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Lesson 6

What is the Bible?

Introduction

Big Question: What makes the Bible so special?

From the beginning of time, He has spoken. His Word was the means of His creation (Genesis 1:3). Shortly after making the first man and woman, He began speaking to them (Genesis 1:28-30). Through His Word, He made them aware of who He was and how they were to relate to Him (Genesis 2:16-17). Throughout human history, God continued to speak. He raised up prophets and apostles to deliver His truth to us (Hebrews 1:1 and 2 Peter 1:20-21). We now have a record of what He has said in a book we call "The Bible."

Key Scriptures:

Genesis 1:3

Genesis 1:28-30

Hebrews 1:1

2 Peter 1:20-21

Apply

To be spiritually strong, we must have a high regard for Scripture. Following Jesus involves an ongoing commitment to listen to His Word. One cannot follow well without a devotion to the Bible.

Conversation Starter

J.C. Ryle once said, "He that holds a Bible in his hand should remember that he holds not the word of man, but of God. He holds a volume which not only contains, but is God's word." WHAT OPINIONS OF THE BIBLE DO PEOPLE HAVE NOWADAYS? WHAT ARE SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS PEOPLE HAVE REGARDING THE NATURE OF SCRIPTURE? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT WE VALUE GOD'S WORD?

Transition

In this lesson, we will seek to strengthen our commitment to God's Word by examining five important truths about the Bible.

1. The Bible Comes from God (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Bible is a book unlike any other book. While other volumes have mere men and women as their authors, the Bible has been given by God. It is the only book God wrote.

Scripture attests to the divine origins of God's Word on numerous occasions. From the earliest pages of the book, we see the Lord commanding men to write His words (Exodus 34:1 and 27). In the New Testament, there are passages that flatly assert the Lord's authorship of Scripture. When writing to Timothy, Paul said, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). The word translated "inspired" is an interesting one in the original language. It was a compound word in the first century that literally meant "God breathed." It depicted Scripture as coming from the very mouth of God.

Key Scripture:

**"All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness."
(2 Timothy 3:16)**

Illustrate

I love books. Both my office and home are filled with a number of volumes. I enjoy perusing the pages of works of history, non-fiction, and fiction. There are a few works that are my favorite. I even have some books that I have read on more than one occasion. Despite my special love for some books, I have one that is unlike any other – the Bible. It is unique and otherworldly. Mere mortals wrote all the books on my bookshelves, but the Bible comes from God!

Apply

Paul showed us an important truth for following Jesus. If we want to walk with our Lord, we need to have a high view of Scripture. We should cultivate a perspective that the Bible is from God. The Word of God should be placed on a high level and be regarded as authoritative for our faith and the practice of our faith. When we have a weak view of God's Word, we will surely experience a weak walk with Jesus.

2. God Used Human Instruments to Deliver the Bible (Hebrews 1:1)

Discussion

Have you ever heard someone attempt to discredit God's Word by saying something like this – "Men wrote the Bible. It isn't really that special"? I myself have heard people say such things from time to time. The argument may seem incriminating at first; however, it actually contains a kernel of truth that lifts Scripture to an exalted plane. The Bible is quite special because of the way in which the Lord used men to write it.

Key Scripture:

**"God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways."
(Hebrews 1:1)**

Instead of dismissing human involvement, the Bible embraces it. The author of Hebrews said the Lord "spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways" (Hebrews 1:1). Consider some

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The Lord used history, legal writings, poetry, everyday letters, songs, and apocalyptic literature to convey His truth. Despite the plethora of people, places, cultures, and generations involved in producing the Bible, the book contains one unified and coherent theme!

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historical facts. Three different languages were used to record the words of Holy Writ – Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The book we call the Bible was written over a span of approximately 1,500 years from more than one continent. Around forty men contributed content to its pages, and it seems the Lord also used some women as contributors (Proverbs 31:1-31 and Matthew 28:1-4). Several different types of literature are found within the New Testament. The Lord used history, legal writings, poetry, everyday letters, songs, and apocalyptic literature to convey His truth. Despite the plethora of people, places, cultures, and generations involved in producing the Bible, the book contains one unified and coherent theme!

Apply

The way in which Scripture was delivered by men is a testament to its divine nature. Which is a bigger miracle – God dropping a holy book from the sky, or God using numerous people, cultures, and generations to produce one magnificent work? I would propose the latter requires more divine power. The fact that men wrote the Bible does not make it inferior. It actually elevates it to a special place.

3. The Bible Can Change You (Hebrews 4:12)

The Bible is unlike any other book because it is endowed with supernatural power. Every time you read it, heavenly power is released. As its principles and precepts cross over your gray matter and enter your heart, your thoughts and desires are impacted. Holy Spirit power is unleashed into your cognitions and emotions.

The author of Hebrews said, “For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Key Scripture:

“For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

Illustrate

To picturesquely describe the transformational power of the Bible, the author of Hebrews likened it to a “double-edged sword.” In the Greek of the New Testament, the language seems to refer to something similar to a knife. The terminology likely pointed to the personal nature of God’s Word. The truth of Jesus is something one can personally carry into all of life’s experiences. It is readily available for one to use when needed.

The knife metaphor also depicted the powerful cutting nature of God’s Word. When one reads it and reflects upon it, it has the ability to spiritually penetrate deep into a soul. Just as an ancient fighter might have plunged his fighting knife deep into the bowels of an enemy, one can use God’s Word to stab into the conscience or mind for the purpose of transformation.

The author of Hebrews meant to say that, when properly used, the Word of God has power to deeply penetrate into the core of one’s being.

Apply

If you attempt to live for Christ for any length of time, you will soon discover your inability to spiritually or morally change in your own strength. You will become aware that you need help. Helplessness and despair over your own sin will probably plague you at some point. The good news is that God has not left us to ourselves. He has given us means of grace for growing and transforming into what He wants us to be. The Bible is one of His choicest tools at our disposal.

4. The Bible Needs to be Consumed (Jeremiah 15:16, Matthew 4:4, Psalm 42:1)

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of His relationship to God's Word by saying, "Your words were found, and I ate them. Your words became a delight to me and the joy of my heart, for I bear your name, Lord God of Armies" (Jeremiah 15:16). Notice the way in which he compared his relationship with God's Word to ingesting food. His metaphor may seem strange, but it is one that persists throughout Scripture.

Key Scriptures:

"Your words were found, and I ate them. Your words became a delight to me and the joy of my heart, for I bear your name, Lord God of Armies." (Jeremiah 15:16)

"It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

"As a deer longs for flowing streams, so I long for you, God." (Psalm 42:1)

When Jesus spoke of the importance of God's Word in our lives, He said, "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Our Lord's Words were a quotation of Deuteronomy 8:3, a passage that described the way in which the Lord had used adversity to train Israel to trust in Him. It said, "He humbled you by letting you go hungry; then he gave you manna to eat, which you and your ancestors had not known, so that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Why does the Bible use food as a metaphor for our relationship to God's Word? There are several reasons. First, the imagery conveys the idea of necessity. Just as our physical bodies require a steady stream of sustenance, our souls stand in need of regular nourishment. You see, we are

not mere physical beings. Because we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), we have a capacity for a spirit to spirit connection with our Creator (John 4:24). To truly engage in a close relationship with Him, our hearts need spiritual food. The soul is a living thing. It requires spiritual light, insight, and encouragement to thrive. The Psalmist expressed such realities by saying, "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so I long for you, God" (Psalm 42:1). Without the Word, the soul will wilt and grow weary.

The food metaphors related to Scripture also represent another important reality – the Word is something that should be consumed on a regular basis. One cannot maintain optimum physical health by eating only one time every now and then. Sure, there are times in which even healthy people will go without food. However, it is ideal for one to have a steady stream of healthy meals. We should approach our relationship to God's Word in a similar way. We need daily inputs from Scripture. In fact, it may be best to have multiple spiritual words a day. Instead of having one big feast on Sunday, or instead of having a big meal to start each morning, it may be more desirable to chew on a passage at a few different points during the day.

Apply

To make the Bible a meaningful part of our lives, we need to develop an approach to it similar to the one the Psalmist had. We should treat it like food. Regarding it as our spiritual source of nourishment, we should read it and reflect upon it at different times throughout the day. It should be a rare occasion to go without soul food. We should plan and set aside spots in our daily schedule to eat and feed. If we don't prioritize spiritual nourishment, it probably won't happen.

Illustrate

For me, I've found that the morning time is the most meaningful. I make sure I start the day with a large meal from God's Word. I've often heard breakfast is the most important meal of the day. I'd argue that the same thing is true spiritually. Start your day in God's Word. Doing such will start your day with a proper sense of peace and perspective.

Next, make room for small snacks at other points in the day. I love pausing around lunch to read a little bit of the Psalms or Proverbs. I might even take in a little devotional reading and have a short prayer time. In the evening, I like to talk about a verse with my family over supper. Finally, I like to contemplate a passage or two before I go to bed.

Discussion

How do you go about making the Bible a part of your daily life? Do you need to start a habit of consuming God's Word on a regular basis?

Follow Me Challenges

PERSONAL: Identify 2 areas of service in the church where God could use you?

PUBLIC: Participate in, invite folks to, or host a Backyard BBQ. More information can be found at tabernaclebaptist.org/events.

PRAYER: Pray for...

- The people on your "My 5" list to get involved in church.
- Pray for the worship services on your own or join the War Room team Sunday mornings (for more info go to tabernaclebaptist.org/prayer).
- Pray for Merge Weekend (Fri 4.23 - Sat 4.23)