

Guidelines for Growth - Part 2

by J. Vernon McGee

The Bible is a supernatural book that requires the Spirit of God to make it real, and we must approach it with humility and faith.

Duration: 1:13:10

Scripture: Psalm 119:18, Luke 24:27-44

Topics: "Bible Study", "Scripture Interpretation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of interpretation and the reliability of modern translations of the Bible. The speaker expresses skepticism towards modern translations and recommends caution when using them. They emphasize the need for directions and instructions in studying the Word of God. The sermon concludes with seven simple yet essential steps for studying the Scriptures, including beginning with prayer, reading, studying, meditating, reading what others have written, obeying, and sharing the Bible with others.

Transcript

Now, when we talk about verbal plenary inspiration, we want to be very clear what we mean about that, and that means that we believe that the words are inspired and that we believe that all the words are inspired, so that today it's the words and, of course, not the thoughts, and we've already amplified that, I think, a great deal. And it was way back under Irenaeus, one of the church fathers, said, "...the scriptures indeed are perfect, forasmuch as they are spoken by the word of God and by his Spirit." Augustine made this statement, he says, "...let us therefore yield ourselves and bow to the authority of the holy scriptures, which can neither err nor deceive." May I say that we need to recognize that we have a book that is fully inspired and, as that great giant of Princeton years ago said, whatever the Bible says, God says, and he speaks in this book to our hearts and to our lives. Now, I want to move down because actually last time I did not amplify enough concerning illumination and interpretation.

And I'd like today to amplify a great deal of what we said last time about illumination. Now, illumination means that you and I have a book, and we have said it's a God book. It's a human book written by men who are expressing their thoughts, but when they do that, they are writing down the word of God and the marvel of it.

And the thing that makes it supernatural is that God, without destroying their personalities, he didn't turn them upside down like a fountain pen and write with them. They wrote what was in their minds and hearts,

but the Spirit of God so guided them that many of them actually wanted to look into the things they wrote about but couldn't. That's what Peter said, and they wrote without error.

Now, Moses made mistakes, and he wrote about those mistakes, but the writing about those mistakes, there was no mistake, my friend. That, may I say, is a record that when he's giving to us the word of God that we are getting a revelation from God. Now, in view of the fact that that is true, we're dealing with a book that takes more than just mental acumen in order to understand.

Paul made a very interesting statement, and that statement is simply this. He says, and I'll have to turn to it now, it's found in 1 Corinthians 2, beginning at verse 7, but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, I hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love it.

Now, you and I today get most of what we know through the eye gate and the ear gate are by reasoning, by thinking, rationalizing. Now, actually, Paul says here that there's certain things that eye hasn't seen, certain things the ear hasn't heard, and there's certain things that you can't even get into your head at all. Well, how in the world are you going to get them? Well, a great many in the past have taken this verse of scripture to a funeral, and I've heard it used at a funeral years ago like this, that brother so-and-so, he was a great fellow, didn't know too much down here.

That's the inference always. But now he's gone up there and he's really got on his thinking cap now, and he knows things he didn't know before. Well, I think maybe that's probably true.

I think we're going to get quite an education. We'll get a new degree when we move up there, but that's not what this verse says. Paul says there's certain things right down here long before you get to the undertaker.

There are a lot of things down here that you and I can't get through the ordinary, natural means that we learn. Well, how are we going to get them? Verse 10 now, "...but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Now, the Holy Spirit has to be our teacher. Now, you will recall that back on the day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, he walked down the Emmaus Road and joined himself there with a couple of brethren that were walking along.

He entered into their conversation, by the way, and he asked them what in the world it was that had engaged their conversation. Well, the very interesting thing is they said, well, is it possible you've been around here and you don't know what's taken place in Jerusalem? He said unto them, what manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them whose name was Cleopas answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? In other words, he says, well, if you were just a stranger around here, you should have known about this. And he said unto them, what things? And they said unto him concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet.

Notice that was. As far as they're concerned, he's gone. But he was talking to them, and he was a prophet, mighty indeed in word before God and all the people.

And they go on, how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death and have crucified him. And you remember, he predicted that. And the very interesting thing, prophecy had been saying it for years.

And then they expressed that faint hope that it died out. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel. And beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done.

And they went on to tell about it, what they knew and what had been found out when they left Jerusalem, that the women had reported. Apparently, not many paid too much attention to what the women said. And not only that, verse 24, certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, found it even so as the women had said, but him they saw not.

And then their hopes dimmed, and darkness entered their hearts. Now listen to the Lord Jesus. And he said unto them, O fools and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken, ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them and all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Friend, wouldn't you love to have been there that day and have heard him go back into the Old Testament and lift out the scriptures concerning himself? And when he finally made himself known to them as they sat at the meal, you see, it's when you're feeding on the word of God and feeding on him, that's when he reveals himself in all of his glory. And this is their comment. And they said one to another, did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way and while he opened to us the scripture? You see, we're studying a book, friend.

It's different from any other book. It's not that I'm just believing today in the inspiration of the Bible. Why, I believe that this is a closed book unless the spirit of God will open your heart and make it real, by the way.

And so I find that he continued teaching at that time because when he returned to Jerusalem, he appeared to the disciples. And then will you notice down in verse 44 of Luke 24, and he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me. Let me pause there.

He believed Moses wrote the pen to you. He believed the prophets spoke to him and that the Psalms that all of them pointed to him. Now here is the great verse.

Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures. And friends, if he doesn't open your understanding, you're just not going to get it. That's all.

And that's the reason we ought to approach this book in great humility of mind. And I do not care how high your IQ is. I hope I'm talking right now to some young graduates of some of our seminaries today who think they know it all.

Well, may I say that I went through that period too. I thought when I was in seminary, I knew it all, but I found out since then that there are one or two things I don't know. I'm going to keep reading here because it's important.

And he said unto them, thus it is written and thus it behoove Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day and that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem. And you're witnesses of these things. Now, will you notice how they're going to

witness? They're going to have to have a little help.

In fact, they're going to have to have a whole lot of help. Verse 49, and behold, I send the promise of my father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high. In other words, you will have to have a teacher to open the word of God to your understanding.

Now, I go back to 1 Corinthians again and this passage that I was reading, and he goes on to say, Paul does in 1 Corinthians 2, verse 13, which things also we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, their foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they're spiritually discerned. I'm never disturbed when one of these unbelievers, even if he's a preacher who comes along and says today, he no longer believes the Bible is the word of God.

He never did believe it, to tell the truth. But may I say to you, that's the way he should talk. I mean, after all, if you're not a believer, you couldn't believe it.

It takes the Spirit of God. And that's the reason I quoted Bishop Hadley the other day when he said, there is more meaning in every word of holy writ than we shall ever get out of it. And you know, it was Mark Twain that made a very interesting statement, and he was no believer.

He says that he was not disturbed by what he did not understand in the Bible. He said, what worried him were the things he did understand. And there are things you can understand, and it's that that keeps many away from the word of God.

It was Pascal who said, human knowledge must be understood to be loved, but divine knowledge must be loved to be understood. That's very, very important to get, by the way. There needs to be that illumination.

It was Robert Alfred Vaughan who made this statement, speaking of these unbelievers in their conceded rejection of the light without until they have turned into darkness, their light within. And that's what Paul meant when he says that they would not receive the love of the truth and God would let them believe a lie. The unbelievers said some harsh things about us, but God has said some very harsh things about it.

I'd like to give you this statement of Bishop Pollock. He says, the Bible is a corridor between two eternities down which walks the Christ of God. His invisible steps echo through the Old Testament, but we meet him face to face in the throne room of the new.

And it is through that Christ alone crucified for me that I have found forgiveness for sins and life eternal. The Old Testament is summed up in the word Christ. The New Testament is summed up in the word Jesus.

And the summary of the whole Bible is that Jesus is the Christ, a statement by Bishop Pollock. And it was Mr. Spurgeon who said, I can never doubt the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration since I so constantly see in actual practice how the very words that God has been pleased to use, a plural instead of a singular, are blessed to the souls of men. May I say these are tremendous statements coming from men of the past, and it's very difficult to eliminate and to blot out what these men have said.

The wisdom of the ages has not really settled in us today. As a generation, we've really got the world in a mess. Now we were talking about illumination, the fact that the Spirit of God must take these words and make them real to us.

The reading of the Bible can become almost profitless, pastime by the way. And it is a book, though, that will bless you even if you do not have the spiritual truth open to you. It's a dirty, sad, the mere ethical teaching of the Bible would alone stamp it as the greatest literary treasure of mankind.

May I say to you that that was one of the saddest things that took place when the Bible was taken away from the public school, why they took away the best production of literature, and then they flooded it with some of this dirty, filthy modern literature today. Quite hypocrites for men to say they didn't want the Bible taught to their children because it contained stories that might soil their mind. Believe me, my friend, they're getting them soiled today in our schools in the name of freedom, and it's nothing in the world but dirt.

Why is it that when we talk about freedom of speech, what we really mean is we want to talk dirty, and we want to look dirty, and we want to be dirty. That's freedom. Well, it is because man is totally depraved.

When he's given freedom, that's the direction he wants to go. It was John Milton who said, There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets, and no politics like those which the Scripture teach. It's a wonderful book just to read.

It was Webster who said, If there be anything in my style or thoughts to be commended, the credit is due to my kind parents for instilling into my mind an early love of the Scriptures. What about you today, Christian parent? Are you making a Daniel Webster in your home, or a little hippie? You'll be making one or the other, I can assure you. And apparently, Webster thought it came about because his parents taught him the Word of God.

May I say to you, the Spirit of God, though, will have to open your mind and heart if you're going to understand the spiritual truth that's here. And Paul, writing to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 2, verse 13, Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. And may I say to you that Paul says that the Spirit of God is our teacher, and that's one of the reasons that we have prayed that the Spirit of God would teach us on this program, because, may I say, if he doesn't teach me and teach you, we're not going to get anywhere as far as the Bible is concerned.

We're dealing with a supernatural book, if you please. The Lord Jesus Himself said in John 6, 63, It's the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.

A great man of the past made a statement concerning one of the greatest writers of the past, and he says, His words, if you cut them, would bleed. Well, may I say to you, that's true of the word of God. And the Lord Jesus said, The words I speak unto you, they're spirit and they're life.

The Spirit of God can make it real to you. And in John 17, in his great high priestly prayer, in verse 18, he made this statement, For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, not the thoughts, the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. It was back in Exodus 20, verse 1, where Moses wrote, And God spake all these words saying.

It was God who did the speaking. That's what Moses wrote. It's very difficult today to reject the Bible without impugning it as an evil book.

Now, notice what he said in John 3, verse 17 and 18, For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. In other words, may I put it very frankly to you, the Lord Jesus said that if you don't accept this word, you're condemned.

If you accept it, you're saved. That means that you've accepted and received him as the Savior of the world. Now, I want to make just one or two other statements.

You remember that when Simon Peter answered him after he had inquired of them, What are men saying about me? And they said everything. They still say that. You can get about as many answers today as as many people as you happen to ask.

And therefore, there are many viewpoints of him. But he said to Simon Peter, or he said to the apostles, and Simon Peter answered, and I think he answered for the others, Whom do men say that I am, and whom do you say that I am? He said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now, you remember what our Lord said to him? He said to him, Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven, and he's the one.

And blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah. And I say to you, only God today can open up the Word of God for us to really understand it. And our Lord said, the Father opened it for Simon Peter, and the Lord Jesus taught them and opened up their understanding before he left.

But he said he was going to send the Holy Spirit, as we saw in Luke, wait for the promise, because he's the only one that can make this thing real. And he had said to them, yonder in the upper room, you will recall, in John 16, verses 7 through 11, I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now, howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come. He will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come.

And he went on, he'll take the things of mine and show them unto you. And may I say I leave this subject of illumination by saying only that the Spirit of God today can open your mind and heart to see and to accept Christ and to trust him as your Savior. How wonderful! I have always felt, as I entered the pulpit, how helpless I am, because, believe me, Vernon McGee can't convert anyone, and I feel just that way before this microphone right now.

But I not only feel weak, but I also feel that I'm mighty, not mighty in myself, but that the Spirit of God today can move out you unto where you are, riding in your car, in your home, doing housework, sitting down at a meal, or wherever you might be, in your place of business, wherever you might be, right now, the Spirit of God can take these dead words and make them real and living to you, incorporate them into your life, and give you an excitement, an enthusiasm that only he can give today. Now, may I say that it's nice to take all the vitamin pills that you can today. My doctor keeps me loaded with them.

But I want to say to you, my friend, the Spirit of God can give you something that vitamin pills can never give you. Now, let's come to this fourth subject, interpretation. I've already spoken of the versions, and I'd like to just add this to that also.

I've had to move so speedily the other day, and I forgot that we're going to be together here five years, so we have a little time to talk about these things. The question often arises, what about the versions that we

have today? The translations, are they dependable? And what about the modern translations? Can we depend upon them? Now, I want to make this statement recognizing that it is a blanket statement, and it's a generalization. And as the French proverb has it, all generalizations are untrue, including this one.

And therefore, the fact of the matter is, I cannot recommend the modern translations. Now, I recognize that there are some good things in them. In fact, in most of them there is.

Even one or two put out by the liberals today. It's excellent Greek in places, but I found out that today we are so divided doctrinally that every group that attempts to translate the Bible just naturally injects into his translation his particular viewpoint. Therefore, if the liberal is going to do the translating, you may get just a little taste of liberalism.

And if the fundamentalist is going to do the translating, you'll get his bias in certain places. I feel that the man who did the original translation, a man who believed that it was the Word of God and that they handled it like that. And actually, certain words they wouldn't translate.

They just transliterated them. Abba, for instance, Abba, Father. They didn't dare translate that word Abba.

And the same is true of baptizo, baptized. They just transliterated it, and yet we have so many today that want to be dogmatic about things. And you see, that's the danger today in these modern translations.

And then actually some of them are not too good in their translating. I would like to take this position, which I do, that they are interpretations. Now, I have my bookshelf right where I prepare my messages.

I have that bookshelf filled with all the translations, good, bad, and indifferent. And I refer, sometimes I'll refer to 15 different translations. Why? Just see what these men have to say.

And me, I look at them as a form, not of translation, but interpretation. And I would like to call them that. I said concerning one the other day, which I'll not specify right now, somebody said, is this a good translation? And I said, well, it's only how you look at it.

I said it's a marvelous interpretation, but a lousy translation. Now, when you translate, you have to take something out of one language and put it into another language in comparable terms, identical terms if possible. And the thing that most of these modern translations are trying to do is to get it into modern speech.

And to get it into modern speech, many times they really miss what the original is saying. And I personally, as I've said before, I stick by the authorized version. I don't find it too difficult.

The hats and thousands of these don't seem to bother me. In fact, I guess through the habit of the years that they add a note of reverence. And I personally would recommend the American standard version of 1901 of being more accurate than any other.

I feel like the new Scofield reference Bible has made a tremendous step forward in this connection in making certain distinctions and corrections that needed to be made. I personally still use the old Scofield reference Bible. I know my way around through the book.

And after all, the old scout will follow the old trail because he knows that. And that's the reason that I use it. I'd recommend it also, of course.

I'd like to give you here something that's quite interesting in this connection of translation. And it comes from a man who actually was a rank unbeliever, George Bernard Shaw. And he had some harsh things to say about religion.

That is about present day churches and present day Christianity. But notice what he says concerning the translation that we have in the scripture. He says the translation was extraordinarily well done.

Because to the translators, what they were translating was not merely a curious collection of ancient books written by different authors in different stages of culture, but the word of God divinely revealed through his chosen and expressly inscribed scribes. In this conviction, they carried out their work with boundless reverence and care and achieved a beautiful artistic result. He's talking about the authorized version.

That's George Bernard Shaw. Now, actually, there are, frankly, an interpretation, certain, I think, rules that should be followed. And today, the great difference among some of us conservatives is the fact that we differ on interpretation.

We believe the Bible is the word of God. We believe it's plenary, verbally inspired. Now, this may surprise some of you, but one of the leading Pentecostal leaders of this country today, he and I have had lunch together, and he wants us to resume this.

And we sit down and talk about our mutual differences and also about where we are in agreement. And you know we agree more than we disagree. Fact of the matter is, I think I'm about to convert him, friends.

And I say that facetiously because he's a wonderful man of God, and I love him in the Lord, and I respect him. And you know why? Because he believes this book is the word of God just like I do, and he loves the Lord Jesus maybe more than I do, and he trusts him as his Savior just as I do. And so he and I can sit down together, and we can disagree, and I can just tell him that one of these days, he's going to see it as I see it.

And he said, yes, and that day I see it as you see it, you're going to change also, and we both will see it eye to eye. Well, that day is coming. Now, there are certain rules that we need to keep in mind.

One is the overall purpose of the Bible. That's the reason I'm teaching all of it, is because I believe you need to have it all before you can come to any dogmatic statement concerning any particular verse of scripture. And that is something that's important to take all verses that are related to that subject in consideration.

That's important. And then also, we ought to always consider the scripture to whom it's addressed. Now, way back yonder, God says to Joshua, arise, go over this Jordan.

Now, you know, when I was over in that land, I crossed the Jordan River. That's when you could cross it then without being shot at, and I crossed over. But I didn't cross it to fulfill that scripture, and I didn't say to somebody, well, now I've obeyed the Lord, I've crossed over Jordan.

No, when I read that back in Joshua, I have a feeling that the Lord is talking to Joshua. But I believe there's a tremendous lesson there for me. All scripture is not to me, but all scripture is for me.

And that's a very good rule to keep in mind. And then we ought to always consider the immediate context, either before and after scripture. And then, as we've indicated, there should be a consideration of all scripture relative to a certain passage of scripture.

And then there should be an attempt made to discover what the original says. Now, you recognize in our versions we have certain translations, and they're good. They give to us meaning.

I think that when you're reading that American Standard Version of 19.1, you're right close to what the Lord said. But the important thing is determine what the exact text. And that's the reason in several of our study books I attempted to give a translation.

And as I've said a thousand times, I wouldn't recommend that to anybody. But we did attempt to go back to the original, and I think that's imperative. Let me give you a rule that years ago I heard Dr. David Cooper, the late Dr. David Cooper of Southern California, give.

He said this, and this is a good one. When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. Therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise.

Now, that may be a little complicated, but I want to tell you that's just about as fine as you could possibly have. And remember he said heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. And he said forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in the heavens.

The psalmist said that. The Bible was born in the east and clothed in oriental form and imagery. The Bible walks the ways of all the world with familiar feet and enters land after land to find its own everywhere.

It's learned to speak in hundreds of languages to the heart of man. It comes into the palace to tell the monarch that he's a servant of the most high and into the cottage to assure the peasant that he's a son of God. Children listen to its stories with wonder and delight, and wise men ponder them as parables of light.

It has a word of peace for the time of peril, a word of comfort for the time of calamity, a word of light for the hour of darkness. Its oracles are repeated in the assembly of the people, its counsels whispered in the ear of the lonely. The wicked and the proud tremble at its warnings, but to the wounded and the penitent it has a mother's voice.

The wilderness and the solitary place have been made glad by it, and the fire on the earth has lit the reading of its well-worn pages. It has woven itself into our dearest dreams so that love, friendship, sympathy and devotion, memory and hope put on the beautiful garments of its treasured speech, breathing of frankincense and myrrh. The Bible, the word of God.

Now we come actually to our last study in the Bible itself, and next time we'll begin to talk about the guidelines that we suggest to you for studying the Bible in light of all that we've already said. It was Dryden, by the way, who wrote, Whence but from heaven could man unskilled in arts in several ages born in several parts weave such agreeing truths or how or why should all conspire to cheat us with a lie, unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice, starving their gain and martyrdom their price. This is a tremendous statement that is made here concerning the word of God.

Now, I know at this particular juncture that someone is going to say to me, but Dr. McGee, how do you know that the Bible is the word of God? Well, it's a good question, and it should be asked and answered, and we would like to offer our answer to the question. There are many ways of proving it. There's internal evidence in which, of course, we'll be examining as we go through the scripture, and I've called attention to some already.

One of the objective proofs, one of the external proofs, has been the marvelous preservation of the Bible. There have been times when actually the Bible has been reduced to just one volume, and there was a king of old, we read about him in Jeremiah, and when the word was sent to him, he took a penknife, and he cut it to pieces. But it's quite interesting that we have that word today.

There have been a great many Bible burnings. There's a great deal of antagonism to it. They don't burn it today because we're a little too civilized, we think, in this country, so the way they do is just outlaw it in our schools and in many other places, and yet we talk about that we have freedom of religion and that we have freedom of speech today, and wouldn't a person be free if he wanted to read the Bible? And as we've suggested before, they deny themselves of the greatest literature when the Bible is denied to young people today.

In spite of all the attacks, though, that have been made upon it, why, it still exists, and of course, it's one of the bestsellers. There were for many years it was the bestseller, and it's not today. I regret to have to say that, but it is true that it's not the bestseller at the present time, and that is certainly a commentary on our contemporary society which reveals that the Bible is not really occupying the place that it once did in the history and the life of this nation.

Now, I think the preservation of it is worthy of consideration. Another way in which we can know is the fact of archaeology. The spade of the archaeologists has turned up many things that have proven that it is the Word of God.

Now, for instance, there are those that many years denied the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch on the basis that writing was not in existence in Moses' day, and for that reason why he could not have written the Pentateuch. You haven't heard anyone advance that theory recently, have you? Well, of course not. Now, for years the spade of the archaeologists has turned up writing that goes much farther back than Moses, so that is no longer a valid argument.

And then we find that the spade of the archaeologists has turned up again and again evidence of that, the city of Jericho and the walls that fell down. Now, there has been some argument between Miss Kellogg and the bishop who first excavated there, but I think that it's pretty well established that walls fell down, and I'll let them debate about the time and all that sort of thing. I believe that the Word of God has been substantiated there, and in many other ways archaeology has demonstrated the accuracy of the Word of God, and many of the manuscripts that have been found do that.

It's quite interesting when these Isaiah scrolls, Dead Sea scrolls, were found. My, the liberal leaped at that because he thought he found an argument that would discredit the Bible. It's quite interesting how it has not discredited the Bible, and it seems that the liberal has lost a great deal of interest in the scrolls, the Dead Sea scrolls, that were found.

There are many ways in which we could go into this. This is a field into which I do not care to enter at any great length. Now, I want to give a reason if I were asked, what do you have as a conclusive proof? You

just had one thing to suggest.

What would you suggest as be a conclusive proof that this is the Word of God? And you know what I would suggest? I would suggest fulfill prophecy. Fulfill prophecy. I believe that that is the one proof that you can't escape, you can't get around, and the Bible is filled with fulfill prophecy.

One-fourth of the Scripture when it was written was prophetic, was prophecy. That is, it denounced things that were to take place in the future. Well, a great deal of that, in fact a great deal more than people imagine, has already been fulfilled.

Again, we could turn to many places where this has been fulfilled exactly. You'll find that there were many local situations that were fulfilled even in the day of the prophet. Micaiah was a prophet who told old Ahab that when he went out to battle, he'd lose the battle and he'd be killed.

And old Ahab didn't like it because his false prophets had told him he'd have a victory and he'd return as a victorious king. But he didn't like what Micaiah said, and he said, lock him up, feed him water and bread, that's all you give him, and I'll take care of him when I get back. And Micaiah shot back the last word.

He said, if you come back, the Lord hasn't spoken by me. Well, evidently the Lord spoke by him because Ahab didn't come back. He was killed in the battle, he was defeated, and he attempted to camouflage himself.

But you see, a soldier, one of the enemy, the Scripture says he pulled a bow at a venture. That is, when the battle was about over, why, he just had one arrow left in his quiver, and he just put it in there and he just shot it out in space. But you know, that arrow had old Ahab's name on it, and that arrow wandered around, went around trees, around rocks, and down this road and up this path, and finally it found old Ahab.

The only thing is, it didn't do it quite that way. It just went right to its mark like an arrow. Why? Because Micaiah had made an accurate prophecy.

And Isaiah, in the same connection, said the Assyrian wouldn't shoot an arrow into the city of Jerusalem. Well, now that's interesting. A soldier shot an arrow by chance, a bow at a venture, and wouldn't you think that among 300,000 soldiers that one might be trigger happy and pull the bow back, and there would be the bow at a venture, and he'd let an arrow fly over the wall of Jerusalem? Well, he didn't.

Isaiah said that if the enemy shoots an arrow inside this city, you can be sure that I am not God's prophet. May I say to you, those were local fulfillments of prophecy. But Isaiah also said a virgin would bring forth a child, and that was 700 years away before it was literally fulfilled.

And then, if you want a final proof, there were over 300 prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ. They were all literally fulfilled. He was hanging there on the cross and dying, and there was one prophecy that had not been fulfilled, and that was, they gave me vinegar to drink.

And he cried out, I thirst, and the enemy himself went and fulfilled prophecy. May I say to you, it's the most amazing thing. But man can't guess like that.

It's been rather amusing to watch the weather man. During the summer season in Southern California, he does fine. But when we get to the change of seasons, well, your guess is as good as his.

He doesn't always hit it. Now, in the nation Israel, a prophet had to be accurate. And if he wasn't accurate, why, he would be put to death.

God said that you always know that a thing has to come to pass, that he says. He asked, first of all, to speak in the local situation, which Isaiah did. And then he can speak out, yonder to the futures, Isaiah did.

We can look back and know that it was fulfilled. But there are so many other prophecies. Tyre and Sidon are over there today exactly.

As God's Word said 2,500 years ago, they'd be. And there they are. And may I say to you that Egypt today is in exactly the position God said it would be in.

All of these are amazing, friends. And that's one of the greatest proofs. You see, man just can't be that accurate.

Man can't guess like that. As we said, the weather man misses it. Let me show you that actually, according to mathematical law, mathematical law of problematical conjecture, why man could never, never prophesy.

Now, let me give you just a very simple illustration of this. Suppose that I right now would make a prophecy. I don't know where you are, and I don't know what the weather is.

But suppose I'd say to you right now, wherever you are, that it's going to rain tomorrow. Well, may I say to you, I'd be 50, 50 percent chance of being right, because it's either going to rain or it's not going to rain. It'll do one of the two.

Now, for some of you, it probably would be accurate. Others, it wouldn't be accurate. But I'd make the statement.

Now, suppose, though, I'd add to that, and I would say it'll start raining tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock, and that will be another uncertain element. Now, I had a 50, 50 chance of being right at first. Now, I have a 25 percent chance.

Every uncertain element that is added here reduces the chance of being right 50 percent, you see, the law of problematical conjecture. Now, suppose that I not only say it's going to start raining at 9 o'clock, I say it'll stop raining at 2 o'clock. Well, believe me, friends, that's reduced our chances now another 50 percent, which brings it down to 12 and a half percent.

Can you imagine my chance of being right now? It'd be just 12 and a half percent. But suppose you add 300 uncertain elements, and may I say that there's not a ghost of a chance of being accurate, of being right. You just couldn't hit it.

It'd be impossible. And yet the Word of God hit it, my friend. It was quite accurate.

And if I even would dare to come along and having given these three uncertain elements, and then I would add another one, I'd say then at 2 o'clock it's going to begin to snow. Well, I want to tell you by then, friends, there would be somebody come forward and lead me away, probably the man with the little white coat, and he'd say, my, you need to be put away, boy, because of the fact that you are doing something that is absolutely ridiculous and something that could never come to pass. Now the Word of God is moved into that area.

That to me is absolute proof that this is the Word of God. There is nothing to compare to this at all. Now, I have only given very little of fulfilled prophecy.

May I say to you that in the Word of God there is prophecy after prophecy, and they have been fulfilled, and not only fulfilled, but fulfilled literally. And by the way, that gives, I would think, the method in which prophecy for the future is yet to be fulfilled. Now, there is one final, well, in fact, there are really two final reasons that I offer as proof that this is the Word of God.

One is the transformed lives of believers today. I have seen what the Word of God can do in the lives of men and women. I'm thinking right now of a man who listened to this program up in Oakland, California.

I know this man. This man was, I'm not going into detail in his life at all, but he probably had as many problems, he had as many hang-ups, he was in as much sin as any man that I know anything about. And did you know that this man began to listen to the radio program, and I hear people just hear it for the first time and are converted.

That's wonderful, and I think it's possible. But this man listened to it for week after week, and he became antagonistic, he became angry. He said to me that if I could have got to you when you told me when you were teaching the Epistle to the Romans that I was a sinner, he said I would have hit you in the nose.

And frankly, friends, I think he could have done it. He's much bigger than I am and much younger than I am. I'm glad he couldn't get to me.

That's another reason to appreciate this radio, by the way. You can keep a big fellow like that at arm's length, and you can still call him a sinner. And so this man now turned to Christ.

May I say to you, it's been wonderful to see what God has done in his life. Some time ago, I read a letter of an entire family way back in Indianapolis. Through the word of God, they came to a saving knowledge of Christ, and an entire family is changed.

May I say to you, friends, that again and again and again and again, this could be multiplied of those who had their lives transformed by coming to Christ. Now, let me give you a reason that's a rather personal reason. And I journal impersonal, but this may be even a little more personal.

When I finished seminary, I was what would be called a preacher who preached in the realm of the defense of the gospel. And I attempted to defend the Bible. In fact, I think every message I had entered into that area.

And I felt that if I could get just enough answers to the questions that people have for not believing the Bible, that I'd be able to just mow them down. And I attempted to get them. And I found out that in certain cases, though, where I could answer the individual, that the worst thing in the world to do would be to whip a man down intellectually.

The minute that you do that, you've made an enemy, and you'll never win him for the Lord. And so I found out that I was being self-defeated by that method. So I moved out of the realm of apologetics, because I was an apologetic preacher.

And I moved into another area of just giving out the word of God simply as we attempt to do it. And the reason that I've done this is because there's been a certain development in my own life. And that is, I've

reached the place today where I not only believe that this is the word of God.

May I say this to you? And I don't want to appear to be overly dogmatic. And that is, I want to say that I know it's the word of God. And I know it's the word of God because of the fact that the Spirit of God has made it real to my own heart and my own life.

That's the reason that I know this is the word of God. And that was the thing that you'll recall that Paul talked to the Colossians about. He said to them that they might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

And he prayed for that. And that would be the thing that I'd want people to pray about. I thank God for the great army of folk that continue to remember us in prayer physically for physical strength.

Friends, I also want to be filled with the knowledge of his will in wisdom and spiritual understanding because I found out that the Spirit of God can confirm these things to your heart and that you don't need archaeology. Some young preacher said to me some time ago, Dr. McGee, isn't it wonderful that they have discovered this? And he mentioned something in particular. And I said, well, I don't see anything to be excited about.

And he was greatly disappointed and even chagrined that I was so far away from it that I did not respond in any way. And so, why, he says, what do you mean? Is it possible that this hasn't impressed you? Well, I said, did you know I already knew it was the Word of God long before the spade of the archaeologist turned that up? And he said, how did you know it? Well, I said, the Spirit of God's been making it real to my own heart. Friends, may I say to you, and this has been personal, I pray for you who listen to this program as we enter into the five-year program that the Spirit of God is going to make the Word of God not only real to you, to incorporate into your living, but he's going to give you that assurance that you can say today, I know that it's the Word of God.

And if the Bible says 2 plus 2 equals 5, I'll know that sometime in the past or sometime in the future, 2 plus 2 is going to equal 5. But the interesting thing is the Bible doesn't say that. It's only men who make errors with figures, not the Word of God. Now, we want to look at actually some guidelines, seven to be exact.

And I'd like to open today with this scripture which we opened with before. The scripture I want to begin with is Psalm 119, 18, Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. And when the psalmist wrote these lines, of course, he had in mind the Mosaic system primarily.

But we widen that out to include the 66 books of the Bible and can say today, Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of the Bible. And so with that thought in mind, we look at these guidelines. Now, there are certain guidelines that each of us should follow relative to the Word of God.

You may want to add to these, but I believe that the ones we're mentioning are basic and primary. And I'd like to put it like this. I guarantee that if you follow these guidelines, blessing will come to your heart and your life.

Certainly, there should be these directions in the study of scripture. Today, for instance, a bottle of patent medicine, no matter how simple it might be, it might be just a tonic or it might be something for a cold. It has directions for the use of it.

I even noticed that a bottle of aspirin has on it directions. And any little gadget that you buy in a 5 and 10 cent store, and I must pause to say that probably there's no misnomer today like the 5 and 10 cent store. You can't find anything in there that sells anymore for 5 and 10 cents.

It's generally up in the dollar bracket today, but any gadget that you buy there always has with it directions for its operation. I know that I bought my daughter, when she was a little girl, a toy, and it had with it directions. You had to assemble it, and I took it out to give to her, and I thought, well, I'd put it together.

And I want to tell you, friends, I never got into a thing as complicated as that was, and the directions were right there with it, not only directions but pictures. And even with all of that help, I had my problems. Well, if things in this world today are like that, then certainly the Word of God needs directions in order to read and to study it.

The Word of God should have a few directions and a few instructions on the study of it. Now, I'm going to mention seven very simple yet basic preliminary statements that will be a guide for the study of the scriptures, and we're going to attempt to follow them. Well, let me mention the seven to you.

Begin with prayer. That's number one, and we're going to talk about each one of these. Second, read the Bible.

Third, study the Bible. And fourth, meditate on the Bible. And fifth, read what others have written on the scriptures.

And now the sixth one is obey the Bible, obedience. That is all important. Now, number seven is pass it on to others.

Someone has put it in this very brief, cogent manner, the Bible. Know it in your head, stow it in your heart, show it in your life, sow it in the world. Well, that's another way of saying some of the things that we are going to talk about here.

Now, the first one, and we come back to it, is begin with prayer. Bible is different from all other books. That is the thing we've attempted to emphasize when we've been talking in the past few studies we've had together when we've talked about the book.

This book is different, and you cannot come to it and bring to it just mental acumen. You have to bring to it humility that will permit the Spirit of God to be your teacher. And so it's necessary to begin with prayer.

I always felt in college, and a college student gets the impression that he knows everything, and I think it's because he knows so little that he feels like he knows everything. He doesn't realize there are so many areas and vast fields that he's totally ignorant of. And I felt like when I was in college that I could learn anything that any man had ever written.

I didn't care what it was and what field it was. If he wrote it, then I could understand it, and I'm of the opinion that several of us in college at that time had that viewpoint. And that's the way we approached every book and everything.

Well, that's very fine, I suppose, for a college student, but when you get as old as I am now, you ought to have more sense and to know that there are many things you don't understand. Now, I do believe that whatever any man has written, another man can understand it. But that's not true of the Bible.

The Bible is different. The Bible is a closed book. As we've said, since the Holy Spirit is the author, only the Spirit of God can teach us and make it real to us.

And that's the reason when we begin in the book of Genesis, we always begin with prayer. We don't have it at the end of the program, we have it at the beginning of the program, because we recognize that we need the Spirit of God to be our teacher. And the Bible, therefore, is different from all other books.

When Sir Walter Scott was dying, he said to his servant and his secretary, bring me the book. And the secretary looked just a little puzzled, and he looked at the shelf of books that Walter Scott had written, and he wondered which one he intended for him to bring. And he asked, which book? And Walter Scott is said to have replied, the Bible.

There's only one book for a man when he's dying. And I believe that is true. But it's the book for any man who's dying, but it's also the book for any man who's living.

I'm afraid a great many folk do not get interested in the Bible until they get to the end of their lives or until they get in a great deal of difficulty. And it's wonderful to have a book you can pull down at a time like that and find comfort in it. But it's a book for you to live in the full vigor of life.

It's a book to face life with today. And it's the book which furnishes the only sure route through this world and on into the next world. It's the only book that can enable us to meet the emergencies and to cushion the shocks that come to us in life.

The Bible is different, and it's different from any other book. Now, you will notice that it is called Holy Bible. Actually, the word Bible simply means book.

There's a little town in ruins north of Beirut in Lebanon which is called Byblos. We spent several hours there, and the reason that I did, I wanted to get pictures of that place. It's a famous place called Byblos.

That is the book. That's where books were first made, and we're told that it is the place where the Bible got its name. You see, they called it in that day, The Book.

All other books were just books, but the Bible was The Book. And then someone down the line put on it the Holy Bible, or Holy Bible. And I personally believe that it is inspired from the first word in Genesis to the last word in Revelation.

And you know, I sometimes feel that that name on the outside, Holy Bible, is inspired also. May I say that's what it is. Now, this is a book, therefore, that differs from all other books.

It's different in this sense. The Holy Spirit alone can open our minds to understand it. Now, you can take up a book on philosophy, and if a man wrote it and he did, then a man can understand it.

You can read a book on higher mathematics, and since a man wrote it, a man can understand it. There's not a book that ever has been written by any man that another man cannot understand. But again, I keep repeating it, the Bible's different.

The Bible cannot be understood unless the Holy Spirit is the instructor and He wants to teach us. The fact of the matter is, our Lord told us, He'll guide you into all truth. And we write over the guidelines for the Scripture, Open thou mine eyes, that's a prayer, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy word.

Now, when the Apostle Paul was praying for the Ephesians, as we've already seen, he did not pray for their health, although I'm of the opinion he may have done that at another time. And certainly he did pray for that. And he did not pray that they might get wealthy.

I don't know whether he ever did that or not. I know that in my ministry, I've made the mistake of praying for certain men that they would be successful in business and make money. And I've seen some of them do it.

And frankly, I'm very sorry to have to report, in nine cases out of 10, wealth turned them from being zealous for God. I had a man in Cleburne, Texas, and he had a ranch and they began to drill oil. And he came and he said to me, Preacher, you pray that we find oil.

If we do, I'm going to give one half of the revenue that comes in from oil to the work of the Lord. Oh my gracious, you can imagine how this poor preacher, and it was during the depression, how I really got down to business to pray. And then one day it occurred to me that it might be well to see if this man was given a half of what he had in time to the Lord.

And I'm very sorry to have to report, friends, he didn't even give the Lord a tenth, and I don't think we're under the tithe at all, but it certainly could be made a norm for giving. And that man could have given a great deal more, and he didn't give it, and didn't give even a fraction. And yet this man was going to give the Lord a half.

I came to the conclusion he wasn't going to do it. So I just quit praying that he'd find oil. And he didn't find oil, by the way.

I don't know that my refusal to pray had anything to do with it or not, but I do know this, I'm really glad that he didn't find oil. I'm of the opinion, knowing the man, that he would have been turned from God.

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