
THE SCRIPTURES
HIS WORD · MY WITNESS

“Your words were found, and I ate them” (Jeremiah 15:16)

the·sau·rus | \ thi-ˈsôr-əs

- 1 a : a book of words or of information
b : a list of subject headings or descriptors
 - 2 : **treasury, storehouse**
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In public High School in Germany I got to carry small Luther Bibles from the teacher's lounge to the classroom. Though I understood little of that book I knew it was different from all the other textbooks; even the pages had a special smell! Later, as an exchange student from Germany, I acquired my first English Bible (a leather-bound RSV). Translations didn't matter at the time - I devoured this precious Bible daily and became a different person. I still didn't understand much of it. But as Mark Twain supposedly once quipped: “It ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it's the parts that I do understand!”

“Bring me the scrolls!” (2 Timothy 4:13)

God's Word is actively creative (Genesis 1:3), “a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path” (Psalm 119:105), “given by inspiration of God and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16); it is essential for life (Mt 4:4) and “sharper than any two edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12). The Old and New Testaments manuscripts are reliable in quality and quantity and form the only basis for all faith and practice, superseding all human creeds (Isaiah 8:20; John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:17). While hearing the Word of God catalyzes faith (Romans 10:17), we are also called to be “doers of the word” (James 1:22-23). Therefore “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16; Psalm 119:11), trusting that its distribution will not “return void” (Isaiah 55:11).

“Study to show yourself approved” (2 Timothy 2:15)

The preservation of a text preserves the identity of a people. “To them were committed the oracles of God” (Romans 3:2) - one could say that more than Israel kept God's Word the Word of God has kept Israel. Holy Writ birthed the Reformation and liberated the laity. Scripture will sustain your spirit and empower your ministry. *Read! Read with*

faith; it was distrust in the word of God that prompted the fall of humanity: “Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Gen 3:1). Take Him by His word. And principally read for yourself, not through the eyes of third parties. Despite resource-rich digital options a paper copy of Scripture offers significant advantages for a three-dimensional experience and tactile engagement. Paper is more patient and permanent than screens. You should miss your Bible if you lost it.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Read for yourself, not just for sermon preparation and public discourse. You are a sinner first and a servant second. A secret reading plan that fills your heart and mind with the Word will grow you spiritually like nothing else (in conjunction with persistent prayer). It will spill over into the pew; saints and sinners will notice. Escape the shallow, “samo-samo” sermon fodder served every week in many pulpits.

Make the study of His Word a priority in your daily routine. Once your day gets started and the demands of life knock on your door it is difficult to pay attention to His voice and process His Word.

- Read for Intimacy · Intellect · Intercession · Implementation
- This requires Time · Place · Matter · Awareness of Threats

Approach Scripture as a long-term investment; otherwise it denigrates into a high-pressure necessity for sermon preparation and presentations. Output requires input. In time your “Bible greenhouse” will grow roots that ensure a plentiful harvest.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out the of the mouth of God!” (Matthew 4:4)

Treat the Word with respect. The architecture of older Protestant churches elevated the pulpit - the preacher ascended to the proclamation of the Word of God! For this public ascent one must privately descend into the depth of Scripture. Don't settle for a life of superficial entertainment. Creation > Consumption. Caution: Bible software can save much time and deepen your background information but clicks and information overload cannot and must not take the place of disciplined study. As experienced hikers say in the German Alps: “We don't have time for shortcuts!” Neither Isaiah nor Paul had computers at their disposal; if the process of revelation/inspiration functioned without digital dependency, the hermeneutical process can do so likewise.

Oliver Glanz, Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at the Andrews Theological Seminary once noted (unpublished),

The primary text seems to be so much more difficult than the textbook the student has read. The real text does not know of mental fast-food chains nor does it provide directions for those convenient mental drive-ins. But the “raw” text is also not a desert with no food or vegetation. It's full of delicious fruits and nutritious vegetables waiting to be harvested. But modern textbooks do not primarily focus on developing farming and cooking skills – they rather focus on food delivery.

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39 KJV).

Become an expert of a Bible book. Sooner rather than later read the Bible cover to cover; many saints follow this method faithfully. However, a close and concentrated study of a portion is much preferred over a hasty completion of a daily reading plan:

. . . there is but little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Scriptures. One may read the whole Bible through and yet fail to see its beauty or comprehend its deep and hidden meaning. One passage studied until its significance is clear to the mind and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained. Keep your Bible with you. As you have opportunity, read it; fix the texts in your memory. Even while you are walking the streets you may read a passage and meditate upon it, thus fixing it in the mind (SC 90.2).

Slowly - slowly! - memorize some key passages as your Scripture arsenal. Oh the power of the well-trained recall of His Word, including for special ministry events such as communion services, weddings and funerals.

“But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones” (Jeremiah 20:9)

Develop your own Study Bible. Most Study Bibles do not comment on the very verse you need information on. The same Bible questions will be posed over and over - develop a repertoire of answers. This is a lifetime task; start today!

Ad Fontes!

If you know more than one language, become proficient in teaching and preaching the Word accordingly. But certainly wrestle with the Word in the original if you went through the trouble of learning the biblical languages. What an arduous task - capitalize on it instead of discarding it as an academic nuisance. Your preaching will become preeminently richer.

“Reading the Bible in translation is like kissing your new bride through a veil!”

Haim Nachman Bialik

Martin Luther once observed that “languages are the scabbard [sheath] that contains the sword of the Spirit;” “if the languages were revived a hole would be knocked in his [the devil’s] kingdom.”

“Oh, for the day when prayer and grammar will meet each other with great spiritual combustion!” (John Piper, in Pratico/Van Pelt, BBH, xx).

Tyndale wrote from prison: “But above all, I beg and entreat your clemency earnestly to intercede with the lord commissary, that he would design to allow me the use of my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Lexicon, and that I might employ my time with that study.” (<https://www.bible-researcher.com/tyndale3.html>)
(See below for additional quotes making this case)

“The times demand an intelligent, educated ministry, not novices . . . This state of things calls for the use of every power of the intellect” as “minds have not been exercised to their fullest capacity. . . . Our ministers must be men who are wholly consecrated to God, men of no mean culture” (5T 528).

There is a time for milk, but the pew is also starving for meat! Have you ever heard a sermon on Nahum? Obadiah? 2 John? Do you know what their main message is? Point made. Get to know His Word. . . . *Dig up gold!* At the same time let children understand God’s Word - and yours.

Make people look forward to your exposition of the Word. *Feed the flock!* Ironically, intriguingly, feeding the flock will make God’s people become hungry for the Word themselves. Again, it was primarily the Word in the hands of the people that fueled the Reformation. It changed a generation; it altered the world forever! But don’t get a big head . . . As preachers we are just beggars telling other beggars where to find bread!

Finally, intriguingly, the Word is the spousal duty of a husband to his wife! “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27).

“Bring me the scrolls!” (2 Timothy 4:13)

Ingo Sorke, PhD · Remnant Research

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Case Study: His Word is Life-Essential - The Psalms as Sample

Ps 119:9 “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.”

Ps 119:11 “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”

Ps 119:16 “I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word. 17 Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word.”

Ps 119:25 “My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to Your word.”

Ps 119:28 “My soul melts from heaviness; Strengthen me according to Your word.”

Ps 119:38 “Establish Your word to Your servant, who is devoted to fearing You.”

Ps 119:41 “Let Your mercies come also to me, O LORD—Your salvation according to Your word. 42 So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word.”

Ps 119:50 “This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life.”

Ps 119:58 “I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; be merciful to me according to Your word.”

Ps 119:65 “You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word.”

Ps 119:67 “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.”

Ps 119:74 “Those who fear You will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in Your word.”

Ps 119:76 “Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your word to Your servant.”

Ps 119:81 “My soul faints for Your salvation, but I hope in Your word. 82 My eyes fail from searching Your word, Saying, “When will You comfort me?”

Ps 119:89 “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.”

Ps 119:101 “I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word.”

Ps 119:105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Ps 119:107 “I am afflicted very much; revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.”

Ps 119:114 “You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.”

Ps 119:116 “Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope.”

Ps 119:133 “Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.”

Ps 119:140 “Your word is very pure; therefore Your servant loves it.”

Ps 119:147 “I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word. 148 My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word.”

Ps 119:154 “Plead my cause and redeem me; revive me according to Your word.”

Ps 119:158 “I see the treacherous, and am disgusted, because they do not keep Your word.”

Ps 119:160 “The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever. 161 Princes persecute me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of Your word. 162 I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure.”

Ps 119:169 “Let my cry come before You, O LORD; give me understanding according to Your word. 170 Let my supplication come before You; deliver me according to Your word.”

Ps 119:172 “My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness.”

Ps 138:2 “I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name.”

**“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth:
it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please,
and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).**

Quotes that Equip

“A man has deprived himself of the best there is in the world who has deprived himself of this, a knowledge of the Bible. When you have read the Bible, you will know that it is the Word of God, because you will have found it the key to your own happiness, and your own duty.” - Woodrow Wilson

“A man’s word is a little sound, that flies into the air, and soon vanishes; but the Word of God is greater than heaven and earth, yea, greater than death and hell, for it forms part of the power of God, and endures everlastingly . . . The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me.” - Martin Luther

“If we would destroy the Christian religion, we must first of all destroy man’s belief in the Bible.” - Voltaire

“So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society. I have for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year.” - John Quincy Adams

“A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.” - Theodore Roosevelt

“There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write ‘damnation’ with your fingers.” - Charles Spurgeon

“I visit many good books . . . but I live by the Bible.” - Charles Spurgeon

“No second-hand knowledge of the revelation of God for the salvation of a ruined world can suffice the needs of a ministry whose function it is to convey this revelation

to men, commend it to their acceptance and apply it in detail to their needs—to all their needs, from the moment that they are called into participation in the grace of God, until the moment when they stand perfect in God’s sight, built up by his Spirit into new men. For such a ministry as this the most complete knowledge of the wisdom of the world supplies no equipment; the most fervid enthusiasm of service leaves without furnishing. Nothing will suffice for it but to know; to know the Book; to know it at first hand; and to know it through and through. And what is required first of all for training men for such a ministry is that the Book should be given them in its very words as it has come from God’s hand and in the fullness of its meaning, as that meaning has been ascertained by the labors of generations of men of God who have brought to bear upon it all the resources of sanctified scholarship and consecrated thought.” - B. B. Warfield, “Our Seminary Curriculum,” *Presbyterian* (September, 1909): 7-8.

“Do I understand Greek and Hebrew? Otherwise, how can I undertake (as every minister does), not only to explain books which are written therein, but to defend them against all opponents? Am I not at the mercy of every one who does understand, or even pretends to understand, the original? For which way can I confute his pretence? Do I understand the language of the Old Testament? critically? at all? Can I read into English one of David’s Psalms; or even the first chapter of Genesis? Do I understand the language of the New Testament? Am I a critical master of it? Have I enough of it even to read into English the first chapter of St. Luke? If not, how many years did I spend in school? How many at the university? And what was I doing all those years? Ought not shame to cover my face?” - John Wesley, “An Address to the Clergy,” *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Henry D. Rack (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 10:491.

“The main point is, with all and above all, study the Greek and Hebrew Bible, and the love of Christ” - John Wesley, *The Letters of John Wesley* (London: Epworth, 1931), 3:163.

Jerome: “To subdue [the promptings of sin] I put myself in the hands of one of the brethren who had been a Hebrew before his conversion, and asked him to teach me his language. Thus ... I now began to learn the alphabet again and practice hard and guttural words. ... I thank the Lord that from a bitter seed of learning I am now plucking sweet fruits” (Jerome, translator of the Vulgate, c. 342-420).

J.A. Froude: “Never was [a] volume [Erasmus’ Greek New Testament] more passionately devoured. A hundred thousand copies were soon sold in France alone. The fire spread, as it spread behind Samson’s foxes in the Philistine’s corn. The clergy’s skins were tender from a long impurity. They shrieked from the pulpit and platform, and made Europe ring with their clamour.”

Bitzer: “The more a theologian detaches himself from the basic Hebrew and Greek text of Holy Scripture, the more he detaches himself from the source of real theology! And real theology is the foundation of a fruitful and blessed ministry” (*Light on the Path*, 10).

Bruce Waltke: “I must confess that I find it difficult to engage theological presentations that have not been purged through the fire of careful exegesis” (BK Waltke, Prof. of Old Testament Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary).

George Mueller: “I now studied much, about 12 hours a day, chiefly Hebrew . . . [and] committed portions of the Hebrew Old testament to memory; and this I did with prayer, often falling on my knees . . . I looked up to the Lord even whilst turning over the leaves of my Hebrew dictionary” (G. Mueller, Autobiography of George Mueller, 31).

George Whitefield: “Though weak, I often spent two hours in my evening retirements and prayed over my Greek New Testament, and Bishop Hall’s most excellent Contemplations, every hour that my health would permit” (in Dallimore, George Whitefield, vol. 1:77).

Walt Whitman: “Language ... is not an abstract construction of the learned, or of dictionary-makers, but is something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity, and has its bases broad and low, close to the ground.”

“The Scriptures are the great agency in the transformation of character. . . . If studied and obeyed, the word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute” (COL 100).

“The word of God is to be our study. We are to educate our children in the truths found therein. It is an inexhaustible treasure; but men fail to find this treasure because they do not search until it is within their possession” (COL 109).

“The study of the Bible is superior to all other study in strengthening the intellect” (MYP 253).

“The Scriptures need not be read by the dim light of tradition or human speculation. As well might we try to give light to the sun with a torch as to explain the Scriptures by human tradition or imagination. God’s holy word needs not the torchlight glimmer of earth to make its glories distinguishable. It is light in itself - the glory of God revealed, and beside it every other light is dim. But there must be earnest study and close investigation” (COL 111).

“Our salvation depends on a knowledge of the truth contained in the Scriptures. It is God’s will that we should possess this. Search, O search the precious Bible with hungry hearts. Explore God’s word as the miner explores the earth to find veins of gold. Never give up the search until you have ascertained your relation to God and His will in regard to you” (COL 111).

“The appreciation of the Bible grows with its study” (COL 132).

“If placed under the control of His Spirit, the more thoroughly the intellect is cultivated, the more effectively it can be used in the service of God. The uneducated man who is consecrated to God and who longs to bless others can be, and is, used by the Lord in His service. But those who, with the same spirit of consecration, have had the benefit of a thorough education, can do a much more extensive work for Christ. They stand on vantage ground” (COL 333).

“Let every student take his Bible and place himself in communion with the great Teacher. Let the mind be trained and disciplined to wrestle with hard problems in the search for divine truth” (COL 334).

“The reason why the youth, and even those of mature years, are so easily led into temptation and sin, is that they do not study the word of God and meditate upon it as they should. The lack of firm, decided will power, which is manifest in life and character, results from neglect of the sacred instruction of God’s word” (MH 458).

“If the word of God were appreciated as it should be, both young and old would possess an inward rectitude, a strength of principle, that would enable them to resist temptation” (MH 459).

“If God’s word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose, that is rarely seen in these times” (FCE 126).

“The Bible is God’s voice speaking to us, just as surely as though we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, with what awe would we open God’s Word, and with what earnestness would we search its precepts! The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One” (6T 393).

“The Bible was not written for the scholar alone; on the contrary, it was designed for the common people. The great truths necessary for salvation are made as clear as noonday; and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God” (SC 89).

“Since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word. The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. Says the apostle John, ‘Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.’ I John 4:1. And Isaiah declares, ‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ Isaiah 8:20” (GC vii).

“One sentence of Scripture is of more value than ten thousand of man’s ideas or arguments” (7T 71).

“An understanding of Bible truth depends not so much on the power of intellect brought to the search as on the singleness of purpose, the earnest longing after righteousness” (GC 599).

“Let the youth, then, be taught to give close study to the word of God. Received into the soul, it will prove a mighty barricade against temptation. “Thy word,” the psalmist declares, “have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.” “By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.” Ps 119:11; 17:4. The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God’s original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption” (Ed 190).

"His words are not permits, not suggestions, but the decisions of an infallible Judge. They are divine maxims, the very specified laws which will judge us in the last days. No man is excusable for acting as though he were at liberty to cancel the decisions of God, to disregard His directions and injunctions, to review them, criticize them, reverse them as he sees fit. The religion of every man must be in harmony with the Bible. No man can disregard one word of God, or walk contrary to his expressed will, receiving or rejecting it as he pleases, and be guiltless in the judgment. He will be brought face to face with the record, and will have to answer to the charge against him” (Letter 24, 1890, pp. 7, 8. To "Dear Brother Saxby," August 13, 1890 | 4MR 450.2).

“When God’s Word is studied, comprehended, and obeyed, a bright light will be reflected to the world; new truths, received and acted upon, will bind us in strong bonds to Jesus. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God’s Word is infallible. Instead of wrangling with one another, let men exalt the Lord. Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying, “It is written.” Let us lift up the banner on which is inscribed, The Bible our rule of faith and discipline” (RH, December 15, 1885 | 1SM 416.2).

“But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.” (GC 595.1)

