

The Power of God's Word

by Zac Poonen

The power of God's word is essential for living a full and victorious life, resisting temptation, and fulfilling God's purpose for our lives.

Duration: 25:18

Scripture: Genesis 1:3, Revelation 22:18

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of God's spoken word, starting from Genesis where God's creative power is displayed through His spoken word. It highlights the significance of opening ourselves to God's word found in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Jesus' early life and ministry underscore the value of studying and applying God's word, as seen in His responses to temptation with scripture. The sermon stresses the transformative power of God's word, likening it to food for spiritual strength, a sword against Satan, and a source of guidance and correction for righteous living.

Transcript

Today we want to look at the importance of the word of God in our Christian life. Right from the very first chapter of the Bible, you find the importance of God's word, God's spoken word in his purposes for man. What do we see in Genesis chapter 1? Again and again and again, we read these words, and God said.

That is the word of God, God's spoken word. It was creative. When he said, there was light, let there be light, there was light immediately.

And God said, let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters and the heavens were created. He said, let the waters be gathered together, let the dry land appear. And like that, you find this earth that had been ruined by sin before Genesis 1 and Genesis between verses 1 and 2 because of Satan's fall, was remade by God in Genesis 1. And this remaking was done through his spoken word and through the operation of the Holy Spirit that we read in verse 2. So right from the first chapter of the Bible, you find the power of God's spoken word.

And that's why it's so important for us to open our beings to God's spoken word, which we have in the Bible. When you come to the last chapter of the Bible, in the book of Revelation, again, you find a tremendous importance given to the word of God in the last paragraph of the Bible. In Revelation 22, verse 18 and 19, it speaks about our attitude to the words of this book.

It's particularly referring to Revelation, but it applies to the whole Bible as well. That God would, if you, we are not supposed to add to God's word or subtract from it. That's what he says there.

If you add to it, then you'll get the plagues that God has spoken of in this book. And if you subtract from it, then God will take away your part from the tree of life. So in the first chapter and the last chapter, you find this tremendous importance given to God's word.

And in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, we find one of the earliest instances in his life is that described in Luke chapter 2, when he was 12 years old and he was in the temple, sitting and talking with all the scholars at the age of 12. And he was discussing the word of God with them. It says in Luke chapter 2, that he was sitting there in the midst of all the teachers of the law in verse 46, listening to them and asking them questions from God's word.

So you find that right from the beginning, the very first picture you have of Jesus as a young boy is centered around the word of God, discussing God's word, questioning and perhaps explaining as well. And it says all those who heard him were amazed at his understanding of the word and the answers he gave. So Jesus Christ from his childhood was a very careful student of the Bible, which was just the Old Testament in those days.

And remember, he never had a written Bible like this bound and easy to read in his home. There were very few copies of the Old Testament available and they were all handwritten on parchments and very expensive to own. And it's usually just the synagogues that had them.

So in the synagogues, the children would be taught in the schools and there they would have an opportunity to hear the word of God. And that's all the opportunity Jesus had in all those 12 years. And he listened carefully, absorbed it and knew the scriptures.

And no doubt he continued that practice all through his life. And so when he was 30 years old and he began his ministry, again, we see as soon as he enters his ministry, the importance he gives to God's word. As soon as his baptism is over, he goes into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days.

And at the end of that period, the devil comes to tempt him. This is part of God's plan for his son on earth. And the devil comes with a certain temptation and Jesus replies to the devil quoting the word of God.

He just says, it is written. That's the answer for me. You tempt me to turn the stones into bread because I'm hungry and I haven't eaten for 40 days, but I live by God's word.

And he quoted that scripture from Deuteronomy chapter 8, which says, man shall not live by bread alone. This is in Luke chapter 4 and verse 4, but man shall live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth. We find the fuller statement of that in Matthew 4 and verse 4. And this is a quotation from Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 3. How is man supposed to live? By every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

These are the first spoken words of Jesus recorded in the Bible after he began his ministry, after his baptism. Man shall not live by bread alone. And we could say all the other things necessary for life.

They're not for physical life. That's not enough. Man must live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

In other words, if I miss something of what God has spoken for me, in that measure, I'm not going to have the fullness of life that God wants me to have. I believe this is the reason why many, many Christians, their lives are so shallow. They don't know their privileges as Christians.

They live in fear. They live in insecurity. They have, they're defeated by sin.

What is the reason for all these things? Why is there so much confusion in their homes? Why is it so many children, the children of so many believers are going astray? The answer to all of this is found in this one reason. Many, many Christians do not take the study of God's word and receiving his word regularly from God seriously. And then they can't live.

In fact, Jesus compared it with food. Man shall not live by bread alone. We all know that we need food in order to be strong.

We need food in order for our life to continue on this earth. And Jesus compared to the word of God to that exactly like you need food on this earth. Here is something more important than food to receive God's word.

And the second time when the devil came to him and tempted him, quoting God's word. You see, when the devil saw that Jesus was a person who would quote God's word, he also quoted God's word to lead Jesus astray, as it were saying, why don't you jump down from the temple? Because it is written that he will give his angels charge concerning you, Matthew chapter four, verse six. And then Jesus said, but it is also written on the other hand, that you shall not tempt the Lord, your God.

And so we learned something else about God's word from Jesus reply there. And that is the devil may use a verse of scripture by taking it out of its context. And Christendom is full of examples in 2000 years of cults and groups who produced all types of strange teachings through taking a verse out of context and building a doctrine around it and building a denomination around that doctrine.

And they don't realize it's the devil who's quoting that verse to them. It is written. So what we learned from here is that the whole truth of God is not found in the phrase, it is written, but it is written and it is also written.

In other words, we've got to compare scripture with scripture in order to understand the whole mind of God. And that is why it's very important. If you want to really make progress in your Christian life to study scripture carefully, the Bible says in second Timothy and chapter three, that all scripture verse 16 is inspired by God, breathed by God.

In other words, there's something special about this book called the Bible. These 66 books that comprise the Bible, God's word, God's breath is in these words. These are not just words.

The meaning here is inspired by God means God breathed. God is breathed into this book, into something like, you know, when God made Adam, he took some mud and made the shape of a man. The hands, eyes, head, legs, everything was there, but it wasn't a man.

And then it says God breathed into that man and suddenly he became alive. He was a living soul. So God's word is exactly like that.

Just like Adam got the breath of God in him. And just like when Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, it says he breathed on them and said, received the Holy Spirit. Second Timothy 3.16 says that God's word is also something he has breathed into.

There is life in these words, just like there was life in Adam. And just like the Holy Spirit came into those disciples on whom Jesus breathed. So these words in scripture are not just stories.

They're not just empty words. If there is a promise in God's word, God's breath is in that promise. There is a power in that word.

There's a tremendous power in the word of God. In fact, in Hebrews 4, it says here, the word of God is living and powerful, active. Hebrews 4.12. And it's able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

God's word is like a searchlight. It's active and powerful, searching into the depths of our hearts. So it's like a scan.

You know, we have so many scans now that can search into our body and show us things that are wrong inside us and how useful those scans are for medical purposes. God's word is something like that, that goes right into the depths of our hearts and shows the areas where we are wrong. So a man who constantly exposes himself to the light of God's word is going to discover a whole lot of things in his life that he needs to set right.

And God will help him in that area. 2 Timothy 3 goes on to say that all this which is inspired by God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. God uses his word to correct us, to teach us, to train us, to lead us in the path of righteousness with the ultimate goal that we as men and women of God will be perfectly equipped for everything that God wants us to do.

We'll be adequate. We'll be strong, capable. God's word is like food.

God's word is also like a sword in our conflict with Satan. The greatest example is of course Jesus himself in the three temptations described in Matthew chapter 4. We find he used no other weapon except the written word of God. And if we know the written word of God, we can drive Satan away every time he comes to us with any temptation.

If you don't know the written word of God, you're helpless. And in Ephesians chapter 6, we are told that God's word is the sword of the spirit, verse 17. Ephesians 6, 17 says the sword of the spirit with which we can fight Satan.

He uses a military illustration of those days. No soldier would ever go to battle in those days without a sword. It was one of the most important parts of equipment for him to attack.

All the other things described here are weapons for defense, you know, the breastplate and the helmet and the shoes and all these things are for defense in Ephesians 6, verse 13 to 17. But there's one weapon in that list of the armor of God which is for offense, where we can fight the enemy. That is the sword of the spirit.

God's word is a sword with which we can drive Satan away. And if Satan is causing problems for you, you can drive him away with God's word if you know which word to quote to him. Jesus had a particular word for each temptation.

How did he get that? It was not supernaturally because he was God. Remember that when Jesus came to earth, he gave up voluntarily the abilities he had as God. He was still God in his personality, of course.

He was sinless and still God in his personality, but in his person, but he gave up access to the resources God has, you know, almighty power and all-knowing wisdom. He gave up all that in order to be a man like us. Otherwise, he couldn't be an example for us.

So when he came to earth and he came as a little baby, there was nothing in his mind of God's word. Just like every baby born into the world doesn't have any data of God's word in his mind. It acquires, that baby acquires knowledge by reading or hearing.

And so Jesus filled his mind with God's word through the years when he grew up on earth. And from that database of many, many verses that he had stored in his mind, the Holy Spirit could pick out one which is appropriate for the first temptation and another one which is appropriate for the second temptation and another one which is appropriate for the third temptation. Now this is exactly what the Holy Spirit wants to do for us too.

In every circumstance we face, and I have experienced this for 47 years now, more than 47 years as a Christian, as a born again Christian, I found in so many different situations, complicated situations, trials, difficulties, I found that the Holy Spirit picks out a scripture and gives it to me. But where does he pick it out from? From the Bible which I have stored in my mind. As I've read it through the years, I built up a database of scripture.

But because our memory is not so perfect, we need to read it again and again. Not only to refresh our memory, but from the very same verse, God may give us some new life. I found this many, many times reading the same verse for the 20th or 50th time.

I see something new there because God's word is like that. It's not like man's words. It's not like a chemistry book where you study something and then you got it and then you move on to a higher standard.

It's not like arithmetic where once you studied addition you move on to subtraction. God's word is not like that. God's word is like an unending well, a spring of water that never ceases.

You go into it, maybe you go in to read that verse for the 100th time and you get something new in it over there. And so the Holy Spirit, if we keep meditating on God's word, that's why it's important to meditate on it. If we meditate on it, the Holy Spirit will take at the appropriate time the right word from all that we have stored in our mind and give it to us and it'll be exactly suited for our need in that situation.

Now many Christians never experience this in their whole life because they don't study God's carefully. Let me show you this verse in Psalm 1, which is a very well-known passage among many Christians. In the first Psalm, David writes, how blessed is the man who meditates, whose delight, verse 2, is in the law of the Lord.

And in those days that was just the Old Testament scriptures, you know, the law of Moses, five books and a few other books that were before David's time. It is a very small portion of the Old Testament. That is all that David had as scripture.

And he says, it's blessed. The man who meditates on this is so blessed. If his delight is in it, not just he reads it to ease his conscience, but his delight is to, in this law and in that law, he meditates day and night, he reads it maybe just a little while in the synagogues, they would listen to it and then he meditates on it.

He didn't have a Bible at home, as I said, they didn't have Bibles those days, but they had that, the parchment in the synagogue where David could hear it. And then he would meditate on it throughout the day. He says, such a man will be like a tree planted by the streams of water, which always yields fruit in its season and whose leaf never withers and whatever he does will prosper.

What a beautiful picture of a tree that is never dry, always green. That is the picture that describes a man who meditates on God's word all the time. It's a picture of freshness.

A tree that is always green is a picture of freshness. And this verse teaches us that the way to freshness is by meditating on scripture. And I found that through the years, the more I meditate on God's word, my life is fresh.

I never need be dry. And God gives me a word, not only to face, for me to face temptation like Jesus faced it, but he also gives me a word to give to other people when they face trial and temptation. And it's not just because I'm a preacher.

God can give you that word. He may not be able to stand up in a pulpit and speak for some length of time, but that's a gift. But he may give you a word to speak to somebody who's in need, just one sentence perhaps from scripture or to write a verse of scripture to someone who is facing a particular problem.

The Holy Spirit can pick out a word from all that you've stored in your database, pick out the right word, not only for yourself, but for other people as well. What a tremendous thing. This is not only being fresh yourself, but giving fruit.

It says he will yield its fruit in its season. That means fruit comes out from the branch of the tree. And you know that a tree does not produce fruit for itself.

Every tree produces fruit to bless other people who pluck the fruit and eat it. So here it says, speaks about a man who meditates on God's word and he's fresh himself. His leaves are always green.

365 days of the year he's fresh. And he produces fruit in season, means whenever needed. And other people can come and take of it and be refreshed.

It's a wonderful thing. It's a wonderful way to live. That is the way God wants us to live.

To open our being, to read God's word, meditate on it, to fight the devil as a sword, to feed on it as our spiritual food, and to drink of it like the tree sucks in the sap, sucks in the water from the river and is always fresh. The river here is a picture of God's word. And here God's word is pictured like the water that flows into this tree through the roots and keeps that tree fresh all the time.

And produces fruit through the sap in its branches so that other people can be blessed. All of this comes through God's word coming into our system. There's something else we read also in Jeremiah in chapter 23 that God's word is like a hammer and a fire.

Jeremiah 23, he speaks about his word having this power, Jeremiah. And chapter 23, he's speaking about various types of false prophets. And he says here, I have not sent these prophets, he says.

They have spoken words, but those words have not produced any results. But he says, if they had given them my word, that would have produced results. I have not spoken to these people.

My word, he says in verse 29, finally, is like a hammer that can break the shadow of the rock. It's like a fire. You know, God's word can destroy the rocks in front of us that hinder our progress.

God's word is like a fire that keeps us burning in our devotion to Jesus Christ. There are many pictures like this used of God's word in the Bible to show us its tremendous power to refresh us, to feed us, to give us the ability to fight Satan, to produce fruit through us, to bless other people, and also to keep us on fire in our devotion to Christ. And also to be used as a hammer to break every rock that stands in our way in a mountain, so that we can go through to fulfill God's purpose for our lives.

God's will is that you fulfill his plan for your life. And for that, you need the word of God. God bless you.

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