

The Sword Of The Spirit

Ephesians 6:17

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I want you to look at Ephesians 6:17, the latter part. Paul mentions taking “the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” In our spiritual war against satan, God has provided armor so that we (verse 13) can stand. I want you to backup to verse 13. He says, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,” God has provided His armor for us. Why? “...that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

The armor involved the belt of truth (verse 14), the breastplate of righteousness, our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (verse 15), the shield of faith (verse 16) wherewith we may quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, the helmet of salvation, and tonight we want to look at “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Of all the pieces of armor that God has provided for us, this is the one that very clearly has a large element that is basically offensive. God has provided this armor for us in this spiritual battle, and it is both defensive and offensive to protect us. Tonight, we see the sword of the Spirit gives us the ability to go on the offensive and attack the enemy.

What kind of sword did the Roman soldier have? There were two basic swords that the Roman soldier had. Each of the pieces of the armor was given to us by Paul using a spiritual analogy taken from a Roman soldier. They had the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sandals of peace, the helmet of salvation, and now we have the sword of the Spirit. The two kinds of swords that the Roman soldier had was first of all what we might think the sword as a very long sword, sometimes even about three feet long. They could actually wield that sword with great power and effectiveness, but the word that Paul used in this case was actually a very interesting Greek word used for a different kind of sword that they used. It was a smaller sword that some say was about 8-18 inches. It was the same sword that was used by the Roman soldiers when they came into the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus; and Peter grabbed one of their swords, pulled it out of the sheath, and cut off the servant's ear. His name was Malchus. I don't usually use object lessons (don't worry, I'm not going to hit anybody) but someone last week said, “Hey, I've got a Roman sword. You gotta use it next week.” I said, “Well, bring it and I'll check it out,” so pray right now I don't cut my hand off or something like that. This is very similar to what the sword would look like. It wouldn't be any longer than this. It would be attached to the belt and in a sheath. The soldier would pull out the sword using it for very close hand-to-hand combat. (You don't want to take a picture of me in the pulpit right now and put it on the website saying, “What's going on at Revival Christian Fellowship?” I'll stop right there.) It was a short sword made for close hand-to-hand combat. This sword was a very, very, very important weapon for the Roman soldier as he would do battle there on the Roman battlefield. It was a shorter kind of sword, sometimes even described as a large dagger, used in very close hand-to-hand combat.

The most important thing is not what kind of sword the Roman soldier had but the question is:

How does that apply to us as believers? The answer is very clear. It's right there in the text. It's the sword of the Spirit, and then he tells us what it symbolizes, which is the Word of God. What does he mean by the Word of God? Most New Testament scholars agree (and I do as well) that it is a reference to the Scriptures or what we would call the Bible. I would make this point, for the Christian to stand against the wiles of the devil they must be rightly related to the Word of God. I really can't emphasize or stress it enough or cover it more thoroughly. The most important thing about you (and I've meditated on this long and hard for many, many, many years and am still convinced of this truth) is your relationship to this Book—what you believe about this Book, what you do with this Book, and how you live by or apply this Book in your lives. You say, "Well, isn't the most important thing about me my relationship to God?" Yeah, but how do you know God but through His Word? "Isn't my relationship to God the number one thing in my life?" Yes, and God has revealed Himself in His Word. This is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Without this we're like no compass, no map, no guide, no GPS, no light in the darkness, we're like a ship without a rudder or a sail on a sea. We need God's Word, and in God's Word God has revealed Himself. I can't know, understand, worship, trust, serve God or live for God apart from as He has chosen to reveal Himself in His Word.

If you're a Christian and you're neglecting the Scriptures or the Word of God or you're ignorant of the Bible and you're not reading and meditating and applying God's Word to your life, then it only stands to reason that not only are you not growing as a Christian you're defeated as a Christian. It's impossible to grow in the Christian life apart from the Scriptures, apart from the Word of God, and you certainly aren't going to be victorious in your battle against the enemy if you don't know your Bible and live by the Word. A lot of Christians are not reading, studying, meditating on God's Word, and applying God's Word to their lives. I believe that it all comes back to your relationship to the Scriptures. As Christians, we should be looked at and thought of as men and women of the Book. We should be all about the Book, all about God's Word. Charles Spurgeon said we should feed on the Word of God until our blood is Bibling. I like that. We should eat on God's Word until we're burping Scriptures constantly. It's so very important.

In light of that, I packaged what I want to say tonight in five points. There are some sub-points under some of these, but you can write them down. I'm going to give you five basic things that you need to have in your relationship to the Bible, the Word of God. First, you must believe that it is God's Word. There is nothing more important for you than to have the right view of what this Book is. You need to believe that it is the Word of God or some would say, "God's Word, written." I want you to remember that in Genesis 3, shortly after Adam and Eve were created, they were in the garden and God told them that they could eat of all the fruit of the garden except for one—the knowledge of good and evil. Satan comes on the scene and tempts Eve. What were the first recorded words out of the mouth of the devil in Genesis 3:1? Basically, it's this, "Did God really say that?" Isn't it interesting that the very first words recorded in the Bible out of the mouth of Satan was that he was questioning the Word of God. "Did God really say that? Did God really say that you can't eat of all of these trees in the garden?" He wanted to get Eve questioning God's Word. One of Satan's number one goals is to get you to question the authenticity, the reliability, the clarity, the sufficiency, the inspiration of God's Word. That is one of his number one points of attack, and he's been doing it for a long time. It started in the

Garden of Eden. “Did God really say that? Is the Bible really the Word of God? Can it really be trusted? Is it really reliable? Is it really given by divine inspiration?” We could go on for weeks just talking about that one point, but let me give you a couple of references.

Second Timothy 3:16 is one of the classics in the New Testament where Paul, writing to Timothy, said, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man,” or woman, “of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. You might argue, “Well, when Paul wrote that the New Testament wasn’t complete.” That’s true. It is primarily referring to the Old Testament, but we have good reason to believe that the New Testament was Scripture on an equal par with the Old Testament. The New Testament isn’t less inspired than the Old. It is equally given by inspiration of God along with the Old Testament—all of Scripture is given by inspiration. The phrase, “...given by inspiration of God,” what does that mean? Literally, it means it is breathed out by God. All Scripture is just God breathed. It’s God breathing. In the Greek it indicates that He’s breathing out.

I believe that the correct view for the Christian today of the Scriptures is what is called verbal plenary inspiration. What do I mean by that? Verbal, I mean the words; and plenary means all of them. The Bible isn’t given by inspiration of God in just broad, general concepts—the concepts are given by inspiration of God and not the individual words. Why do we look at and study individual words? Because every word is given by inspiration of God, and all of them are given by inspiration of God. Jesus said, “...one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Every little period, every little dotting of the I, every little exclamation point, God breathed. All the Word is given by inspiration. It’s not dictation, it’s inspiration. It’s not just the thoughts. How do you convey thoughts but by using words. You can’t convey thoughts without using words. I believe the Bible is given by inspiration, and this is my definition of inspiration: God superintended the human authors so that the very words that they wrote were the very words of God. God superintended human authors—using their own personalities and the historical setting—so that when they wrote, the very words they wrote, were the words of God. I believe that is the correct way to view divine inspiration.

Some say, “Well, the Bible is only inspired as you encounter God in the text. It’s not really infallible or inerrant but you do meet God in the Bible; and when you meet God, you have an experience with God. That’s how the inspiration comes.” I believe that is not true. It’s in error. It is what is called Neo-orthodoxy or a new orthodoxy which is a mystical interpretation of inspiration popularized in the last few years in what is called the emerging church movement which is starting to lose steam a little bit in the church today. They didn’t really feel like the Bible—every word—was inerrant or infallible and there were errors in the Bible, but you could still meet God in the Bible and it was given by inspiration in that sense. I believe that the foundation for us (and this involves how we stand against the enemy’s attacks) is we must be completely convinced of the inspiration and reliability of the Bible—historically, geographically, and in every way the Bible is trustworthy. Some would actually say, “Well, Pastor John, doesn’t divine inspiration only pertain to the original autographs?” That’s true. The question is: How close are the translations to those original autographs? The answer is very, very close. We have a

lot of manuscript evidence and other evidence to make us believe that the Word of God is reliable.

It's interesting. The Bible was written over about a 1500-year period by about 40 different authors, yet all speak with unity and harmony on a controversial subject such as the very nature and character of God. They were writing in different places at different times from different walks of life. You have 40 different authors over a 1500-year period writing about a very controversial thing—what is God—and yet speak with perfect harmony. You go down to the mall today and take 10 random people and ask, "What do you believe about God?" You're going to probably get 10 answers, and I believe that's an indication of divine inspiration. I also believe that archeology has supported the historicity and reliability of the Bible. The Bible has what we call fulfilled prophecy. The prophets spoke about things hundreds of years before it happened, and it did happen as God said it would. It's an indication that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Also, the testimonies of people's lives that have been changed simply through reading the Bible and coming to know God, and their lives have been changed and transformed by the power of God's Word and the influence that it has. There are lots of reasons to believe that the Bible is what it claims to be—the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God.

Here's the second reference, 2 Peter 1:21. He says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake," and here's the point, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The word "moved" is actually carried along. When I use the term superintending the human authors, God carried them along. It wasn't like spirit writing—their hand didn't just pick up a pen and start moving. Paul didn't say, "Wow! Look! I'm writing to the Colossians! That's amazing!" God did breathe out and superintend and carried him along. The word was used for wind filling the sail of a boat and carrying it along the water. These holy men spoke as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit. I want you to notice in our text that it is the sword of the what? Spirit. I think sometimes we miss that point. It's not just the sword, the Word of God, it's the sword of the Spirit. The Bible was given by the inspiration of God. That's the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired the human authors to write this book. The Bible is given by the Holy Spirit's inspiration. The Bible is God speaking, and God speaks to us. I believe that through God's Word we can detect and defeat the lies of the enemy. You want to be a stronger Christian? You want to be a more vibrant Christian? You want to walk in victory and be able to stand against temptation? Then be a Christian that is solidly standing on the Word of God. It's the only solid foundation in a world that is adrift right now.

Let me give you my second point. I believe that we must know God's Word. We must believe that it is the Word of God. We must know it! How do we know God's Word? Again, this could go on for quite some time, but let me mention it very practically. First of all you have to read it, right? You say, "Well, I can't read." Well, learn to read. I literally learned to read when I got saved. I was 19, believe it or not. I'm not proud of that, but I was a very poor reader and I got saved. I said, "Man! This is so good! I'm just going to start reading," and the Lord helped me to learn how to read by reading the Bible. I'd never read anything until I got saved, and I read the Bible. It was just amazing to me! Now, well over 40 years ago, I still haven't gotten enough. I still want to continue to read God's Word. You never outgrow simply reading the

Book. You got that? Sometimes people say, "Well, I read the Bible. Now, I'm done!" Right? "Genesis to Revelation, I read it! Now, what next?" You read it again, and then you read it again, and then you read it again, and you read it again, and you read it again, and maybe you set out for the Bible in One Year program. That's such an important thing, to read through the Word of God. Read through books of the Bible. I tell people, "If you're going to read the Bible, at least read it book by book as it was written." Take a book of the Bible and start in chapter 1, verse 1, and read through a chapter a day or half the chapter a day—how much you read isn't the issue but that you read God's Word every day. It's so very, very important. If you're going to rightly handle the sword of the Spirit, defend yourself, and attack the enemy, you're going to have to read the Word.

The second thing you need to do to know God's Word is meditate on it. Psalm 1 says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD," what's the law of the LORD? The Bible, the Word of God. "...and in his law doth he meditate," people are medicating today, but we meditate, "day and night." Do you know what meditation is? It's not emptying your mind—we need all of our mind we can get. In eastern religions they empty their minds. It's like, "There's nothing up there to empty for me, you know. I need to fill it with something! I mean, I've been an airhead long enough." Meditation for the Christian is filling your mind and meditating over and over and over. Do you know the word actually comes from the concept of a cow chewing it's cud? What is a cow chewing it's cud? It takes a bite of grass, "Mmmm, that's good grass!" He tastes and swallows it. "That grass was so good I want to chew it some more." He brings it back up, chews it some more, and swallows it. "You know, that was really good grass! I want some more." He brings it back up, chews it some more, and swallows it again. That's what it means to meditate on God's Word. It means to chew on God's Word.

Another way to know God's Word is to memorize it. If you're smart you'll get going when you're young. There's something about being old—it's hard to memorize when you get old. As a matter of fact, the older you get, you forget what you memorized when you were younger. When you get old you know all the answers but you've forgotten them all. Nobody asks you either. Do you know that in my preaching I would say probably 99% of the verses that you hear me quote I learned when I was a boy growing up in church. I actually learned them because in Sunday school they had us memorizing Scripture. In the first couple of years of my Christian life I read and I read and I read and I read and I read and I read and I hid God's Word in my heart that I might not sin against God, and all of that was lodged in my brain. That's where all the memorization comes from, the Word of God. If you have to work on it, even in older age, learn to memorize Scripture. If you're going to use the sword, you've got to be able to have recall and bring Scriptures to mind.

Fourthly, you get to know God's Word by studying it. In 2 Timothy 2:15 it says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." It means taking the Scriptures and cutting it straight. One of the big problems I see today with a lot of Christians is they don't know how to interpret the Bible. They don't know how

to look at a verse in it's context, get the historical background, look up Greek words and study it, try to figure out what the meaning of the text is, and use other translations to cast light on that verse. You actually need to become a student. It's not enough just to read, it's not enough just to meditate, but you also have to go a little deeper. You have to study God's Word. Psalm 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Let me give you the third point. We must be doers of God's Word. Believe it or not, this is all a part of the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, in standing against the temptations and attacks of satan and being able to also go on the offense; that is, you must be a doer of God's Word. Psalm 119:9 says, "Wherewithal shall a young man," or woman, "cleanse his way?" What's the answer? "by taking heed thereto according to thy word." We stand against temptation by taking heed to God's Word. We must obey God's Word. We must put it into practice. In James 1:22, James says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only," because if you're just a hearer of the Word and not a doer you're like the man who sees himself in the glass and then forgets what he looks like and goes his way. A man that looks down into God's Word being not a forgetful hearer but a doer, "this man shall be blessed in his deed," or in all of his ways.

How do we do God's Word? Let me give you some practical points. The answer is relying upon the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit gave the Bible by inspiration, then I believe the Holy Spirit can give us illumination and transformation and the power we need to put God's Word into practice in our lives. The Bible was given by the Spirit's inspiration, the Bible is understood by the Spirit's illumination, and the Bible is lived out in our lives by the Spirit's transformation. We have to live out God's Word by relying upon the power of the Holy Spirit. We can't do it in the energy of our own flesh. Notice again, it's the sword of the Spirit, so in order to walk with the belt of truth I need God's Word which is truth. In order to live out the breastplate of righteousness—if I'm going to live a holy, righteous life—then I'm going to be sanctified through God's Word, which, of course, is righteous. If I'm going to share the gospel of peace—my feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace—that involves God's Word too. I'm preaching the gospel as it's declared in God's Word. If I'm taking the shield of faith, what am I trusting God for? I'm trusting God's Word. I'm trusting God's promises. I believe what God has said in His Word. It all comes back to His Word. Then he tells us to take the helmet of salvation and I pointed out last Wednesday night that one of the ways to know that you're saved is because God said it, I believe it, that settles it. Amen? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You either believe it or you don't—God said it, I believe it, that settles it. It all comes back to the Word of God.

I think it's interesting that the sword of the Spirit has to be worn with all the other armor. Can you imagine a soldier out there in his underwear? He has no shield, no helmet, nothing. He's got a sword, "Come on let's go." I mean, what good would that do? He'd get hit in the head and he's a goner. The sword of the Spirit has to be worn in conjunction and relationship with all the rest of the armor. It's so very important. To defeat the devil, we do it by living obediently to God's Word, so my question to you tonight is: Are you properly related to this Book and living in obedience? When you hear God's Word, when you study God's Word, when you meditate on

God's Word you say, "This is the Word of the Lord. I must obey," and you go, "Oh, I'll think about it. Well, I don't really like that. Let's find something I really like. Oh, yeah, that's a good verse." We want happy verses but we don't want to confront sin in our lives and repent of it and be obedient.

Let me give you my fourth point tonight. We must use God's Word in times of temptation. This is what most people think of when we come to the sword of the Spirit. When satan tempts us, we take the sword out of its sheath and use that to defend ourselves against the temptations of the devil. I want to point something out. Two Greek words in the New Testament are translated "word" in reference to the Word of the Lord or the Word of God or the Scriptures. Those two most common Greek words in the New Testament are logos and rhema. In John 1:1 it says, "In the beginning was the Word," the word there is logos. This is a broad, kind of general word for "word" and has the idea of God revealing Himself in the Scriptures and God speaking through His Word. The word that is used in Ephesians 5:17 is not the Greek word logos. It is the word rhema. That is actually a reference to spoken word, specifically a spoken word applied to a specific situation. When the New Testament uses the Greek word rhema for "word," it's talking about the word spoken about in a very specifically applied situation. The best illustration of using rhema to defeat the devil is Christ's temptation in the wilderness. I want you to turn now with me in your Bible to Luke 4. It's also recorded for us in Matthew 4 where Jesus was tempted by the devil. We're going to see that He used the sword of the Spirit in order to defend himself against the attacks of the devil. I want you to follow with me in Luke 4:1. It says, "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil."

It's interesting that Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, being led by the Holy Spirit, and now he's tempted by the devil. Do you know that being Spirit-filled doesn't mean that you're immune from the devil's temptations? "Well, I thought when I was filled with the Spirit satan would leave me alone?" No way! As a matter of fact, satan will come and attack you more. Jesus was tempted. It's not a sin to be tempted because the Son of God was tempted. It's a sin to yield to the temptation.

"And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. 3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. 4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. 5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. 8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 10 For it is written," even the devil can quote the Scriptures. He's quoting from Psalm 91:11-12, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12 And Jesus answering said unto

him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him," sadly it says, "for a season."

Don't you wish the devil would leave once and for all? You know, being tempted by the devil and getting victory over that temptation doesn't mean, Clap Clap "Okay! I conquered! Nothing more for me to do!" No. He's going to come back again and come back again and come back again. If he comes in the front door the first time, he's going to come in the back door the next time. If he comes in the side door, in the window, he's going to crawl through the chimney. He's going to come from so many different angles. It'll just blow your mind all the different directions satan will come to attack you.

I want to look at these three temptations quickly and briefly. The first temptation is recorded in verses 3-4. There are three areas that satan basically tempts us in as believers—lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. In John's epistle, as he describes the world, he puts it into those three categories. When satan tempted Eve in the garden, these same three areas were involved in his temptation—the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. You might say that this first temptation was the lust of the flesh. Satan said, "Since you're the Son of God command these stones that they be turned into bread. Take care of your physical need. God isn't providing for you." And, by the way, Jesus resisted the devil in His humanity. He didn't rely on His deity, He relied on the Holy Spirit and the Word of God just the same way you and I resist the devil and rely on the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. If Jesus could resist, so can we. "Since You're hungry, the Father's not providing for You, He's forgotten about You, just take matters into your own hands and meet your physical need—turn these stones into bread."

How did Jesus answer the devil? Did He say, "That's not very nice. You know I'm hungry right now. Please leave me alone." No. He quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3. Notice verse 4, "It is written," Jesus basically takes out the sword of the Spirit, in this case Deuteronomy 8:3, and says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." The word there is by every rhema. Every rhema word spoken by God, so every word of God spoken to meet a certain need, and God has given you His Word to meet every need in your life. You have to memorize it, quote it, and rely upon it. When the devil comes knocking at the door, you answer the door with the Scriptures. A great verse, by the way, out of Deuteronomy, and Jesus quoted Deuteronomy more than any other book of the Bible. Some have called it the favorite book of Jesus. A lot of Christians today have never read the book of Deuteronomy. "Do to what a me? I've never heard of the thing." Jesus loved it. He quoted it all the time. "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone," wish we could learn that. It's not about our physical needs. It's not about our material needs. It's not about our emotional needs. It's not about money and things and physical food; but man, in order to live, must live by every Word of God. Amen? He answered the devil with the Scriptures.

The second temptation would fall into the category of lust of the eyes. "And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me," he's the prince and the power of the air, and there's the sense in which

this world is satan's kingdom, "and to whomsoever I will I give it," "I can give it to whoever I want. All you need to do is fall down and worship me and I'll give it to you. Isn't that what You came into the world to do? To redeem the world back to God?" What does Jesus do? Again, He answers with the Scriptures. Verse 8, "...it is written," He's quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13, some say Deuteronomy 10:20 which is a possibility, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." By the way, you can't worship or serve God if you don't know God as He is revealed in His Word. The only way to rightfully worship and serve God is to know God and worship God as He's revealed in His Word. You can't worship or serve an unknown God. It comes from knowing His Word. He answers him with the Word of God.

The third temptation (verses 9-12) would fall into the category of the pride of life. He took Jesus up to what is called the "pinnacle of the temple," (it's about a 430-foot drop from the pinnacle of the temple, the corner of the temple wall down into the Kidron Valley below) and gets really sly and sneaky, quoting the Scriptures to the Lord. Quoting from Psalm 91:11-12 he says, "For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Whenever the devil quotes the Bible you can bet a few things. You can bet that he's either misquoting it or he's omitting something from it—which is a misquote here. What he's doing, if you read the Psalm, he's taking a little phrase out of it, or he twists or adds to it. He's always twisting Scripture. Satan is a master at twisting Scripture. When people talk to you about the Bible, you have to make sure that they're not twisting it to get their own ideas across. We have to make sure that we properly interpret Scripture or we rightly divide the Word of truth and we take it in it's historical, grammatical, theological context.

I believe all Scripture has only one meaning—the meaning God intended it to have. The goal of Bible study is to get to the actual meaning not to impose my ideas on the text. People say, "What does that mean to you? What does that passage mean to you?" It doesn't matter what it means to you. I don't really give a darn what it means to you! I want to know what God meant by what He said. I want to know what He said and what He meant. By the way, I believe God says what He means and means what He says. There is no ambiguity in the Bible. It's very clear. Someone once said, "It's not the Scriptures that I don't understand that bother me, it's the ones I do understand that bother me. Those are the ones I have trouble with."

The devil twists the Scriptures just a little bit. The phrase that he took out was, "in all thy ways." "God is going to protect you. God is going to take care of you. If you throw Yourself down, God's going to provide angels to bear You up; and everybody is going to see this miracle, that You're miraculously saved by these angels, and they're going to hail You as Messiah and they're going to follow You. You won't have to go by way of the Cross." The problem was that this wasn't God's way. This wasn't God's will. We need to be careful of Scripture twisting, omitting, deluding, or using a Scripture out of context. Jesus, again the third time, answered by using the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, Deuteronomy 6:16. What He quoted was, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," meaning don't put God to a foolish test. Don't presume on the grace of God. Don't presume on the protection of God. Don't do something stupid and then ask God to take care of you. I've had people pray and say, "Lord, just watch over us right now as we do

this thing." I thought, You know, what you're doing is really stupid and I can tell you right now God's not going to protect you because you know ahead of time it's really dumb.

I was with a group of guys one time. We went tobogganing really late one night. We were young. We were crazy We were single. I had no kids. We're on this toboggan late at night in the mountains going down this steep mountain with all these trees and the road down below. I knew this was totally crazy, so at least I was smart enough to get on the back end of the toboggan so I could bail off. I'll never forget, we're all on this toboggan ready to go and one of the guys goes, "I think we'd better pray first." I said, "No way. What we're doing is stupid. We could all get killed and we know that, so we can't pray because we don't need to do it." You want to pray, "Lord, protect me." Get off the toboggan, you dummy! Don't go down the hill at night. Don't presume upon the grace of God. "Oh, just protect me right now as I do this stupid thing." We're presuming on the grace of God, but the point that I wanted to make is that Jesus answered the devil by using the Word of God. I believe that Jesus had God's Word stored in His heart, that he was taught God's Word as a young boy growing up. He meditated on God's Word, and He quoted the Scriptures to meet every need.

When you're discouraged or being tempted or you want to give up on your marriage or you don't think it's worthy to serve the Lord or God doesn't love you or has forgotten about you or He's not going to meet your needs; what's going to sustain, help, and give you victory over those temptations is the Word of God. Is God's Word coming back to your memory to help you stand? In 1 John 2:4, John is writing to young men and said, "You're strong, and the reason you're strong and overcome the wicked one is because the Word of God abides in you." I love that. You've overcome the wicked one and you're strong because God's Word is abiding in you. The story is told of John Bunyan (the man who wrote Pilgrim's Progress, that spiritual allegory that is so awesome) that in one of his Bibles on the flyleaf he wrote, "This book will keep me from sin or sin will keep me from this book." How true that is. This Book can keep you from sin, but sin can also keep you from this Book. That's why the Psalmist again said in Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

There's one last point I want to make, and I won't tarry on it. It's my fifth point. How must we be related to the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit? We must share God's Word with others, right? We must tell others about God's Word. Use the sword of the Spirit when dealing with a Christian to encourage, comfort, build them up, if need be rebuke or chasten them. Speaking God's Word into the lives of your family, friends, and other people will build them up, strengthen, help, and edify them. If I'm going to grab ahold of that sword of the Spirit...It's interesting, the Roman soldier's sword required a strong hand and a strong arm to yield that sword, but the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God and it takes a reliance upon the Holy Spirit. You just quote the Scriptures. There's power in God's Word to bring healing and hope in the lives of other people—share God's Word with Christians to help them and share it with unbelievers to evangelize them.

Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the word," it means to herald the Word. The word is kerysso in the Greek. It's proclaim or herald God's Word. Why? Hebrews 4:12, "For the word

of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Isn’t that awesome? Do you know that this Book is alive and powerful? It’s sharper than any two-edged sword. It’s able to pierce right down deep into people’s hearts. Sometimes people will hear me preach a sermon and say, “Did you spy on me this week? How did you know what I needed to hear? You were speaking right directly to me.” It’s like, “I don’t know anything about you, but I know the Holy Spirit does.” God just brings what we need when we need it, and He speaks. When we’re doing evangelism, the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to bring conviction and conversion. The Spirit of God and the Word of God work together in the heart of an unbeliever to bring salvation as well as spiritual growth, but in all of our evangelism, you’re not going to be effective...and this is the most offensive concept of the sword of the Spirit. If you want to really get the devil upset, then you go out and preach the Word. You go out and share the Word. You share it with your family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and you proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen?

Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Anyone that will believe and a life can be changed and transformed for eternity by believing God’s Word. The story is told of a young girl that had just gotten saved. She wasn’t intellectual. She didn’t know that much theology. She memorized one verse, John 3:16. She decided, I’m going to go out and share the gospel. The first person she encountered was an older man that was an intellectual. He believed in evolution. He was an atheist. She started to share with him. She said, “You know, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will never perish but have everlasting life!” He said, “I don’t believe that! I believe in evolution. I don’t believe there’s a God.” He ranted and raved for a while, and then he calmed down. She goes, “I don’t know but God loves you and He gave His Son and if you will believe in Him you’ll never perish but have everlasting life.” He said, “I told you. I don’t believe that.” He went on another tirade about why he doesn’t believe in God. She goes, “All I know is that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will never perish but have everlasting life!” “I don’t believe that!” He freaked out, got all angry and upset, and he stormed off. That night he went home and finally went to bed. When he laid down on his bed he couldn’t get that verse off his mind, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will never perish but have everlasting life. Before morning came, he was on his knees beside his bed praying and accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior because there is power in the Word of God. Amen?

I believe that God will take the weakest believer and filled with the Word of God you have a powerful weapon in your hand—the sword of the Spirit. All you have to do is quote the Scriptures. You know, sometimes you can even paraphrase it just a little bit and kind of put it right into your conversation. People won’t even know they’re being stabbed! They’re being sliced! They don’t even know you’re quoting the Bible, but the Word of God is coming out of your mouth and the Word of God will not return void. God says, “My Word will accomplish its purposes as the rain comes down and waters the earth and brings forth fruit so will My Word that comes forth from My mouth. It will not return unto Me void.” There’s power in God’s Word

but you need to believe it, read it, study it, meditate on it, practice it in your daily life, and then you need to preach and proclaim it to others. Amen?