

You And Your Bible

Psalm 1, Psalm 19

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In Psalm 1, the psalmist says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

The question I want to ask and answer is, "Why do we need the Bible?" Let me give you three reasons why we need the Bible.

First, because God is the author of the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The word "inspiration" means that it is "breathed out by God." We know that men wrote the Bible, but these men were carried along by the Holy Spirit in their writing. My definition of "inspiration" is that "God superintended the human authors so that the very words they wrote were the words of God."

The Bible has two natures: it was written by men and it was written by God. Jesus was the man-God; He had two natures. It's called the "hypostatic union." The Bible was a book written by men but inspired by God. So God "breathed" upon the authors so that the very words they wrote were the very words of God.

The second reason we need the Bible is because Jesus is the subject of the Bible. The Bible is all about Jesus Christ. If you miss Jesus, you're not properly reading your Bible.

The third reason is because the Holy Spirit is the agent. The Bible is from God, it's about Jesus, but the Holy Spirit is the agent. 2 Peter 1:21 says, "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." God breathed on the human authors, and the Holy Spirit carried them along as they wrote.

So the Bible was given by God, its subject is Christ and the Holy Spirit is the agent.

Now I want to look specifically at the Christian and the Bible or you and your Bible. The Bible is indispensable for every Christian's spiritual health and growth. So the believer who neglects the Bible will not mature. If you want a blessed, fruitful and prosperous life, read your Bible.

Notice the first word of Psalm 1: "blessed." This is the theme of this psalm. It says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits

in the seat of the scornful.” The word “blessed” means “O how happy” and “to be envied.” It’s the same word Jesus used in the opening of His Sermon on the Mount when He said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit....Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness....Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” So it means that you have the smile and favor of God upon your life; it means you’re happy and blessed.

What makes for a “blessed” life? Notice two things in Psalm 1. First, we must be separated from the world, verse 1; and second, we must be saturated with the Word, verse 2.

Verse 1 says that the blessed are happy individuals—a man or a woman—separated from the world. He “walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.” Notice the progression in these statements.

Number one, it starts with you walking in the counsel of the ungodly. You need to be careful about what you believe and how you behave; that you are not influenced by the world around you. “Don’t let the world press you into its mold.” But renew your mind to the Word by the Spirit of God. So be careful where you get your counsel. You don’t want to take it from the world; you want to take it from God’s Word.

Number two, when we start walking “in the counsel of the ungodly,” then we stand in the way of sinners. So the progression is that I walk in the counsel of ungodly, then I will stand with sinners.

Number three, then I sit in the seat of the scornful.” That’s the progression: walking, standing and then sitting. The word “scornful” means “mockery.” So it starts off that we are getting unbelievers’ counsel, then we’re hanging out with them, and the next thing we know is that we are mocking.

I think of Simon Peter when Jesus was arrested and taken to the courtyard of Caiaphas. He was following Jesus afar off. Then He was sitting among the enemy by the fire. Then one of the servant girls said, “You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.” But Peter denied it three times. He began to curse and swear. So be careful where you get your counsel, be careful who you are standing around and be careful who you are seated with, because it could lead your life to destruction.

Christians are “in the world,” but we’re not “of the world.” We’re not to act like the world, think like the world or speak like the world; we’re not to be “in the world” in that sense. This world is not our home; this is not where our citizenship is. We are to get our minds “on things above.”

Now a little practical note. Many times I’ve seen Christians struggle in their marriage. Then the wife goes off to work and the husband goes off to work. They go out to lunch with the boys or with the girls and start listening to ungodly counsel. They say, “You don’t need this; you should get a divorce. You deserve better!” That’s listening to ungodly counsel. The next thing you know, they’re separated from their spouse or divorced, because they got their counsel not from the Word of God but from worldly unbelievers who are around them. Be careful.

1 John 2:15-17 says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it.” So be separated from the world and think Biblically. There is nothing more important for a Christian than to look at all of life through the lens of Scripture.

Notice the positive side, in verse 2, of the negative side, in verse 1. Verse 1 tells us what the blessed person does not do, and verse 2 tells us what the blessed person does. “But...”—there’s the contrast—“...his delight is in the law of the Lord...”—or “the Bible”—“...and in His law he meditates day and night.”

So the blessed life delights in God’s Word, which is called, in verse 2, “the law of the Lord” and he “meditates” on it. He isn’t “medicating”—a lot of that is going on today. And how often do they meditate? “Day and night.”

What does it mean to meditate on God’s Word, “the law of the Lord”? It means to literally fill your mind with God’s Word. It means to go over and over again the Word of God in your mind.

When I was in high school in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, the big thing at that time was called “transcendental meditation.” All my friends were getting into TM, and they were sitting in a lotus position, contemplating their navels—all they could find was lint and not God—and doing a mantra by emptying their minds. I thought, I don’t have anything there to empty.

But Biblical meditation isn’t emptying your mind by chanting a mantra; it’s filling your mind. It’s taking the Scriptures and lodging them in your mind and heart.

Meditation is a similar concept to a cow chewing its cud. When a cow takes a bite of grass, he chews it up, swallows it and then brings it back up to chew on it again. That’s what it means to meditate. It means to read the Word of God and think about it over and over in your mind and heart.

I encourage you to take portions of Scripture to heart —Psalm 1 is a great place to start—and memorize the entire six verses. It will transform your life. So “to meditate” means to fill your mind and your heart with God’s Word.

And whatever delights us directs us. Verse 2 says, “His delight is in the law of the Lord.”

I’m not a big ice cream eater. My wife is more of an ice cream eater than I am. A few weeks ago, she was gone for the day and I was home alone. I knew there was ice cream in the freezer, so I decided to have some. I don’t eat it very often. I took a bite and it delighted me. By the way, I ate right out of the carton. I took another bite and it delighted me some more. So I took another bite and another bite. “This is so delightful! Why don’t I eat more ice cream?” So I ate the whole carton. And it didn’t delight me; it pained me for the rest of the evening.

So I’ve discovered that if I don’t read my Bible, I lose my appetite for the Bible. If I read the

Bible, it delights my heart and I start desiring the Word of God. So if you find yourself not desiring God's Word, you should not only pray and ask God to give you a hunger for His Word, but start reading the Bible and the Spirit of God will speak to your heart.

Nature determines appetite too. Why do dogs eat and enjoy dog food? Because they're dogs. If you're a child of God, you're going to hunger and thirst for the Word of God. If you have no appetite for God's Word, I question whether or not you know the author of the Word—God Himself. Once you know God, then you long for His Word, and it directs and delights your heart. It's so very important.

Now notice how often the blessed man or woman meditates on God's Word: "Day and night," verse 2. In Psalm 119, which is an entire psalm about the Scriptures, in verse 97, it says, "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." So in these two verses you have meditating all day long and at night. What a blessing God's Word will bring into your life!

Back to Psalm 1, verse 3. The Word of God will bring fruitfulness and prosperity. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."

In California, we have a dry climate. When you're out driving around, you see dry areas. But every once in a while, you'll see a patch of green, maybe in a canyon. Whenever you see a green patch in an open area, you know that there is water there, there is life there.

As a Christian, when I'm planted in God's Word, I'll be an evergreen tree. My roots will go deep and my branches will go high and I'll bring forth fruit. Galatians 5:22-23 says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." This verse is a great description of a Spirit-filled believer. It's also a description of a Word-filled believer. Paul said in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." The same results of being Word filled in Colossians are the same results of being Spirit filled in Galatians.

If you're a Christian, you're going to lose your joy, lose your power if you stop reading and meditating on God's Word. You won't grow but you'll backslide if you're not meditating on and spending time daily in and feeding on God's Word.

Notice the other blessing for this person, verse 3, is he will prosper. "Whatever he does shall prosper." Don't misinterpret this blessing as meaning financial prosperity or physical prosperity. There are "prosperity preachers," who are not preaching the truth of God's Word. Nowhere does the Bible promise that we will have perfect health or wealth. But we will prosper spiritually, emotionally and relationally with one another.

In Joshua 1:8, the Lord said to Joshua, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

When I was a young Christian, my Dad used to say all the time, “John, keep your nose in the Bible.” It’s kind of a funny expression, but thank God I’ve done that. It has transformed my life. I don’t know where I’d be without the Bible.

So the Word of God will bring fruitfulness and prosperity. If you want a happy life with fruitfulness and prosperity, separate from the world, “Don’t let the world press you into its mold” and saturate yourself with the Word of God.

The second area I want to look at is in Psalm 19. What are some of the other blessings in our lives that come from God’s Word? In verses 1-6 of Psalm 19 we have the general revelation of God in nature, in God’s world. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.” So all around the world people get a revelation of God in creation or nature.

But then in verses 7-11, we have God’s special revelation in Scripture, in God’s Word. The psalmist says, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them...”—that is, “God’s law,” “God’s Word”—“...your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.”

When you read the psalms, you are reading Hebrew poetry. It is different than our poetry, which is rhyme and meter. Hebrew poetry is called “parallelism.” That means that these psalms make a statement, and then they contrast the statement with something else. Or they will make a statement and say the same statement in different ways. So the same thing is said in multiple ways in Hebrew poetry. That is what we have in Psalm 19, verses 7-11. We also have contrasts.

Notice in this section, first, the references to the Bible. Verse 7 calls it “the law of the Lord.” God has given His laws in His Word. It’s also called, in verse 7, “the testimony of the Lord.” In verse 8, it is called “the statutes of the Lord.” Also in verse 8, we have “the commandment of the Lord.” In verse 9, it is called “the fear of the Lord” and “the judgments of the Lord.”

Second, these verses also tell us what the Bible is. Verse 7 says it is “perfect” and “sure”; verse 8 says it is “right” and “pure”; verse 9 says, “clean” and “true”; verse 10, it’s like “gold” and “honey and the honeycomb.”

Third, notice what God’s Word will do for you. In verse 7, it is “converting the soul” and “making wise the simple”; in verse 8, it is “rejoicing the heart” and “enlightening the eyes”; verse 9, it is “enduring forever” and “righteous altogether”; in verse 11, it warns us and “in keeping them there is great reward.”

This is just a little sampling from one psalm of the many blessings that come into our lives

because of God's Word. If you want God to bless your life, your marriage, your family, the nation, get back to the Bible.

If we would just turn back to the Bible in America today, we would see a revival. I hear all this talk about needing a revival. If we want a revival, we need a re-Bible. Every one of the great revivals in church history had the Word of God as a central part. Yes, there were men who prayed, there was a pouring out of the Spirit, but it was the Word of God that was transforming the lives of those during that time.

Now I want to go over these six things that the Bible will do for you, in verses 7-11. Verse 7 says it is "converting the soul." The word "soul" here in the Hebrew speaks of the whole person. It talks about the inner man, the inner you, the whole inner person. When you are born again, the Bible tells us it is "through the Word of God which lives and abides forever," 1 Peter 1:23. It is the Spirit of God using the Word of God, and you are given new life from God. It is called being "born again" or being "regenerated." So the Word of God and the Spirit of God are involved in your salvation.

In the book of Acts, which primarily has sermons preached from the Old Testament in preaching Christ, it is the Spirit of God using a man of God to preach the Word of God to bring people to saving faith in Christ. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So the Bible converts the soul; it changes your whole life.

I'll never forget when I was finally born again. I grew up in church my whole life, heard Bible stories my whole life, but it wasn't until I graduated from high school that I finally surrendered by life to Jesus Christ. I was born again. I picked up the Bible, and I felt that I was reading it for the first time in my life. It was alive and powerful. It was like water for my soul.

Now I know the author of the Bible. You can't really benefit from the Bible until you know the author of the Bible, who is God. What a change it brings. The Bible says, "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." So if you want your life, your whole soul transformed, then read the Bible.

Secondly, the Bible is "making wise the simple," verse 7. The word "simple" is a person with a simple mind. It has the idea of being naive or indiscriminate about life issues. In the Hebrew, the root idea is that of an open door. In the world today, we hear so much about us as Christians being "closed minded." They say, "You need to open your mind." But the problem is that their minds are so open that nothing stays in it; everything that goes in comes right back out.

The reason Christians are closed minded is because we've found the truth. And the truth has set us free. Once you have the truth, shut the door. Keep the truth in.

The Bible will make you wise about life; wise in your marriage, wise in your parenting, wise in your human relationships, wise in your profession. It's so marvelous and so important.

Thirdly, the Bible will make your heart rejoice. Verse 8 says, “rejoicing the heart.” In Psalm 119:111, the psalmist said, “Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.” So we find joy by reading the Bible.

If you’ve lost your joy, get alone with God and spend time reading the Bible.

Every once in a while, I go away with nothing but my Bible. Have you ever had a “Bible date day”? Just you and your Bible. Get away all alone, pray, talk to God, listen to God as you read the Word. It’ll transform your life.

My wife encourages me to do that. Sometimes she’ll say, “John, get outta here and go read your Bible. And don’t come back until you’re transformed.”

So maybe what you need in your marriage right now is to get your Bible, go find a quiet place and spend time alone with God. Everyone needs the Book, everyone needs a nook and everyone needs to take a look. Go to the bathroom and lock the door if you have to. Go sit in the car in the garage if you have to. Climb a tree—do whatever you have to do. But find a place, open the Bible and say, “God speak to me. Change me by the power of Your Word.” It will rejoice your heart.

Fourth, in verse 8, the Bible enlightens the eyes. I like that. Psalm 119:130 says, “The entrance of Your words gives light.” And Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Don’t you like that verse when you think of walking through the darkness of this world? I once saw in a magazine an ad for slippers that had little flashlights in the toes. They would be “lamp[s] to my feet and light[s] to my path.”

What a truth for life God’s Word is; He lightens up the path when we don’t know which way we are to go.

R. A. Torrey said, “The man who studies the Bible and neglects all other books, will be wiser than the man who reads all other books but neglects the Bible.” I like that. Psalm 119:99 says, “I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.”

The Bible tells us where we came from; we were created by God. The greatest scientific minds in the world can’t explain where matter came from. Why is there anything here to begin with? Where did it all come from? They say, “Well, there was a ‘big bang.’”

“What caused the ‘big bang’ to bang? What banged in the ‘big bang’?” You want me to think I’m just a product of an “accident”? That there is no purpose? The Bible says that we were created by God. And God “created the heavens and the earth.”

And the Bible tells us why we’re here. It’s to know God and enjoy Him forever. The Bible says we are created to know God and to fellowship with God.

And the Bible tells us where we go after we die. That’s the only book that can tell me that. I

can think of all the times I've buried individuals and been in the cemetery where people are laying their loved one in the ground. Their hearts are broken and wonder if they'll ever see their loved one again. I think of the comfort and hope that God's Word brings to people who are grieving and bereaved over the loss of a loved one.

The Bible tells us what happens when people die in the Lord. It says, "To be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." That's the only book that tells me that. Paul said, "To die is gain." He wanted to leave his body and be with Christ. When this body is dissolved, "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The simplest child in our Sunday school ministry knows more than the greatest scientists who have rejected the revelation of God in His Word. They know where we came from, why we're here and they know where we're going. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again..."—that's a promise in the Bible—"...and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." So He's coming again to take us home to heaven. Then the Bible says, "We shall always be with the Lord." What a blessed hope that is.

Fifthly, the Bible warns us, verse 11. "Moreover by them your servant is warned." I like that. The Bible warns us about sin and judgment. It warns us about rebelling against God. It warns us about having our own way.

Then, sixthly, the Bible rewards us, verse 11. "In keeping them there is great reward." The Bible rewards us with great blessing. If you keep God's Word, it brings "great reward." So as a Christian, your growth and maturity in Christ depends on a close acceptance of and a believing in the Bible as the Word of God.

I want to say three more things about the Bible. It reveals God to us. God cannot be known apart from revelation. Yes, "The heavens declare the glory of God," but the Bible explains His love, His mercy, His compassion and His kindness to us. We would never know of this great God of love, mercy, compassion and kindness apart from His Word. So our response should be to love Him.

Second, the Bible gives us salvation in Jesus Christ as the Redeemer. It tells us about God, about the Redeemer, the Savior. Jesus is the main theme of the Bible. In all the books of the Bible, Christ is seen. He is the Redeemer, someone who saves us by His grace. He is "Emmanuel, God with us." It gives us the Savior, and we should trust Him.

Third, the Bible lays out His will. It is "the law of the Lord...the statutes of the Lord...the commandment of the Lord...the fear of the Lord." It tells us how to live and how to conduct ourselves.

So we learn about God, we learn about Christ the Savior, we trust in Him and we learn about His will in the Bible. We must obey Him. The Bible says that if you look in the Word of God, it's like a mirror. If you turn from it or forget what manner of man you are, it won't profit you. But if

you do the Word of God, then you will be “blessed in all of your deeds,” James 1:23-25.

And it's not just looking at the Bible; it's meditating on the Bible, obeying it, knowing the author of the Bible and letting Him transform your life by the power of His Spirit.

When Jesus finished His Sermon on the Mount, covering Matthew 5-7, He told the story about a wise man and a foolish man. They both built houses. The foolish man built his house on sand, and when the rains came and the storms beat upon that house, it fell. “And great was its fall.” But the wise man built his house on rock. And when the wind blew and the rains came and beat on his house, it stood. Jesus explained that the foolish man was the one who “hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them.” But the wise man was “whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them.”

What are you building on? What are you building your marriage on? What are you building your family on? On the rock of Jesus Christ, the solid Scripture, in obedience to Him? Then you will be a blessed, happy and prosperous individual.