

The Word of God and Prayer

Class Outline

- I. Isn't the Bible just another book?
 - A. The Bible is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago
 - B. The Word of God is alive (Hebrews 4:12)
- II. The Bible is God-breathed
 - A. The Bible is divinely inspired (2 Peter 1:19-20)
 - B. The Bible was written by people under the inspiration of God himself
- III. The Bible is a Ruler
 - A. It shows us what is right and true (Hosea 4:6)
 - B. When we fix our heart and mind on it, we will prosper and succeed (Joshua 1:8)
 - C. When we fix our heart and mind on it, our thinking will be transformed, and we will know God's will for our life (Romans 12:2)
- IV. The Bible is a Weapon
 - A. The Armor of God will enable us to resist the enemy and stand firm (Ephesians 6:13-17)
 - B. God's Word will expose sinful motives and help us to see the truth (Hebrews 4:12)
- V. The Bible is a Person
 - A. Jesus and the Word are one (John 1:1-5, 14)
 - B. The Word of God brings life, healing, restoration, love, and faithfulness to us

VI. What Does the Bible Say About Prayer?

- A. Prayer effectively connects us with God (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17)
- B. Prayer breaks down walls (Acts 16:16-33)
- C. Prayer opens the prison doors (Acts 5:17-21)

VII. So, What Does Prayer Accomplish?

- A. Prayer releases the power of God into your life (James 5:16)
- B. Prayer causes the devil to be defeated (James 4:7)
- C. Prayer gives us strength (Matthew 26:39-41)

VIII. How Can I Know That God Has Heard And Will Answer Me?

- A. God always hears and answers when we ask with the right motives (James 4:2-3)
- B. There is a right way to pray

How Do I Connect with God?

Most people have addressed God in one way or another. Some have even learned how to "pray" prayers. But, what does that mean? What is prayer? How do you know God hears you when you pray?

This lesson will look at some of the basics to effective communication with God and why such a thing is so important for each of us individually as Christians. God's greatest desire is that we would know Him... and what better way than to spend time with Him?

What Does God's Word Have to Say About It?

Have you ever heard the phrase, "there is no absolute truth, everything is relative?" How about, "the Bible has a lot of great stories about morals, like Aesop's fables or maxims from Benjamin Franklin... you know, 'a penny saved is a penny earned' kind of stuff?"

It's funny how most people don't realize that the Bible is the number one best selling book of all time. It was the backbone document for the Founding Fathers. It was written over 1,000 years by over 40 different authors, revealing Jesus Christ and His love affair with mankind. It's more than a moral story: it's the power, presence and purpose of a living God revealed for us to see.

This lesson will look at what the Bible really is, and why it's still so important to us today.

From the Bible...

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives.

It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip His people to do every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16 (New Living Translation)

Isn't the Bible Just Another Book?

Have you ever been to a used book store? You can tell the books that have been there a long time. They're old. They're musty. The pages are turning brown. Many times, the content is completely irrelevant to today's society. The Bible is different. It turned the world upside down thousands of years ago, and it is still doing the same today. People are moving from death to life every day because of what's written in its pages.

Hebrews 4:12 says: "For the Word of God is alive and powerful..." The Word of God IS alive! It is living and breathing! This means that the Bible is still as relevant today as it was 2,000 years ago.

Let's look at some characteristics of the Bible.

The Bible is God-breathed

When we say the Bible is God breathed or "divinely inspired" its nearest translation in English would be "God breathed into man what man breathed out."

2 Peter 1:19-20 says: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God."

When we understand that the Bible was written by people by the inspiration of God Himself, it takes away the excuse of human error and leaves us with a standard with which to measure our lives.

The Bible is a ruler

Imagine a bride being fitted for her wedding dress. Every measurement is taken, and retaken, so the dress can be perfectly tailored for the big day. When the gown is ready, the bride rushes to the shop. She tries on the masterpiece... only to find that it doesn't fit!

The seamstress and attendant are called in and asked to explain how the tailoring could have gone so horribly wrong. The attendant re-measures the bride and finds that the measurements are exactly as they were before.

The bride and attendant ask the seamstress, "Why didn't you use the measurements we gave you?" The seamstress replies, "I created my own measuring tape to make the dress. I felt that the measuring tape everyone else uses was old, boring and irrelevant for today's bride".

In this situation, the seamstress would have been fired and no one would have blinked an eye. In order to properly measure something, you need a measure that is consistent. That consistent measure, or ruler, for our life is the Bible.

What happens when people decide they don't want to use God's standard of measure?

Hosea 4:6 says: "People are ruined because they don't know what is right or true." Thank God that we don't have to live ruined, frustrated and lacking lives!

Joshua 1:8 says: "Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do."

Wow! Meditating and rehearsing God's Word until it changes the way you think brings with it prosperity and true success! Yes you read that right... changing the way YOU think to the standard of the Bible is the key to success. But wait, there's more!

Romans 12:2 says: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

When you allow God's Word to be the standard you measure your very thoughts by, you will learn God's pleasing and perfect purpose for your life.

The Bible is a weapon

Ephesians 6:13-17 says: "Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness.

For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.

In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.

Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

The Word of God is our sword against the devil, sickness, lack and even negative thoughts in our minds.

Hebrews 4:12 says: "For the Word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes and he is the one to whom we are accountable."

From this reading we learn that one of our greatest enemies can be the way we think! The Word of God is how we expose true motives and desires from sinful ones. The Bible has the ability to bring light and understanding to every situation in our life, starting at our thoughts and ending with our actions.

The Bible is a person

John 1:1-5 says: "In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through Him and nothing was created except through Him. The Word gave life to everything that was created and His life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it."

Further on in that chapter, John 1:14 says: "So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."

The Word of God and Jesus are one and the same. Jesus is, in fact, the living, breathing character that lives and fulfills every characteristic of God.

So, if Jesus brings life, healing, restoration, love and faithfulness, as we read and meditate on the Word it brings life, healing, restoration, love and faithfulness to us! After all, the Bible's purpose is to reveal Jesus so that we can have intimate relationship with Him, the Father and the Holy Spirit!

Summing It All Up

In conclusion, we see that the inspired word found in the Bible as ruler and weapon are wrapped inside of our growing relationship with Jesus.

We obey Him because we love Him. We follow Him because we are connected with Him. We share His authority over every sickness, disease, lack and ruler, both in this time and in the time to come. We are one in spirit with Christ, but our minds are being remade through His Word.

As you filter your thoughts and make your decisions each moment of each day, ask yourself: "What does God have to say about it?" If it lines up with the Bible, that settles it! It doesn't matter what the TV or radio has to say. It doesn't matter what the "expert on all things" at work has to say. It doesn't even matter what your doctor or financial consultant has to say. Unless it lines up with the Bible, it's a lie. The Bible is our source for all things true!

What Does the Bible Say About Prayer?

Through prayer we cultivate our relationship with Jesus, find peace in storms, receive power to be disciples, and learn to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. Nothing can take its place!

Our primary example is Christ Jesus Himself! The disciples saw the things Jesus did. They saw that prayer was more important than food, sleep, or even ministry. They saw how He made time daily to pray. It compelled them to ask, "Lord, teach us to pray..."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 says: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Paul, the writer of this verse, had experienced the effectiveness of prayer and the connection made to the Father God while in prayer.

In Acts 16:16-33, Paul and Silas were put into jail because they cast a demon out of a young girl and were accused of teaching unlawful customs. In the middle of the night they began to pray and sing and in the midst of this the earth began to shake, the prison doors were flung open, and all of the prisoner's chains were loosed... Amazing!!!

On a prior occasion (Acts 5:17-21), with similar circumstances, several apostles were imprisoned not long after receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit while in prayer. An angel of the Lord appeared, opened the prison doors, then commissioned them to preach boldly.

Prayer has many facets including waiting on the Lord, praying for others, asking for what you need, listening to God, standing in spiritual warfare, thanking God, and offering praise to God.

What Does Prayer Accomplish?

Prayer releases the power of God into your life. James 5:16 says: "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results." Many times, there are situations in your life that cannot be solved by your own wisdom or understanding. You need something more! The wisdom and power of God is released through prayer... then His wisdom will guide you to the perfect answer!

Prayer also defeats the devil as you resist him with authority. That authority belongs to Christ and He has given it to you. James 4:7 says: "So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." The devil won't stand in the presence of the name of Jesus in prayer. He will flee... quickly!

When Jesus was going to confront the deepest hell of separation from God through going to the cross, He prayed.

Matthew 26:39-41 says: "He (Jesus) went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground, praying 'My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want Your will, not mine.' Then He returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, 'Couldn't you stay awake and watch with me even one hour? Keep alert and pray, otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak!'"

Jesus knew that His disciples were going to have to endure much, and He told them to pray with Him. When prayer is a regular part of your life, you are more alert to the devil's tactics.

How Can I Know That God Has Heard And Will Answer Me?

By becoming familiar with the character of God you can become certain of His answers to your prayers. His will is spelled out in His Word. Also, becoming familiar with who you are and having the deposit for all promises – the Holy Spirit – gives you confidence.

James 4:2-3 says: “...you don’t have what you want because you don’t ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don’t get it because your motives are all wrong - you want only what will give you pleasure.”

Jesus said that all things would be given to us if we ask rightly. So what is the right way to pray?

- Asking in faith (James 5:13-18).
- Believing that God will hear and answer what you’re praying for (Mark 11:22-24).
- Keeping forgiveness as a prominent part of your life (Mark 11:25, 26).
- Following Jesus’ example of prayer (Matthew 6:6-13; John 17).
- Practicing praying (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Prayer brings us into the presence of God and allows us the opportunity of being a part of what God wants to do on the earth.

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