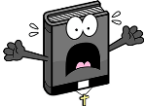


01 – YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BIBLE

- ✓ I'm going to ask you a question that you've probably never been asked before: **How's your relationship with your Bible?** There are all *kinds* of relationships you can have with your Bible. Let's see if we can locate ourselves. (The first few you'll find mostly in unbelievers.)

1. Non-Existent – “I never read it, and it doesn't bother me. It's just not a part of my life.” 
2. Painful – “I've read parts of it – (and I still DO read it sometimes). But I don't like how it makes me feel. I either feel *guilty* because it points out my flaws, or I feel *dumb* because I don't understand it.” 
3. Antagonistic – “I grew up reading it. But now, there's so much I don't agree with! To me, it seems sexist, racist, and judgmental. Whenever I read it, I just get upset.” 
4. It's My Life-Preserver – “I reach for it when I'm in trouble.”
5. Genie-in-a-Bottle – “I just want to 'rub the lamp', get my three wishes, then go on with my life. I don't really want to change.”
6. Sporadic – “My relationship could be described as 'on again/off again'. I enjoy the Bible, but I can't seem to be consistent.”
7. Regular, But Unfruitful – “I read it nearly every day, but honestly, I don't get as much out of it as I'd like to.” 
8. Hotline to Heaven – The Bible is 'God speaking to me'. It's life-giving and life-transforming.” 

- Wherever you find yourself right now ... in this series, we want to move you closer to the goal – (where the Word is a powerful connection to Heaven for you).

Lifeway Research Asked: (Only Evangelicals)

- a.) How Often Do You Read the Bible? Daily 11%, Once a Week 27%, Once a Month 27%, Rarely or Never 34%.
 - b.) How Often Do You Study the Bible? Daily 3%, Once a Week 21%, Once a Month 22%, Rarely or Never 53%. (2 Tim. 2:15)
- ✓ The biggest reason people said they don't study: “They don't know *how* to study”. (They were never *taught* how to study, so they don't do it. That's understandable!) My goal in this series is to make your “Word time” as consistent and as productive as it can be, and to teach you the basics of Bible study.

Why Have a Daily “Word Time”?

1. God Thinks It's Important

Prov. 4:7 – “**Above all and before all**, do this: Get Wisdom! **Write this at the top of your list**: Get Understanding!”

Another Translation: “**With all of your energy, passion, and resources**, get understanding.”

Prov. 3:13-15 – “Happy is the man that finds wisdom, and the man that gets understanding. It's more valuable than jewels; **nothing you desire can compare with it**.” (Why is it so important?)

2. It's the Primary Way You Get to Know God

- ✓ You can't know God apart from the Bible. That's where He reveals Himself. (Yes, God reveals Himself, *to a point*, in nature. But there's a lot about Him that's *not* revealed in nature. What He likes/doesn't like, what He values, what He does/will never do.)

3. We Learn “Life Lessons” From the Word

- ✓ You've probably heard people say, “Experience is the best teacher”.

That's not true! Experience is a *terrible* teacher! The problem with experience is – it gives you the test first, and the lesson afterwards. (What if your high school Algebra teacher had used that method? What if he walked in on the first day of the semester and handed you the final exam? Then, once you'd written the final, and your mark was recorded, THEN he began to teach you the material. You wouldn't think he was a good teacher at all!)

- ✓ But that's what experience does! You're living your life – minding your own business – when life presents you with a test. There you stand at a fork in the road! You're going to choose one path or the other. Whichever direction you choose, you're going to learn a lesson. But, if you choose the wrong path, you'll be left bruised and bleeding.
- ✓ The Word of God is a MUCH better teacher. It gives you the lesson first. Then when life presents you with the test, you'll know which way to go, and you can pass the test every time. (Or to say it another way: You *can* learn things through experience – but who said it has to be *your* experience? You can learn from the experiences of David, and Joseph, and Saul and a host of others. You can see for yourself, the effects of sin. Then, when you're faced with that same test, you can make the right decision.

4. It'll Keep You Safe In An Age of Deception

- ✓ Not only does the Bible warn us about false teachers, but it also speaks of false miracles, signs and wonders. (Not everything that's supernatural is of God.) All those things need to be judged by the Word (1 John 4:1). False teachers and false miracles are no joke. Your life can be shipwrecked.

You Get the Most Out of the Word When:

(i) You Have a High Opinion of It

- ✓ We've talked before about David's attitude toward the Word (Ps. 33:4; Ps. 119:128). Paul's attitude was just as good.

1 Tim. 1:15 (Wuest) – “Trustworthy is the Word, and worthy of UNQUALIFIED ACCEPTANCE ...”

- ✓ Our attitude toward the Word will determine how we approach it. If I have a high opinion of the Word, then I'll assume the role of a student, and I'll let the Word teach ME. If I have a low opinion of the Word, then I see myself as above the Word, and I'll start to judge IT. (It's not our place to judge the Word! According to Jesus, one day, the Word will judge us! John 12:48.)

(ii) You Realize What It Will Do For You

- ✓ Reading the Bible is not a “religious duty”! There are blessings that come into your life, when you prioritize the Word. (I'll say it another way. Many of the things that people chase in life, automatically come to you, when you put the Word first place. Don't chase after the blessings. Chase after the Word!)

Joshua 1:7 – “Be sure to obey all the teaching (the Law) my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left.”

- ✓ What does that mean? In Prov. 3:13-16, the Word is personified as a woman who holds “length of days” in her right hand, and “riches and honor” in her left. So many people in this world are chasing riches and honor! But, if you'll forget about the riches and honor and chase the Word, the riches and honor will come to you WITHOUT you having to chase them.) What else comes with the Word?
- a.) Promotion/Success – “Exalt the Word, and she shall promote you.” (Prov 4:8, Joshua 1:8 NEB)
- b.) Health – “My words are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.” (Ps. 107:20, Prov. 4:20-22)
- c.) Freedom – “You shall know the truth [John 17:17], and the truth will make you free.” (John 8:32)
- d.) Faith, Joy and Peace – (Ro. 10:17, John 15:11, 16:33)