworthy-1262196.html>.
- Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993. in John A. Witmer. "The Incarnate and the Written Word of God." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 113 no 449 (Jan 1956): 66-69.
- Conforming To Jesus Ministry. "What is the Meaning of Truth in the Bible?" Accessed October 10, 2022. https://www.conformingtojesus.com/truth_sets_you_free_meaning.htm#:~:text=The%20meaning%20of%20Truth%20in%20the%20Bible%20can,sin%20brings%20only%20confusion%20and%20causes%20only%20destruction%21.
- A Conquering Faith. "'Reprove, Rebuke, and Exhort' Church Discipline." Last modified April 19, 2005. Accessed March 6, 2023. ["REPROVE, REBUKE, AND EXHORT" CHURCH DISCIPLINE – A Conquering Faith](#).
- Curtis, David B. "Is the Bible Trustworthy?" Last modified January 7, 2001. Accessed January 11, 2022. https://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/2timothy/is_bible_trust.htm.
- Dugan, Renee. "How to Relate to God." Last modified March 1, 2021. Accessed January 4, 2023. [How to Relate to God | Spirit & Truth \(spiritandtruthonline.org\)](#).
- Edmondson, Ron. "God's Voice Through Our Circumstances." Ministry International Journal for Pastors. Last modified April 2007. Accessed January 30, 2023. [Ministry Magazine | God's voice through our circumstances](#).
- Ellis, Karl C. "The Nature of Biblical Exegesis." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 no 546 (Apr-Jun 1980): 151-155.
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. "PROCLAIM the Good News of God in Christ Through Word and Deed." Accessed March 6, 2023. [PROCLAIM the Good News of God In Christ Through Word and Deed - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America \(elca.org\)](#).

Hagen, Lucas. "The Bible Was Written to Inform God's People." Christianity.com. Last modified October 29, 2020. Accessed February 10, 2021. <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/what-is-the-purpose-of-the-bible.html>.

Inspiration Ministries. "Free Indeed." Accessed January 13, 2022. <https://inspiration.org/daily-devotional/free-indeed-in-jesus/>.

Geisler, Norman L. "The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 no 548 (Oct-Dec 1980): 327-339.

Lagasse, Paul. *The Message of Reconciliation: How to Have a Relationship with Jesus Christ*. Published 2020. <https://newtestamentevangelism.com>.

Lincoln, Abraham. "Reply to Loyal Colored People of Baltimore upon Presentation of a Bible." September 7, 1864. Roy P. Basler, ed. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*. Vol. VII. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 542. Quoted in Creig Marlowe. "Is the Bible Still Relevant?" Accessed January 13, 2022. <https://www.explorethegospel.com/articles/is-the-bible-still-relevant>.

Lockerbie, D. Bruce. "Thinking Like a Christian Part 1: The Starting Point." *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Jan-Mar 1986): 3-13.

MacGregor, Geddes. *The Bible in the Making*. Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1959.

Martin, Luther W. "Famines in the Days of Claudius Caesar." Accessed September 1, 2021. www.wordsfitspoken.org/gospel_guardian/v7/v7n30p2-3a.html.

"Merriam-Webster Since 1828." Merriam-Webster. Accessed November 22, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

Muller, Richard A. *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy*. Ca. 1520 to ca. 1725. Volume 3: The Divine Essence and Attributes. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003. In Peter J. Gentry. "The Meaning of 'Holy' in the Old Testament." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 70 (October-December 2013): 400-417.

Olesberg, Lindsay. "How Can I Interpret God's Word Faithfully?" Christian Bible Studies: Transformed by the Truth. Last modified March 19, 2013. Accessed March 1, 2023. [How can I interpret God's Word faithfully? | Christian Bible Studies \(christianitytoday.com\)](https://christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/march-2013/03-how-can-i-interpret-gods-word-faithfully/).

Payne, Barton J. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1973. In Wayne Jackson. "How Many Prophecies are in the Bible?" Accessed

- August 6, 2021. <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/318-how-many-prophecies-are-in-the-bible>.
- Pink, Arthur W. *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*. Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1917.
- Richardson, Brian. "Do Bible Facts Change Attitudes?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Apr-Jun 1983): 163-172.
- Rydellnik, Michael and Michael Vanlaningham, eds. *The Moody Bible Commentary*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014.
- Ryken, Leland. "And It Came to Pass: The Bible as God's Storybook." *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Apr-Jun 1990), 131-142.
- Staff. "The Account We Must Give." Accessed June 16, 2022. <https://www.bible-truth.org/Judgment.html>.
- Staff. "How Did the Twelve Disciples Die?" Accessed September 2, 2021. <https://bibleask.org/how-did-the-twelve-disciples-die/>.
- Staff. "How Many Miracles are there in the Bible?" Last Modified February 28, 2019. Accessed 8/2/21, <https://www.spiritoflifeag.com/how-many-miracles-are-there-in-the-bible/#:~:text=Feel%20free%20to%20share%20with%20others.%20There%20are,more%20than%2080%20found%20in%20the%20New%20Testament>.
- Staff. "What Is the Difference between the Soul and the Spirit?" Bibles for America. Last modified February 23, 2021, Accessed February 14, 2023, [What Is the Difference between the Soul and the Spirit? \(biblesforamerica.org\)](https://www.biblesforamerica.org/what-is-the-difference-between-the-soul-and-the-spirit/).
- Stowe, C.E. *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible*. Harford, CT: Hartford Publishing Company, 1868.
- Swanson, Amy "What are the Most Important Things to Understand About the Nature of God?" Christianity.com. Last modified October 2, 2020. Accessed February 10, 2021. <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/god/important-things-to-understand-about-the-nature-of-god.html>.
- Taylor, Jim. "Perception Is Not Reality." Psychology Today, Last modified August 2019. Accessed January 27, 2023. [Perception Is Not Reality | Psychology Today](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/201908/perception-is-not-reality).
- Warfield, B.B. "Inspiration." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Vol. III. Cf. Warfield. *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*. In John F. Walvoord. "Is the Bible the Inspired Word of God?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Jan 1959): 3-14.

Willard, Dallas. *Hearing God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1984.

Zodhiates, Spiros and Warren Baker, eds. *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: Key Insights into God's Word*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1996.