

January to March 2024
Teenz RPG Series on

Importance of the Bible

Why is the Bible so Important?

Do pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance before you begin your devotional time, for unless the Spirit reveals the meaning, we cannot understand scripture (1 Corinthians 2:10). Then you must read the scripture text; please don't be tempted to read the devotional alone without reading the Bible. Memorising the scripture text will help you meditate upon it (Psalm 1:2), even long after you have finished your devotional time. After reading the devotional, always end with self-reflection: compare yourself against the standard of God's Word, and humbly yield to the Holy Spirit to direct you towards that standard (James 1:23-25). Be ye doers of the Word, not hearers only!

At the end of this series, may you be able to say as David said,

*"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee,
my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."*

(Psalm 63:1)

May all glory be God's alone!

Dn Milton Ang

On behalf of the Teenz RPG committee

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The English word ‘Bible’ is from the Greek Word *‘biblos’* which simply means book or scroll. In a sense, that is what the Bible is – it is basically a rather thick tome that consists of words on pages that make up verses, chapters and books. Yet we know that the Bible is far more than that. It is a book unlike any other book in the world, for it is the perfect Word of God – the only book mankind has, that is given to us through the direct revelation from God.

That is how the Christians at Thessalonica understood Paul’s teachings to them, for Paul testified of them in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 *“when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God”*. They understood that Paul and the other Apostles spoke with the same authority as the prophets of old, that as the mouthpiece of God, the messages that they spoke and penned carried with them the authority of *‘Thus saith the Lord’*.

This same thought is well encapsulated by Dean Burgon: *“The Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne! Every Book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High! The Bible is none other than the Word of God: not some part of it more, some part of it less; but all alike, the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the Throne; faultless, unerring, supreme!”* The phrase *“Thus saith the Lord”* appears 415 times in the Bible, a constant reminder that the Bible is the Word of God. Notice 1 Thessalonians 2:13 uses the present tense *“...but as it is in truth, the word of God”*, and like Dean Burgon who also uses the present tense, every true believer by faith must receive the Bible as the very Word of God; written many centuries ago no doubt, but every word inspired by God Himself (2 Timothy 3:16), applicable today and forever more.

So what remains, dear teen, is to ask yourself: what is the Bible to you? As man’s words, or as God’s Word? Only partially containing God’s Word, or every letter of the Bible as God’s Word? Containing some errors, or totally true? I pray for you to have faith to receive the Bible as God’s Word. For man’s words cannot convince one of this fact; only the Holy Spirit *“... which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”*

Thought: What is the Bible to you?

Prayer: May I accept all of the Bible as God’s Word.

“...Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures,
neither the power of God?”

WHAT DOES INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE MEAN?

Some critics of the Bible say that because the books of the Bible were written by so many different people over a large span of time, and are ridden with contradictions and discrepancies, therefore the Bible could not possibly be the Word of God, but the words of men. They assert that no one can insist that the Bible is perfect, for it is filled with errors, and is not even reliable as a historical document. Is this true?

2 Timothy 3:16 clearly asserts that *“all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”* The phrase *“given by inspiration of God”* in Greek literally means God breathed. This means that every word of the Bible is exactly given and precisely as God intended it to be. The Holy Spirit moved (2 Peter 1:21) each of the Biblical writers to write the exact words in the manner that He wanted them to write. Although each author would retain their individual writing styles and vocabulary, their writings are all alike the inspired Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16 is therefore the proof text of the doctrine of Verbal Plenary Inspiration, meaning that every (‘plenary’) word (‘verbal’) is inspired of God. The Bible Itself says so, and therefore by faith we must believe it to be so, just as in yesterday’s reading every true believer will believe that the Bible is God’s Word. That being said, the Bible has to be perfect, for how can a perfect God give us an imperfect Word?

Dear teen, do not be tempted to treat the Bible as a literature text, or as a compilation of stories for good bedtime reading. This is no ordinary book; God spoke every word, and you must treat each word of Scripture as such. Once you do so, you should look to the Bible to understand what truth is (‘doctrine’), where you fall short (‘reproof’), how you should then correct your ways (‘correction’) and how you should keep from falling away from the truth (‘instruction in righteousness’). It is no surprise that those who are in sin or backsliding into sin often treat the Bible lightly. Do you?

Thought: Do I treat the Bible lightly?

Prayer: May I keep from backsliding by regularly meditating on the Bible!

“For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE BIBLE?

I read in today’s newspaper that there are several compulsive gamblers who seek help for their addiction by attending self-help groups; but sadly when emerging from these group meetings, all they gain is the comfort knowing they are not alone in their struggles!

The Bible is the solution to all of life’s problems. Without the Bible, we only have the general revelation of God through His creation: we know God exists through evidence of intelligent design. With the Bible, we have the special revelation of God; we can see that man’s problem is sin which must be punished, we can understand the nature of God, and we can realise God’s plan for man’s redemption from sin. Most importantly, the Bible tells us of the Lord Jesus Christ, and how we must believe in Him by faith in order to be saved. In John 5:39 the Lord Jesus Christ clearly declares: *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”* The Bible is the word of everlasting life; without it, we can only look towards a hopeless end. Without the Bible, we cannot realise that every one of us is a sinner. Without the Bible, we do not realise that the punishment for such sin is eternal death in hell. Only the Bible reveals to us that the solution to this is Christ Jesus, for only He has died for us, the sinless for the sinner, and conquered sin and death on our behalf.

The Bible reveals to the gambler his love for money is sinful, and while he might temporarily turn away from gambling because he does not want to hurt his family, the lust within himself may eventually turn him back to gambling again. More importantly, the punishment for sin is not just the harm on the family, but eternal death in hellfire. The gambler must confess his sin before God, and confess Christ as His Lord and Saviour. With the Holy Spirit’s help, the gambler realises through the Bible that Christ is now His master, not sin, and armed with God’s Word with much prayer and submission to Christ, he will be able to withstand temptation, and follow after righteousness.

Dear teen, do you realise how important the Bible is? It is the only way in which we can know of Christ, and attain eternal life.

Thought: Do I realise that the Bible is the solution to life’s greatest problem?

Prayer: May I look to the Bible always!

“they... searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

WHAT IF WE DID NOT USE THE BIBLE?

Dear teen, when seeking wisdom and advice or faced with life's problems, who do you consult? Your best friends at school? Articles in a magazine or on the internet? Secular books or blogs written by successful and famous people or life coaches?

Isaiah 8:19-20 states: *“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”* In times of trouble, instead of seeking God, the people of Israel sought necromancers who claimed to be familiar with the spirits of the dead, and to wizards who supposedly performed magic. Isaiah pointed out it was folly for the living to seek answers from the dead. They should instead follow the Law, not only because the Law expressly forbade consulting such necromancers and wizards (Deuteronomy 18:10-11), but also they should judge according to the Law all the advice these necromancers and wizards gave. If anyone of them thus contradicted the Law, this proved that they were not of God. Verses 21-22 go on further to describe the desolate godless life that such people have, full of darkness and anguish, for they do not live by God's law.

The people of Israel consulted these necromancers and wizards because they thought that the advice was supernatural and powerful. You too might have your favourite sources of advice. Be very careful; judge all advice according to the Bible. If the advice contradicts the Bible even in part, you should shun the advice, for it is clear that the advice is not godly. Look “to the law and to the testimony” first! Search God's Word for what it says on the problem. So often teens think the Bible does not say anything on the subject, and therefore do not look. When you look to other sources which are not godly, you are not only running the risk of sinning against God and turning away from God, but you also have to bear the consequences of any wrong decisions made by you.

Thought: Do I care about making the right decision?

Prayer: May I realise that every decision has consequences.

“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

HOW IS THE BIBLE “A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY”?

Many Charismatic churches today emphasise experience over the Word of God. Very often, their preaching will be based on some vision or dream that they “received of the Lord”, and compel the church to go in a certain direction or follow a particular teaching simply because they claim that “God spoke to me last night”.

Peter in 2 Peter 1:16-18 warns we must never follow “*cunningly devised fables*”, but he speaks the truth as an eyewitness to both Jesus’ baptism and transfiguration, where at both times God confirmed that Jesus is His Son. In 2 Peter 1:19 he goes on to say “*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*” What he means is that we must take heed to, and seek direction from Scripture only. This is the certain set of instructions that God has entrusted to us, as a light to guide our lives. Even though Peter had the wonderful experience of witnessing and experiencing the ministry of Christ in the flesh, he still had such a high view and respect for the written Word of God, for the latter is available to all generations and would abide forever. The scriptures are sufficient for our faith, a light to reveal our sin in this dark world we live in (Psalm 119:105), and this is the Word that we must follow and trust instead of cunningly devised fables, till Christ returns (“until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”).

Dear teen, do not be fooled by what the world does in preaching experience over God’s Word. Be not attracted to a church which claims tolerance of sinners is more important than correction of sin, that numbers in the congregation is the priority over Bible study, that worship means doing what the congregation enjoys rather than doing what God wants, that pastors who speak brilliantly and seek prosperous lives should be followed rather than pastors who may not be as eloquent or entertaining, but live lives that are examples to the flock. It is our human weakness that feels intolerance should be abhorred, that it is better to be in a big group than in a small one, or that if something feels so right it cannot be wrong. Remember that it is the Bible that is inerrant and infallible; men are not, experiences are not.

Thought: Do I believe that scripture is more important than experience?

Prayer: May I use God’s Word as the yardstick for everything!

BUT DIDN'T MAN WRITE THE BIBLE?

Yesterday, we learnt that the Bible alone should be the basis of our faith, and not experiences or anything else. But you may be wondering – wasn't the Bible penned by the hands of men? And if so, how can the words of fallible men serve as the sole authority for our lives?

The answer lies in today's reading. *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (2 Peter 1:21). The phrase “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” tells us that, while the words of Scripture were indeed written down by the hands of men, they wrote not according to their own will or wisdom, but through the Holy Spirit's direction and guidance. Interestingly, the Greek word for “moved” here is the same as the word translated as “drive” in Acts 27:15. In that passage, Paul and his companions were on board a ship. It had been seized by a violent and strong wind such that the sailors could no longer direct the ship, and could only let the ship be driven and carried along by the wind. In the same manner, these holy men of God spoken of in today's passage were driven and carried along by a supernatural influence that guided them as they penned the words of Scripture. Just as a ship which is tossed about by the wind has no choice but to go wherever the wind blows it, likewise the writers of the Bible were wholly surrendered to the Holy Spirit's leading and simply wrote whatever the Holy Spirit guided them to. Therefore, we can be sure that the Bible which we have in our hands today is the very Word of God.

Dear teen, may you thus never doubt the source of the words of Scripture. Because it is the very Word of God, you can have full assurance that it holds the key to all of life's problems. May you trust in it and keep it close to your heart, that you may be able to find guidance throughout your life on this earth.

Thought: The Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne!

Prayer: Lord, help me to trust fully in Your Words which You have given to us in the Bible.

CAN WE ADD TO THE BIBLE TODAY?

I have a friend who is a very devout Catholic. Once, I tried to point out that many of the doctrines which he believes in such as the Assumption of Mary (that her earthly body was taken up to heaven at the end of her life) or the existence of Purgatory (a place of suffering where all souls must go to be purged after physical death) are found nowhere in the Bible! However, he answered that these doctrines have been laid down by the Pope, or found in the writings of the Early Church Fathers and other Apocryphal material, and are therefore fully accepted as doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC).

What warning does the Bible give against such additions to God's Word? Today's reading tell us that *“If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book”* (Revelation 22:18). This is indeed an extremely stern and serious warning! It emphasises to us how sacred and important the Bible is, and how it is viewed by God as the complete and sufficient authority for our lives. Similarly, God warns against subtracting from any portion of Scripture. For those who are guilty of this, *“God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”* (Revelation 22:19). This verse does not teach that we can lose our salvation; rather, it suggests that those who could commit such a heinous sin are not even saved in the first place, and have no part at all in heaven. Such stern warnings also imply the fact that we have in our hands a perfect yardstick from which we cannot take away or add to, for how can we add or take away from something that is fixed?

Knowing therefore that we have a complete and perfect Bible in our hands today, we must never be tempted to tamper with it. When the RCC elevates the decrees of the Popes to be like Scripture, or adds the books of the Apocrypha to the Bible, they are effectively adding to the Word of God. When modern translations of the Bible edit away verses or words, they are taking away from the Word of God.

How about us? Have you been guilty of adding to the Bible, by trying to twist its words and squeezing out new meaning to justify some sin in your life? Or have you been guilty of subtracting from the Bible, by ignoring its commandments and living as if they do not even exist? May you repent of your sin today, and live your life in accordance to the words of Scripture.

Thought: The consequences for those who add to or subtract from Scripture are very serious!

Prayer: Lord, help me never to be guilty of this sin.

BUT ISN'T THE BIBLE OUT OF DATE?

A common mindset among many people I know is that, while the Bible is a good book that teaches some good moral principles on how we ought to live our lives, it is no longer relevant to us now. Because it was written such a long time ago, it can have relevance only to those who were living during that period in history, and not to us who are living in modern times in the 21st century. Furthermore they feel that many of the principles and teachings of the Bible are outdated, and no longer apply to our present day lives. Such views are taken not by unbelievers only, but even some believers subscribe to such thinking.

But what does the Bible have to say about this? *“But the word of the Lord endureth for ever”*. Amidst all the changes on earth, the Bible remains unchanged and unchanging. Though the flesh of man withers just like the grass, though the glory of man fades away like the flowers, the Word of the Lord continues to endure. And just as it was relevant and applicable to the people living at the time when it was written, so now it continues to be just as relevant and applicable to us living in today's world. Circumstances may change, but the truths of God's Word remain constant.

Secondly, this is the same *“word which by the gospel is preached unto you”*. Think back on your salvation. How did you come to know about God's salvation plan and the Lord Jesus Christ? Was it not through this same Bible? Indeed, these are the very words which are responsible for your salvation – can you then say that they are out of date and not relevant to your life? God's standards of holiness remain unchanged, as does the punishment for sin. The central message of Scripture concerning God's salvation plan for sinners – was relevant in the past, is relevant today, and will continue to be relevant for as long as sinful man remains on this earth.

Dear teen, may you thus never view the Bible as a dusty, old-fashioned and out of date book, but realise instead how valuable it is to hold God's unchanging truths in our hands. The problem is not that the Bible does not conform to our current worldview, but rather that we fail to conform our lives to the standards of the Bible.

Thought: God's Word was relevant in the past, is relevant today and will continue to be relevant forever.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be able to see how Your Word applies in my life.

HOW COME MY FRIENDS CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT?

Recently while tracting, I met a young man who had attended a church before and been exposed to the doctrines of Christianity, yet had not received the gift of salvation. Although he had read the Bible, he simply could not see how salvation could be so simple; rather, he believed that, in order to find salvation, one has to rely on his own effort and hard work.

Such experiences should not surprise us too much, for the Bible has already foretold that *“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). To the unregenerate sinner, he simply cannot understand nor accept spiritual things, because he lacks the key ingredient that will help him to understand spiritual things: the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that enlightens the mind and works in the hearts of men, in order that we are able in the first place to receive the gift of salvation. Then, after we are saved, the Holy Spirit continues to work in us to help us to understand and accept the spiritual truths that are taught in the Bible.

Does this mean that there is therefore no point sharing spiritual matters with our unsaved friends? Of course not! Our responsibility is still to do all that we can to share the gospel with those around us. In order for them to believe in and accept the gospel, they need to first hear it! At the same time, we should pray that God will soften their hearts and send the Holy Spirit, such that their eyes will be opened to the marvellous truths of God’s Word.

Dear teen, may you thus seek to do your part in helping your friends to know more about the gospel, and then commit the rest into God’s hands, trusting that He is able to give illumination into every sinful heart through the Holy Spirit. Do not be discouraged when you do not see any immediate response to your efforts at evangelism. We must always remember that salvation is of the Lord. We are but His mouthpieces to spread the good news of salvation to all who will hear it.

Thought: It is the Holy Spirit that brings understanding and illumination.

Prayer: Lord, thank You that You have opened my eyes.

HOW COME I CAN'T UNDERSTAND SOME PARTS?

As a young Christian, I found it hard to wrap my head around certain doctrines. One particular doctrine that I struggled with was on how we are to reconcile God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. I am sure that you can probably think of many things in the Bible that you do not fully understand too.

Do not fret, dear teen, if you find that there are certain parts of Scripture which you do not understand, for the Apostle Peter himself also recognised that there were certain parts of Paul's writings that were "*hard to be understood*". This refers to the difficulty which we face in comprehending certain parts of Scripture. Sometimes, the things of God are simply beyond the reach of our weak and finite human minds – we are unable to fully comprehend, while still in our sinful states, the wondrous things of heaven and eternity. Sometimes, the fault also lies with us, in that our hearts are so hardened that we refuse to accept certain things that are taught in the Bible.

The second part of today's reading also contains a warning to us – "*they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction*". There are some, who in order to try to force the teachings of the Bible to fit their man-centred worldviews, would twist the meanings of certain passages and interpret them in a way that they would like to. We are to be wary of such people who would pervert the Word of God, promoting false doctrines and leading others astray. Ultimately, such people will face punishment – but in the meanwhile, many fall victim to their false teachings.

Dear teen, even though you may find certain parts of Scripture difficult to understand, may you not be discouraged and therefore give up studying the Bible entirely. Without a firm grounding in the truths of God's Word, you would be easily swayed by these false teachers! God has promised the Holy Spirit to all believers, who will "*guide you into all truth*" (John 16:13). May you rely on Him to help you in your understanding of the Bible, and be a lifelong student of God's Word.

Thought: In the university of life, the Bible is the textbook and the Holy Spirit is the teacher!

Prayer: Lord, grant me understanding of Your Word.

HOW CAN I UNDERSTAND ANYTHING?

With so many warnings in the Bible of false doctrines, and of people who interpret the Bible erroneously, how can I be certain of any teaching from God’s Word? How do I know how to rightly interpret the Bible, so that I do not fall prey to such wrong teachings? If there are so many “*things hard to be understood*”, then how can I be sure that I can understand anything at all! Furthermore, I am but a youth, not well versed in Scripture knowledge.

Today’s reading tells us that “*the entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple*”. When the Holy Spirit enters the heart of a person, no matter how ‘simple-minded’ or seemingly uneducated he may be, the assurance is that he can understand the truth of the gospel and accept it. That is why even children can come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ at a very young age. What does that tell you about the Bible? Yes, certain parts of it may teach complex and difficult doctrines; yet, when you think about it, the underlying message of the Bible is truly so very clear and straightforward. We are all sinners in need of a Saviour. If we confess our sins and accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour, we can have eternal life and no longer fear the wrath of God. The message is certainly not hard to grasp, neither is the action required on our part difficult to do. In fact, while other religions are all about what works their followers need to do, or what standards they must achieve, Christianity is different in that it is about what has already been done – of Christ’s finished work on the cross.

Ironically, the beauty of simplicity becomes a stumbling block to some, because people find it hard to accept that salvation can be just so simple. A common response when people hear the gospel is “Huh? That’s all I have to do? How can it be so simple?!” Sadly, rather than rejoicing over the fact that Christ has already done all the work in our place and gratefully accepting His gracious offer, these people choose to turn their backs and reject Him.

Dear teen, may you be encouraged to share the gospel with your friends, knowing that its simple message alone is enough to save sinners. May you also pray that the Holy Spirit will grant illumination in their hearts, that they will be able to accept the simple message of the gospel.

Thought: The gospel message is simple, yet profound.

Prayer: Lord, help me to trust in the power of the gospel when I share it.

IS THE BIBLE CORRECT IN ALL AREAS?

A view that is common among many people is that, while the Bible is correct when it talks about matters related to the Christian faith like sin and salvation, it is less reliable concerning other areas such as history, geography and science. They claim that many of the dates and places are inaccurate, and because of the very primitive understanding of the time when the Bible was written, it is definitely wrong when it comes to certain scientific facts. We should therefore leave it to the historians, archaeologists and scientists to be the authorities on these matters. What do you think? Is this a view that true Christians should hold to?

In today's reading, Paul talks about the hope of eternal life which God has promised to all believers. He describes the character of God – *“God, that cannot lie”*. The meaning conveyed here is very clear. The God of the Bible is a God that is utterly incapable of error – he cannot, does not and will not lie! Every word that proceeds from God is the absolute truth.

Thus, we can then easily answer the question as to whether the Bible is correct in all areas. Knowing that the One who wrote the Bible is also the One who cannot lie, there can be no doubt in our minds that the Bible is free from all errors and mistakes in every single area! We also know that God is perfect in His wisdom and knowledge. As the creator of the universe, and having been the only one who has been around since the beginning (Genesis 1:1), He alone is the ultimate authority in everything. Hence, whenever the Biblical record goes against theories and concepts that men may come up with, we can be sure that the error lies with man's reasoning, and never God's. For example, Darwin's theory of evolution is taught in most schools today as fact; however, the Bible tells us clearly that the world was created by God out of nothing in six literal days. Should we trust an unproven theory of a fallible and sinful man, or of God, who cannot lie? Indeed *“...let God be true, but every man a liar”* (Romans 3:4).

Dear teen, may you thus never entertain the thought that the Bible may have errors, but be fully persuaded in your heart that the Bible is indeed correct in all areas. May you also be courageous to stand up to those who would claim otherwise.

Thought: The Bible can have no mistakes because its Author is divine.

Prayer: Lord, dispel all the doubts that I have concerning Your Word.

HOW TRUE IS GOD’S WORD?

I have a friend who sometimes has a tendency to make empty promises. This friend will impulsively promise to do certain things, but more often than not, he will not actually carry these plans out. I have since learnt not to put too much weight on this friend’s words.

Perhaps you have encountered people like that too. Sometimes, it can be disappointing when we realise that those promises were meaningless words! But we can be sure that there is One who will never fail us. In today’s reading, Jesus declares with great conviction that “*thy word is truth*”. All the words which God has spoken are 100% true. And where are these words to be found? In the Bible! Therefore, we can have full assurance that all that is written in the Bible is true, including things concerning the past, present, and even the future. The records of all the great men and women of the Bible are true, and have been preserved for us so that we can learn from and be encouraged by their godly examples. For us who are living as Christians today, we know that God has given us many wonderful promises that will help us in our journeys here on this earth. He has promised us His abiding presence, His grace in times of need, His comfort in times of trouble and His forgiveness in times of sin. As we look towards the future, we have the full assurance of the eternal hope of heaven – that we have a far better home that awaits us after this life is over.

Dear teen, have you ever doubted God’s Word? Have there been times when you have questioned His wisdom, or wondered if He had made some mistakes? Or has there been a time where you felt as if He had failed you, or not kept His promises? May you never doubt Him, but instead believe wholeheartedly that our God, whose word is truth, will never fail you. And may you also learn to be like our promise-keeping God, that your every word be “*Yea, yea; Nay, nay*” (Matthew 5:37).

Thought: God has never once failed me.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for being a promise-keeping God.

HOW POWERFUL IS GOD’S WORD?

It never ceases to amaze me how God speaks to us through His Word. When I do my Quiet Time, the portions of Scripture which I read often seem so suited to whatever I am experiencing in life at that point in time. For example, when I am struggling with the sin of slothfulness and laziness, I come across a verse that rebukes me to be more diligent and hardworking. Or if I find myself becoming puffed up with pride, God sends a rebuke by reminding me of the need to be humble.

Today’s reading reminds us of the amazing power of the Word of God. *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* First of all, God’s Word is described as being *“quick”*, which means *“living”*. It is not a dead and lifeless Book, but one that is full of life. It is also *“powerful”* – it has the power to convert sinners and save souls. Third, it is so sharp that it pierces and divides. No matter how much we may try to put on a false face and deceive the world that we are good, upright and holy, the Word of God is able to pierce through all our hypocrisy and expose us for who we really are. And fourth, it is able to see the thoughts and intents of the heart. All our inner motives and intentions will be laid bare by the Word of God. When we make a thorough and honest examination of our lives in light of the Word of God, all the sinful tendencies and impure motives of our hearts will be revealed.

Dear teen, have you been living a hypocritical life? Or have you been allowing the Word of God to really speak to you and convict you of your sins? Have you honestly and sincerely evaluated your life against the perfect standard of God’s Word? May you ask God today to reveal to you through His Word the things in your life that need to be changed. Of course, in order for the Word of God to be powerful in your life, you have to first read it and meditate upon it. The question is, are you willing to take the effort to do so?

Thought: The Word of God shows me how I really am in God’s eyes.

Prayer: Lord, show me through Thy Word the things that I need to change.

*“as ye have received of us how ye ought to ...please God,
so ye would abound more and more.”*

WHY MUST WE STUDY THE BIBLE?

I thank God that I was recently able to read through the entire Bible, which is something that I have always wanted to do, and that I have been encouraged by many preachers and speakers to do too. However, when I came to the end, I was struck by how much more that I had yet to learn. So many areas remained in which I lacked understanding, and so many teachings and doctrines that I still could not explain clearly.

In today's reading, we find a clear command from God. This verse was given by Paul to Timothy to remind him of his great responsibility as a minister of the Word. Yet, the same applies for ordinary Christians like you and me. We are commanded to “study” the Word of God. It is not enough just to read the Bible once a week on Sunday mornings, or even 1 or 2 verses perfunctorily each day just to soothe our consciences. Instead we are to search the Scriptures diligently, to meditate – chew on its words, to draw out lessons and understand the riches of its deep and marvellous truths.

And why must we study it? Paul gives us 2 very good reasons. First of all, we study the Bible in order to please God. Just as an earthly father is happy when his children make the effort to know him, likewise God our heavenly Father is pleased when we search His Word in order to know Him and understand His will. And we are to faithfully and diligently perform our duty, so that we do not need to be ashamed when we come before God. Secondly, we study the Bible so that we are able to rightly divide it. What this means is that, through close and careful studying of God's Word, we become skilful and effective in understanding the Bible. We are able to discern right from wrong, truth from falsehood, good from bad.

Dear teen, have you been a faithful student of God's Word? Or will you be ashamed before God because you have not been studying His Word diligently? May you realise today the great importance of studying the Bible, and seek to be a lifelong student of His Word. No matter how many times you may read the Bible in your lifetime, there will always be new truths waiting to be discovered.

Thought: To please God is to know His Word.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a diligent student of Your Word.

HOW DOES THE BIBLE AUTHENTICATE CHRIST?

John 20:31 plainly tells us that “*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*” and that if we believe in Him, we have life through Him. One question one might have upon reading this verse is - How genuine and real is this message? How do we know that it is really true and not some kind of fraud? These are some of the questions that we would be confronted with, or even grapple with within ourselves.

The answer lies in the first part of this same verse. It tells us that “*these are written that ye might believe*” – referring to all the signs that are recorded for us in the gospel of John. What John is saying is that the records of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ have been inspired and preserved for us in order that we may know that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Each event, miracle, conversation and teaching has been recorded in a most deliberate manner, in order that a person reading would be convinced of the truth of Christ. As we search the pages of sacred Scripture, being led by the Spirit of God, we will inevitably come to the conclusion that all that are written within are indeed true, and testify of the perfect Son of God who came to save us from our sins. In so doing, we see that the gospels, and in fact all of Scripture, all authenticate Christ, and all we have to do is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we can be saved!

Dear teen, you often trust that what your textbooks tell you is true. But you know that new editions are published frequently and facts often have to be updated. You can be sure that God’s Word is not like that. It is divinely inspired and therefore does not change with time. It is eternally true. It is true today and will be true forever. Isn’t God’s Word wonderful? You can trust it completely. It says that Jesus is the Son of God. Simply believe it and be blessed by the truth.

Thought: Faith is believing what God says in His Word.

Prayer: Lord, give me the faith that looks up to Thee. Thank You for Your living Word, the Bible, that we can easily own and read in our language. May we read it more regularly and obey it more lovingly.

“...we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses...”

HOW DOES THE BIBLE USE GOOD EXAMPLES?

The great “*cloud of witnesses*” are the good examples that the Bible has recorded. In Hebrews 11, the great heroes of the faith chapter, Paul cites them – from Abel to Enoch, to Noah, to Abraham and even Sara. They bore good witnesses through their great faith and they pleased God, and their lives become testimonies for us to follow.

Likewise, we should also exercise faith, great faith, like them. We ought to have the faith to take God at His Word, and never doubt His promises. Faith also means obedience to what God commands. If it is an animal sacrifice that God instructs, then Abel offered to God and God accepted his excellent sacrifice. Enoch walked with the Lord and God was pleased with his testimony and translated him into heaven, without dying. Simple faith knows that God can do anything and God can do the impossible.

Therefore there is much profit to be had in studying the lives and witness of the many good characters in the Bible, and how they overcame their trials by faith, despite their flaws and imperfections. In that, we would learn of the dangers of sin, and be minded to lay aside these weights that would hinder us in our own spiritual race. We realise that we are certainly not alone in our struggles, but through faith we can certainly overcome them. In examining their lives, we would also be inspired to have the patience to run our own races, knowing that the same Lord who preserved them is also the one who has promised to guide us in our lives.

Dear teen, study the good examples that abound in the Bible and you will be much blessed and profited by it. By God’s grace, may you be inspired by their great faith and seek to please God. Notice that you also need to “lay aside every weight” and so you must be strong and single-minded to focus on your spiritual growth. The distractions and attractions of the world will only hinder your growth and even stifle it. As you patiently read your Bible and pray consistently, you will be surprised how the Lord will abundantly bless your faithfulness.

Thought: Jesus is our greatest example of one who had perfectly obeyed all the laws of God.

Prayer: Lord, may I constantly keep before me, the lives of these great men of faith. Thus may I put aside all temptations and sins and run my race faithfully.

HOW DOES THE BIBLE USE BAD EXAMPLES?

Today's text narrates some examples of faithless people during the time of the wilderness wanderings when the children of Israel left Egypt. Having been delivered out of their bondage in Egypt, under the cruel Pharaoh who made them to be slaves, they had tasted the mercy and goodness of the Lord. They knew that the Lord had done good and marvellous things for them. They were provided with water and manna from heaven. Yet they sinned against the Lord. Their hearts showed unbelief. They were never really able to shake off the idolatrous influences that they had from their years in Egypt, as seen in their making of the golden calf at the foot of Mt. Sinai while waiting for Moses to come down. Not only did they worship idols but they also committed sexual sins as they *“eat and drink, and rose to play”* (Exodus 32:6). For that, God punished them. Twenty three thousand died that day. Subsequently they went on to murmur and complain every time they faced difficulties and problems, and continually sinned against God.

So what can we learn from all these incidents? 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 tells us clearly that *“these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things”*, and not be idolaters, fornicators, people who tempt Christ, murmurers, and were all *“written for our admonition”*. When we read of all these accounts of sin, and the subsequent judgments against them, we would do well to take heed of them and be warned. We learn from their mistakes, and make sure that we do not fall into the same snares as they did.

Dear teen, may you learn what to avoid and never to do, knowing that God is displeased with those who are faithless and disobedient. It is wise to learn from others and avoid the pitfalls. Paul teaches, *“We should not lust after evil things.”* These are the things of the world, the materialism that is so prevalent around us. Keep away from these longings and desires for the pleasures and prestige of the world. Instead, *“Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Thought: When we learn from others, we are spared the sufferings and pain of rebellion and disobedience.

Prayer: Our loving heavenly Father, teach me to fear Thee instead of fearing men. Thee must I please and not men. It is Thee that I must honour and obey. Help me, Lord, to walk humbly with Thee all the days of my life.

“Believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”

WHAT KNOWLEDGE DOES THE BIBLE GIVE US?

We all know that the Bible is a book unlike any other. It gives us knowledge beyond what any human book gives to us. It is the absolutely truthful witness of God that is far greater than any witness of man. It reveals to us who God is and what sinners must do to reconcile themselves to a holy God. We are to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come and laid down His life for us. He was the propitiation (to win, regain the favour of God) for our sins. This is the knowledge that the Bible gives us and we are to act in the light of this knowledge. Yes, you must believe on Him and then you shall have eternal life, for this is the promise of God.

But you do not stop there. The Bible provides you with the knowledge and resources to nourish your soul everyday as you read it. Like a tree that has been planted, you do not leave it unattended. You need to water it and prune it for further growth. Likewise, you need to be fed by the Word of God. You read it daily and meditate upon it. You study it. This is the food for your soul. An ever-increasing knowledge of God’s Word will enrich and delight your soul. It is an infinite source of learning that will never be exhausted. Therefore, a lifetime of learning is not sufficient for us to learn all the glories of God and His kingdom.

Dearest teen, how is your spiritual life? First, do you take heed to what is being taught in class in Teens Sunday School? Do you seriously search the Scriptures? Many people pride themselves on having all kinds of knowledge of the world. But the best knowledge is the knowledge of God’s holy will – and what He would have you to do as His child. Do you do what you can to increase in the knowledge of spiritual things? Remember there is a library of good Christian literature in the church library and in the bookroom for you to explore. What effort are you putting in to seek the kingdom of God? If we liken the Word of God to great treasure, what are you waiting for?

Thought: The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul:
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart:
the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Prayer: Lord, may I love Your Word: reading, studying and meditating upon it. And in it, may I find Your revealed will for myself and mankind and may I share its good news with others.

WHAT IF WE IGNORE PART OF THE BIBLE?

We have a clear example here of those who ignored part of the Bible and erred greatly. The Sadducees were wrong on two counts. First, Jesus rebuked them for not knowing the Scriptures - for they were ignorant of the fact that God is the God of the living and not the dead. Secondly, the Sadducees erred because they do not know the power of God. He is able to resurrect bodies from dust of the ground. His power is infinite. The story that the Sadducees presented before our Lord was that of a woman whose husbands died one after another so that she was said to have married seven brothers. In Old Testament times, it was the custom for a widow to marry the brother of the deceased to raise children for the brother who had died. The question the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection (as they wrongly believe that the soul is annihilated), presented to Jesus was, *"Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven?"* They thought that Jesus would be unable to answer their "tough" question.

However, Jesus was able to explain clearly their error. Jesus revealed to them something they did not know. Jesus revealed that in the resurrection, in heaven above, there is no marriage. Life in heaven is not like life now on earth. Furthermore, Jesus told them that God is the God of the living and so Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive in heaven. One day, their bodies which were buried on earth, will rise to meet with the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

We cannot afford to ignore any part of the Bible if we are to fully understand any doctrine. That is how cults are formed. They deny and ignore parts of the Bible. We accept and learn from the whole counsel of God in the Bible. Dear teen, do you have the tendency to pick and choose certain portions of the Bible to believe and reject? That is dangerous. The only approach is to accept the whole Bible. We admit that our finite minds cannot understand fully an infinite God. We humbly submit that we have sinful desires and motives. But we have faith that all His ways are righteous and all His works are holy. That is faith that pleases God.

Thought: To ignore a part of the Bible would be to ignore God as He speaks to us!

Prayer: Gracious heavenly Father, help me to obey Thy commandments for therein do I delight.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE BIBLE IS STUDIED CAREFULLY?

The testimony of John Sung is a wonderful example of how the Bible taught him to be an obedient servant. In his own words, he said, “God has thoroughly moulded my character and temperament. (He was very hot tempered in his younger days.) The Holy Spirit was my Teacher teaching me the deep things of Truth...The Bible was my textbook (He was sent to stay at the Mental Hospital at that time.) The Bible comprises 1189 chapters. By the Lord’s instruction, I’ve derived 40 methods of study, reading the Bible 40 times. When I read the Bible, I was so carried away by it that I kept on and on, like enjoying a delicious meal.”

As a result of his deep study of the Bible, filled with the Spirit, John Sung became a mighty evangelist for God. His preaching won thousands of souls for Christ, as his messages were from the words of God and not the words of men. He rightly divided the word of truth, and explained these precious truths clearly to the hearers. Thus John Sung was able to preach with all authority, resting on all the promises of God, and to guide his hearers to be submissive to the authority of God’s Word. They heard the Word and were “pricked in their heart” and repented of their sins. Tears flowed when they considered their sinful ways and how lovingly Jesus had cared for them, dying for their sins. In all this, we see how this faithful student of God’s Word was approved unto God, as an unashamed workman, for God blessed his labours, and his ministry indeed brought forth much fruit.

Dear teen, are you a workman who is lazy and uninterested in studying God’s Word? Will you suffer the shame of God’s disapproval because you have not been a faithful student of His Word? Or would you rather be one whom God is pleased with? If we are indeed faithful students of God’s Word, we will certainly be able to bring glory to God, and God will bless our labour for Him.

Thought: It requires great wisdom, study, and care, to divide the Word of God rightly.

Prayer: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, may I learn more of Thee through Thy Word for at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

“...the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

WHAT STANDARD DOES GOD USE TO JUDGE US?

This passage speaks of Christ as the light of the world. He is the perfect light that shines in the darkness of this sin-filled world. But *“men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved”* (John 3:19-20). Nonetheless for them, there will be a day of reckoning – a judgment by God where those who reject Christ will receive a final judgment in the last day.

On that day, God’s judgment will be based on whether we have heeded the words of Christ. He has come to save the world and yet there are many who reject Him, and reject His Word. What shall the judge of all the earth do with such? Can he be allowed to cast aside the words of God and regard them as nothing? If worldly powers like the school and government do not condone those who break the rules and laws, how can a holy God overlook those who blatantly reject His laws?

The standard that God will use to judge the world is not an arbitrary one. It will be according to His revealed will, the Word of God which is proclaimed, preached, taught constantly. Consider the number of Bibles sold around the world, the billions of tracts that are printed to ensure that the Word of God goes out to the nations, that all might believe and be saved. There are many instances of helicopters used to distribute portions of God’s Word over a whole countryside. Many translations have also been made so that all can read God’s Word in their own language. The Lord prophesied that before He returns, the “gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations” (Matthew 24:14). We see this happening all around us. The world will be judged according to whether they have received or rejected the gospel.

Dear teen, you have God’s Word in your hands, but will you reject it? Or would you rather embrace it with all your heart, believe every jot and tittle of it, and obey it in your life? If God were to judge you today based upon His Word, how do you think you would fare? To have faith in God means that we have faith in His Word, and that we desire to obey it. Is that how it is for you?

Thought: Let us daily examine ourselves that we may not be judged and condemned of the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, let me constantly abide in Thee and Thy words, always looking to Thee with a singular love and devotion.

CAN GOD’S WORD ALONE CONVICT SINNERS?

Josiah was a godly king. His grandfather, King Manasseh, and his father, King Amon, had caused the land of Israel to sin grievously. When Josiah became king he resolved to purge Judah and Jerusalem of all idols. He also wanted to repair the house of the Lord. It was in the course of the repairs that a book of the law of the Lord was discovered. It is a sad day when the word of God is hidden and out of sight. It is meant to be read and made known to all people that they might hear the glorious salvation written therein. When Shaphan the scribe read it before the king, there was an immediate reaction. It made a deep impression on him and he was convicted of the sins of the people who had not obeyed the Lord. They had gone whoring after other gods. As a godly king, Josiah took God’s Word seriously. When he realised that they had not fully obeyed certain aspects of the Word of God, his heart mourned. He rent his clothes as a mark of his sorrow and grief. He repented of the sins of his people and wanted to lead them to walk in the way of the Lord.

This incident shows the power of the Bible to convict sinners and bring about a change of heart. The Word of God has power to open the spiritual eyes of men lost in their sins. For Josiah, all it took was for the Word of God to be read to him to show him the areas where his people had disobeyed the Lord, and that God’s wrath would be upon them if they did not repent. Subsequently, he gathered the elders of the land and read the same word to them, knowing that the Word of God was what they needed to be convicted in their hearts. He then made a covenant before the Lord to henceforth walk in His ways.

Dear teen, if you own a Bible but know little of the glories of God that are contained therein, what good does it do for you? You have learnt that the Word of God in King Josiah’s days was suppressed and kept away from the people. They were totally ignorant of the commandments of God. Today, the Word of God is printed and sold everywhere. It is easy to buy and own one, but the Word would be useless to us if we do not know the contents well. Resolve then, dear teen, to know your precious Bible and use it as your spiritual sword to fight temptations, to walk in the ways of the Lord and to witness faithfully to your classmates and neighbours.

Thought: Receive God’s Word with a tender heart.

Prayer: Lord, may I have a thirst and hunger for Your eternal Word of Life. It is living bread for my soul. Feed me till I want no more.

MUST THE BIBLE BE READ IN WORSHIP?

When believers gather together to worship God on the Lord's Day, we are commanded to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This means we worship from the heart and only in the way God has commanded us to in His Word. Thus worship includes praying, reading and preaching of God's Word, singing, participating in the Lord's Supper and giving of our tithes and offerings. In Acts 2:42, when the early church met, they *"continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine"*. This means that they diligently read and studied what the Apostles taught (which was by the authority of Christ through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), which is now recorded for us in God's Word, the Bible.

The Apostle Paul here charges the church leaders in Thessalonica to read this epistle to all the believers. This charge is serious as it is stronger than a command, and it is akin to binding them by an oath. In addition to reading this epistle, God also commands that we be instructed in the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) so that His people are well versed in His truth and grow in His ways. Although it was addressed specifically to the church at Thessalonica, and some of the issues addressed were specific to them, yet it was also to be read in all the churches when they are assembled together, for within it are also valuable lessons and instructions that are applicable to all believers of all ages. It was not to be suppressed or kept from them. Such injunctions in the Epistles tell us that the Apostles had authority to give infallible instructions to the churches.

Dear teen, do you see how the Word of God must be central in every church, and also in every worship service? The Bible alone is our guide for faith and practice, and it is through God's Word that we would have our hearts and minds fixed upon Him. We cannot on one hand claim to be worshipping God, but yet ignore His Word, or just perfunctorily pay lip service to it but not take it seriously at all. No we must be sober, reverent and attentive when the Word of God is read, for it is as it were God speaking to us – so we better listen up!

Thought: *"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."* (Psalm 119:18)

Prayer: Our Father in heaven, teach me and cause me to desire to spend more time reading Your Word of life. May it be honey to my taste and strength for my soul.

"And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people..."

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO THE READING OF THE BIBLE?

The children of Israel had assembled at the foot of Mt. Sinai. They had heard the Lord speaking to them from out of a smoking and fiery mountain (Exodus 19:9). They had heard the Ten Commandments but it was here that Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. Then he proceeded to build an altar to the Lord to worship Him. He offered burnt offerings and sacrifices. The blood of these animals was divided into two portions. One portion was sprinkled on the altar and the other was for the people. But before that happened, they had to do something.

Moses took the book of the covenant which he had just written and read it before the people. They listened intently and carefully. They then promised that they would obey all that the Lord wanted them to do. They understood the message of the Lord and agreed to abide by it. They fully believed and trusted all the words of the Lord. They also affirmed that they were willing to submit to God's command. Then and then only did Moses take the other half of the blood and sprinkle it on the people. In this way, both parties were mutually bound to the covenant. Similarly, when we hear God's Word, our response should be to unreservedly accept the words of the Lord. We should listen carefully. We should give the reading of God's Word our full attention and reverence. We seek to understand it. We pray that our lives will be transformed to be more Christ-like. We do not want to be hearers only. We seek to be doers of God's Word too.

Dear teen, are you focused on listening to God's Word? Or do you chat and pass irrelevant remarks among yourselves? Worse still, do you fool around, play with your mobile phones or allow wandering thoughts to creep in and thereby not profit from the reading and preaching of God's Word? Beware of such bad habits for they dishonour God, mar your testimony and affect your spiritual lives. Pray that God will help you to concentrate and benefit from the message preached. God will hold us accountable for how we receive His holy Word. It is more precious than all the knowledge in the world. Receive it reverently as the voice of God speaking to you from on high. As you listen, make notes, underline and pray that you will be wiser and holier day by day because His Word has nourished and strengthened you.

Thought: *"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."* (Psalm 119:72)

Prayer: Father in heaven, may I treasure Thy word in my heart and obey it, live it and love it all the days of my life.

“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense...”

WHY MUST THERE BE A PREACHER?

On this important occasion when the people of God met to worship and thank Him for the completion of the wall of Jerusalem, the reading of God’s Word held centre stage. In the reading of His Word, God is honoured and His church edified. We note that the people were willing to listen for six hours. It was *“from the morning until midday”* (Nehemiah 8:3).

The Word of God was read *“distinctly”*. This simply describes a clear public reading of the Word to the people in the original language of Hebrew. For those who still understood the language but were not able to read it, such a public reading would be the only way they had access to the Word of God. However, most of them would probably not be familiar with Hebrew, and only understood Aramaic, which was the common tongue of the people at that time. Even if they could understand the words, they might have found it difficult to understand the full significance of what was being read. Therefore it was important that the preachers *“gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading”* which means to expound God’s Word. Reading is only the first part. It has to be followed by explanations of the meaning of the passage. It does not edify if God’s people do not understand the meaning or significance of what they read. Therefore, the preacher must explain the context, define words and give illustrations to shed more light on the particular passage of Scripture and also to apply it to the lives of the hearers.

It is therefore required of preachers that they explain the Word and give the sense of it. In every message, their objective should be that the listeners will come to a better understanding of God’s Word, and increase in their desire to obey Him. The end result of such faithful exposition leads to great joy, which is the strength of God’s people as Nehemiah 8:10 tells us.

Dear teen, as the labour of every preacher is to open the Book of Life to his listeners, what duty do we have as hearers? Every preacher seeks to edify the people of God. But you cannot be edified unless you are willing to be taught. So you need to give your full attention to the preaching and pray for understanding as the Word of God is being preached. It is a great joy to understand the Bible and know that your great and mighty God is speaking to you personally to instruct you in your faith.

Thought: We need both faithful preachers and faithful learners.

Prayer: Our Father in heaven, we pray for our pastors and teachers, that Thou wouldst grant them the wisdom to study Thy Word and preach it faithfully.

WHY MUST I BELIEVE IN VPI?

VPI stands for Verbal Plenary Inspiration. "Verbal" means "every word to the jot and tittle" (Matthew 5:18). "Plenary" means "the Scripture as a whole with all the words intact" (Matthew 24:35). "Inspiration" means that all these words of Scripture, in their original languages, are God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). In *Theology for Every Christian*, Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo write, "The Bible is a God-breathed Book, written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As the verbally and plenary inspired Word of God – inspired as a whole as well as in its parts, - it is all-sufficient and all-authoritative."

In Matthew 4, Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. In answering each temptation, Jesus replied with the words of Scripture, declaring: "*It is written*". In so doing He set an example for us, that the Word of God alone is sufficient for us to defend against the attacks of Satan. The Word of God is described as the sword of the Spirit, our weapon in the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:17). It is able to defeat Satan and we must use this method when at any time we are tempted to sin; resist and repel the temptation with, "*It is written*". Thus to live "*by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" is to trust the Bible completely, knowing that it is infallible and inerrant, as it is divinely inspired. We need every word of God, and not just some words. To believe otherwise, and say that only certain parts are inspired is wrong. There are some who think that the Bible is true only in spiritual matters but not accurate in scientific matters. Such a view which holds only to the partial inspiration of the Bible is unbiblical. The Bible says very clearly that "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God*" (2 Timothy 3:16). Dear teen, do you hold a high view of the verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible? Do not be like the neo-evangelicals who compromise the supreme authority of the Bible. They are disobedient to God's command to separate from unbelief and error, compromising doctrine and remaining silent when liberals deny fundamental truths of God's Word. To believe in VPI is the high ground on which we must stand. Is this your conviction?

Thought: The Holy Spirit has authenticated the Holy Book, and we should bow to every word written therein.

Prayer: O Father, may our hearts be clean, pure and humble and receive Your every word into our hearts.

HOW DO I KNOW GOD GAVE EVERY WORD?

The only approach that the child of God should take when coming to the Bible, is to accept all that God has given to us by faith. This faith cannot be forced or engineered, but is placed in believers by the Holy Spirit. It is something inexplicable, but yet very real and is something that is experienced by believers throughout the ages. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 describes such understanding of spiritual things as something that God has *‘prepared for them that love him’* and that *‘God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit’*. It is something that God has done for us, and on our part, we simply follow the leading of the Spirit, and accept the revelation that God has given to us. With the Holy Spirit guiding and convicting our hearts, we will be able to know and understand all *‘the things that are freely given to us of God’* (1 Corinthians 2:12) – the truth of God’s Word. This is something that is spiritually discerned, and something that the natural man, the unbeliever is unable to understand.

Thus when the Bible authenticates itself, by declaring that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16), the believer, being guided by the Holy Spirit, simply takes God at His Word, and firmly believes it with all his heart. The unbeliever, no matter how much fact and evidence he is shown, will always remain sceptical, for without the Holy Spirit in him, he can never understand such amazing and wonderful spiritual truths.

Dear teen, what a precious book we have in our hands. Let us endeavour to read and study it with all the time we have despite our busy schedule. The world makes many demands on our time and our stress from having to keep up with expectations is great. Nevertheless, you must discipline yourself and find time to read and study the Bible. Perhaps you need to cut down on the pleasures of the world and practise self-denial – play less, hang out with friends less, cut down on non-essential activities and you will certainly find time to do it.

Thought: The Holy Spirit “turns on the lights” for us so that we can see the truth of God.

Prayer: O loving and gracious Father in heaven, help me to love Your Word and spend more time reading and enjoying it.

CAN WE SAY THAT THE WRITERS WERE INSPIRED?

We have established that the Bible is the inspired Word of God as God controlled the writing of each and every word (1 Corinthians 2:13). The Bible is of divine origin, God Himself is the ultimate source. The writers of the Bible had special supernatural supervision when they penned the words of God. However, can we then describe the process as the writers themselves being inspired by God?

In 2 Peter 1:21, the Apostle Peter wrote: *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”* The literal meaning of the word “moved” in this passage is “carried along,” as an ocean current might carry a ship through the water. The Holy Spirit influenced and guided them as they wrote, such that each and every letter penned was exactly as was intended by God. However, the word ‘inspired’ is not used to describe this process, and it is only used to describe the character of Scripture itself, in that each and every word of God is literally ‘God-breathed’ (2 Timothy 3:16). For the writers, the more accurate term to describe this process is being ‘*moved by the Holy Ghost*’. Therefore in all this, the focus is primarily on God and His Word, and not so much the human agents whom God used to pen His Word.

Dear teen, how do you respond when people tell you that there are errors in the Bible? Does that cause you to lose confidence in the Bible? We must not be swayed by their faithless accusations. We must be convinced and convicted that God has given us a supernatural, divine book devoid of any errors. Then why do men say that there are? It is the arrogance of man that causes them to stand in judgment of God’s Word, and think that they knew better than God. They do not believe that God has inspired and preserved His Word. They seek to find fault with God’s Word, and view it merely as the work of men, and not the work of God. On our part, we must be humble and submit to the supreme authority of the Bible.

Thought: The Holy Spirit has authenticated the Holy Book so we should bow to its every dictate.

Prayer: I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast shown me the mysteries of the Bible. I know that every chapter, every verse, every word has something good for my spiritual life.

WHAT DOES INERRANCY AND INFALLIBILITY MEAN?

God's glory is found not only in creation but much more so in the divine revelation of Scripture. Just as the air we breathe in and the light of the sun are necessary to sustain life on this planet, so is the Word of God critical in sustaining the spiritual lives of every believer. Because of the fallen nature of man, the Word of God is necessary to show him the way out of his fallen state. Aided by the Holy Spirit, the Word of God is made plain and clear to him. He is convicted of his sins and comes to Jesus, who has taken away his sins at the cross of Calvary.

The psalmist gives an account of the blessing and power of the Word of God. Note that there are also six other names for the Word of God (verses 7-9). It is "*law of the LORD*", "*the testimony of the LORD*", "*The statutes of the LORD*", "*the commandment of the LORD*", "*the fear of the LORD*" and "*the judgments of the LORD*". Verse 7 declares the perfection of the Word of God itself. It is perfectly free from all corruption, perfectly filled with all good, and has within it the perfect way through which man's soul can be converted from sin to righteousness. This declares both the Bible's inerrancy (which means being free from error) and infallibility (which means the Word of God is incapable or cannot possibly have error). Inerrancy describes actuality while infallibility describes ability or potential. Both qualities stem from the fact that the Bible has its origin in God and was superintended by the process of inspiration. Indeed it is a great assurance to know that it is a perfect law that we rely on for our salvation, and not a Word that possibly has errors – for if that be the case, how can we know that the promise of salvation is certain?

Dear teen, we attribute infallibility to God and His work because of His nature and character. Jesus Himself told us that the words of Scripture are the only way to know anything about His life and teachings (John 5:46-47). If we reject the inerrancy and infallibility of God's Word, and claim that there are errors, then we are rejecting the claims of the Bible writers (Acts 18:28) and the claims of Jesus Himself. We will be left without any authority or guidance in our faith. If we do not have the promise of the perfection of God's Word, how can we be certain that even a verse like John 3:16 is free from errors?

Thought: To reject Scripture is to reject God.

Prayer: Gracious Father in heaven, increase my faith and give me grace to see how glorious Thy Word is.

HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS INERRANT?

If the Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God, as it claims (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21), we would expect there to be evidence supporting this. After all, just because something claims to be the Word of God does not make it true. The truth is that the Bible itself is full of evidence of prophecy – over 600 of them – that have been fulfilled. In Deuteronomy 18:21-22, God evidently knows that there would be people who would doubt His prophets, or try to seek assurance that the words that the prophets speak or pen are indeed the very words of God. One method which God suggests, is to see if the prophecy given actually comes to pass or not.

As we study the Bible in our present day and age, we see beyond a shadow of doubt that the Bible is indeed true! If we just consider the prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, we know that so many predictions made concerning the birth of the Messiah have definitely come true, and were even corroborated by facts in secular history. No other book on the earth has such a consistent and inerrant claim to having the truth. Some mathematicians have actually calculated that the odds of Jesus fulfilling just 8 of the prophecies from the OT concerning him would be in the region of one in 10 to the power of 17 (1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000)!

Dear teen, it would be good if you do a study of some of the prophecies of the Bible that have been fulfilled with such amazing accuracy. Indeed a study of the prophecies concerning the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ would do much to strengthen your faith in the living and true God that we worship. The entire Old Testament predicted Christ's life, His ministry, death and resurrection. For example, Micah 5:2 foretold seven hundred years before it happened – that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.

Thought: God let none of His words fall to the ground.

Prayer: Our gracious heavenly Father, thank You for all the evidences that You have shown us that the Bible is the Word of God that endures to this day and forever.

DID THESE MIRACLES REALLY HAPPEN?

The attack on the veracity (trustworthiness) of God's Word first began in the Garden of Eden when Satan tempted Eve and has never stopped ever since. He cast doubt in her mind and sowed the seed of distrust in her heart against God by saying “*yea, hath God said...?*” (Genesis 3:1). The world was thrown into a state of spiritual darkness due to Adam's disobedience from which it has yet to recover to this very day. Because of that pivotal event in the Garden of Eden, disbelief of God's Word is the norm in today's world. Doubts have been cast on every aspect of the Bible pertaining to issues such as creation, sin, Christ's divinity and His resurrection... the list goes on.

Even the miracles recorded in the Bible have come under attack. Some claim that Moses did not part the Red Sea (strong winds and currents did), that the walls of Jericho collapsed due to resonating sound waves from people yelling (and God had nothing to do with this), or that Jesus did not really walk on water (rather, He did some nifty stone-stepping), and neither did He rise from the dead (He merely fainted and was wrongly presumed dead). Many others would believe that the universe came about from the “Big Bang” (and therefore not created from nothing by God), that all living things came to be through evolution (and not by God who created all things ‘after their kind’). This attitude of unbelief has eventually led to the attack on the perfect preservation of God's Word. This is a master stroke on the part of Satan. Every single biblical doctrine can be attacked all at once by simply convincing people that God's Word has mistakes because it has not been perfectly preserved through the ages.

Yet Jesus Himself affirms the validity of the supernatural in the Old Testament, when he used the example of Jonah being in the belly of the fish in today's passage. He used this example as a means to describe his own death and resurrection, and also to rebuke the unbelief of the scribes and the Pharisees. Likewise there are many scholars today who claim to be religious experts, but are really no more than faithless critics of the Word of God. Believing God's Word means to take every single thing that God has revealed to us in scripture as the absolute truth. God cannot and does not lie. Jesus said that every single jot and tittle shall not pass until all is fulfilled (Matthew 5:18), and this certainly applies to every single miracle found in the Bible as well as the perfect preservation of His Word.

Thought: God would not be God if He is not even capable of performing wondrous miracles or preserving His own Word.

Prayer: O Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.

WHAT BIBLICAL PROPHECIES HAVE BEEN FULFILLED?

There are many instances in the Bible where prophecies made hundreds of years in the past were fulfilled to the letter. Many of these involve Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection. His first coming was revealed in Genesis 3:15 when God said that He would send a Saviour to the world to destroy the works of Satan and defeat death on behalf of those who look to Him in faith. Later, the prophet Micah pinpointed Bethlehem as Jesus' birthplace (Micah 5:2) and the prophet Isaiah predicted correctly that a son would be born who is also God (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus, who was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9), was betrayed by Judas (Psalm 41:9) for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13) and had His hands and feet pierced during His crucifixion (Zechariah 12:10). Jesus even foretold His burial in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9) and His own resurrection on the third day after His death (Matthew 20:19). These are probably but some of the many passages that Jesus expounded to the two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus, showing them all the prophecies of the life and death of Christ.

Today, we know that Jesus is coming again very soon as foretold in His parable of the fig tree in Matthew 24:32-36. The fig tree represents the nation of Israel. Because of Israel's rejection of Jesus, God cursed Jerusalem by having it destroyed and dispersing the Jews. This is symbolised by the fig tree which Jesus had earlier cursed and caused to wither because it was unfruitful. However, Jesus again referred to the very same fig tree and said that when it starts to show signs of life (sprout leaves), the time of His return would be very near.

History tells us that the nation of Israel was declared independent on May 14th 1948, hence fulfilling the fig tree prophecy. Its leaves have begun to sprout, and we know therefore that Jesus' return is drawing near. We do not know exactly when our Lord will return, but we are to be watchfully anticipating His return at any moment. Let us continue to be busy with His work lest He finds us in a state of spiritual slumber upon His return.

Thought: Jesus may return at any moment now, perhaps even before I am done reading this sentence!

Prayer: O Lord, surely You come quickly. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

HOW DO WE KNOW THERE ARE 39 OT BOOKS?

We know that God promised to inspire and preserve His Word perfectly for us. Since we know that a perfect Bible has been given to man, it is logical to assume then that God would certainly guide His people to correctly and accurately identify which books of the Bible should be in the canon and which should not. It is the logic of faith that will lead us to such a conclusion. However are there proofs even within Scripture itself that affirm this? How do we know which books are in the Canon of Scripture?

Concerning the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself spoke of books that made up the authoritative Word. In Luke 24:44-45, as He conversed with His disciples just before His ascension, He reminded them of all that He had taught them about the prophecies found within the Old Testament. He affirmed them as words that were beforetime already written in the *‘law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me’*. These three represent the threefold division of the Hebrew Bible, which at the time of Jesus, had already been widely recognised as Scripture. The division was as follows: the law of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), the prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings were called the former prophets; and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve smaller books from Hosea to Malachi were called the latter prophets) and the Psalms which also referred to the holy writings consisting of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and the two books of Chronicles. All these make up the 39 books of the OT. Surely, if there had been missing books that were not in the list, or if there had been extra books that were not supposed to be there, Jesus would have told His disciples. But he did not. Thus we can be certain that the Scripture which Jesus held in His hands were the complete Old Testament, which contain the same 39 books which we hold in our hands today.

Now that we know we have the Word of God, will we spend time to read, study and meditate upon them?

Thought: Surely an all-powerful all-knowing God is able to give us the right books that He wants us to have!

Prayer: O Lord I cannot even trust myself completely no matter how certain I may feel but in Thy Word I can, now and forever.

HOW DO WE KNOW THERE ARE 27 NT BOOKS?

John 16:13 teaches us that God's Spirit, who indwells each and every believer, will lead him to the truth. Just as an infant can recognise his caregiver, so too do Jesus' sheep hear their Shepherd's voice (John 10:27). This is the underlying principle which guided the early church leaders such as Athanasius in 367 AD in his quest to identify the NT books which were divinely inspired. Books which contained material that were inconsistent with Jesus' character, person or work were excluded. So too were those which contradicted the OT (Nature of the book). Whether a particular book was written by an apostle or a close associate (Authorship) and was commonly used in the churches throughout the Body of Christ (Universality) were also considered. Were there recognisable marks of inspiration? In other words, did the book have a spiritual character that agreed with the Holy Spirit which indwells all believers? Thus the early church Fathers made decisions according to their understanding of God and His Word, and were guided by the Holy Spirit. This process was repeated by councils in Laodicea (AD 363), Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage in (AD 397). 27 books were eventually identified as inspired NT scripture.

God may not have specifically declared that there would be 27 NT books. Nonetheless we can be absolutely sure by that the logic of faith that God would certainly guide the early church leaders to rightly identify which of the books written would form the official canon of scripture.

The logic of faith is not some vague concept which theologians use as an excuse to explain away issues which may be controversial or difficult to understand. Just as we suspect a rumour about someone whom we know intimately is untrue because what is said is inconsistent with that person's character, we who are God's children should also be able to recognise it should we encounter blasphemous lies against God or our Lord Jesus. Thank God that we now have the complete and perfect Bible which is self-authenticating (proves itself to be true) which we should prayerfully use with the Holy Spirit's help as our guide unto all truth.

Thought: Faith and logic work hand in hand. There is no such thing as 'blind faith', or a 'leap of faith into the dark'.

Prayer: O Lord, Thy Word is indeed true, every jot and tittle of it.

WHO ARE THE HUMAN AUTHORS OF THE BIBLE?

Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo wrote in *Theology for Every Christian*, “...God first appointed Moses to write the Pentateuch, the Torah or Law (of Moses). Other holy men like David wrote the Psalms and Solomon the Wisdom Literature. The rest of the Old Testament was penned by four Major Prophets and twelve Minor Prophets. These made up the 39 books of the Old Testament”. “The 27 books of the New Testament were written by the Apostles and Apostolic men”. While it is easy to come up with a list of all the human authors of the Bible, it is even more important that we understand the kind of people these men were, and how God used them to pen the Bible.

The human authors were specially appointed by God to record His words in writing. Nonetheless, they were just sinners saved by grace like you and I. The Apostles were weak and deeply flawed people who struggled with problems such as pride and anger. Peter and many of the other disciples were fishermen from Galilee. James and John were nicknamed by our Lord Jesus as “*Sons of Thunder*”. Some scholars think that this was because of their zeal, but others think that this was probably because they had terrible tempers (Luke 9:54). Even the Apostle Paul who wrote the majority of the NT was once a persecutor of Christians, and struggled with sin (Romans 7:14-24). In the OT, King David was guilty of adultery and murder, Solomon committed gross idolatry and had 700 wives and 300 concubines, and Moses murdered an Egyptian out of rage (Exodus 2:11-12). Yet they wrote so many Psalms (David), Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon (Solomon), and the first five books of the Bible (Moses).

In spite of all their flaws, the Holy Spirit used them for God’s glory by guiding these imperfect men to record God’s Word perfectly. They were holy not because they were sinless but because they were truly repentant of their sins, looked to the Lord for mercy and forgiveness and submitted to His will, thus allowing the Holy Spirit to enable them to serve God mightily. If you have shied away from serving God because of your flaws, do not be discouraged. If you are truly repentant and willing, God can and will use you also.

Thought: If I wait till I am perfect before serving God, I will never be able to do so in this lifetime.

Prayer: Take my life, O Lord, and make it pure, that I may perform good works for Thy glory.

WHAT DOES VPP MEAN?

VPP stands for Verbal Plenary Preservation. The phrase itself means that “all (of God’s) words kept completely intact”. Simply put, it is a doctrine that teaches that every single Word that God has inspired, has also been perfectly and miraculously preserved for us, down to the very jot and tittle. We have every single word of God in the original languages in our hands today. Even though the term VPP was not coined until recently as a doctrine, it is as old as God’s Word itself. The issue is not so much what VPP means but why it has created so much controversy. Some of those who oppose it use the excuse that because VPP is a newly coined term, it is therefore unbiblical.

Hence, based on the above flawed logic, VPI (Verbal Plenary Inspiration), Calvinism (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints), much of the terminology in systematic theology (e.g. theism, anthropology, eschatology, soteriology) and the Westminster Confession of Faith, all of which form the foundation of our Reformed Faith should have been branded as heresy because they were all newly invented terms during their time. Reformed theologians do not take issue with them because they are founded on biblical teachings, just as no Bible-believing scholar would object to the usage of the word “Trinity”, as it is a word describing something which is substantiated by the Bible itself. VPP is therefore merely a term used to describe something that already exists – God’s promise that His Word is kept completely intact for every generation of believers, forever.

People who oppose VPP actually do so not because VPP is unbiblical but because they have no faith that an almighty and loving heavenly Father is able to keep that which is best for His children (His Word) pure and complete through the ages, in spite of what the Bible itself clearly says (Psalm 12:6-7). God says that “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*” (Matthew 24:35) but VPP opponents would look rather to the evidence before them, and say that we cannot possibly have every single word, because they think they have found mistakes in the texts and manuscripts. Which view is more glorifying to God and therefore true? Appeal to your faith!

Thought: What kind of a God am I worshipping if His words cannot even withstand the ravages of time?

Prayer: O Lord, Thy Word declares salvation through Christ unto a sinful world. Thank You for preserving every jot and tittle of it.

DID GOD PRESERVE EVERY SINGLE WORD?

The "jot" is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, while the "tittle" refers to a simple turn by which one letter is distinguished from another. What the Lord was saying in Matthew 5:18 was that every minute detail of what the Bible says will be fulfilled eventually.

Those who think that the Bible has mistakes say that errors were made during the copying process. While some believe that these errors were minor and did not affect any major doctrines, others believe that the Bible could only be trusted insofar as moral teachings are concerned. Historical and scientific data in the Bible could not be relied upon.

This therefore begs the question, "Today, if the Bible has mistake, how are God's people to know that everything that He says would be fulfilled?" So-called minor errors would not be so minor anymore if we cannot even rely on the Bible to verify if every jot and tittle will come to pass. Therefore in its self-authenticating manner, God's Word boldly declares what Matthew 5:18 says on the basis that every jot and tittle has indeed been perfectly preserved, otherwise Matthew 5:18 and the rest of the Bible would have absolutely no authority and integrity whatsoever. This is the 1st axiom (a statement accepted as true) of VPP – God has preserved His Word, each and every word.

A person plays a video which begins by saying, "If you are watching this, it means that you are still alive". This seems a ridiculously obvious assumption to us. Likewise, someone reading the Bible, which says that it will fulfill every minute detail found within it, would have to make the very obvious assumption that none of it, even the most minute details has been lost. Otherwise, God has no business saying whatever He has said. This should be glaringly obvious to all God-fearing and Bible-believing Christians.

Thought: Those who say God's Word has mistakes should correct them and make the Bible perfect. Why haven't they done so?

Prayer: O Lord, You are a God who keeps every Word, simply because You have preserved Your every Word.

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE REJECT VPP?

In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter knew that there were certain things in the Bible which some would find difficult to accept and understand. In speaking of Paul's epistles (which he considered as Scripture), he acknowledged that there are certain teachings within that are '*hard to be understood*'. There would then be the '*unlearned and unstable*' who would '*wrest*' with these teachings – ultimately to their own destruction. In speaking of these '*unlearned*', it was not so much that they were uneducated, but rather it referred to their ignorance of spiritual things. They were spiritually undiscerning, and '*unstable*' in that they were not firmly grounded and rooted on the firm foundation of the Word of God. As a result, they would struggle and fight against the teachings of God's Word, refusing to humble themselves and submit to it.

Likewise today, many speak against the doctrine of VPP. They find this doctrine difficult to accept, for they feel that this teaching does not seem to tally with the evidence before them. Sadly, many of them are church leaders, pastors and seminary professors. God's promise that He will keep His words pure forever is not quite good enough for them. Instead they try to seek out errors in the Bible which do not exist or make claims of certain percentages of errors in the Bible (which cannot be substantiated), just to prove that VPP is wrong. They say that when God declares His Word to be perfectly kept, it applies only to those passages which are relevant to doctrinal issues. Such an attitude is tantamount to twisting what God has said. Peter warns that they do so unto their own destruction.

Peter also said in 2 Peter 1:20, "*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*" We do not come to our own conclusions about God's Word. Neither are we to change its meaning or alter its message in any way. Rather, we are to be transformed and renewed by His Word, acknowledging that certain things may be hard to accept or understand due to our own limitations. When we have trouble with Scripture, the problem is always ourselves, not God's Word.

Thought: How wonderful to have a Bible, which unlike any other book, never needs correction nor revision.

Prayer: Deliver me from evil, O Lord, when I am tempted to rationalise my doubts by twisting Your words.

WILL GOD’S WORD EVER PASS AWAY?

This powerful declaration by Christ is actually repeated in all three of the synoptic gospels. In Luke 21:33, Mark 13:31, and here in Matthew 24:35, Jesus affirmed that no matter what happens to this world, God’s Word shall always stand, and never pass away. This phrase “*pass away*” has the meaning of perishing or to be gone. The universe that God created is vast. Its expanse is beyond our frail and finite understanding and yet God says that even this universe which He created shall come to an end someday, but His words and the truths declared by them shall prevail for eternity. They shall not pass away; they shall not fail.

In the context of what Jesus was teaching, He was referring to the events of the Last Days, when Christ would return the second time, and end in the destruction of the whole world. We know from other parts of Scripture that “*the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*” (2 Peter 3:10). And then after that, there will be “*a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away*” (Revelation 21:1). These will all happen at the end of times, after the events of the Great Tribulation and the Millennium. God’s promise, in the light of all these, is that even with all these cataclysmic end of days happening, God’s Word will continue to abide forever, and will never pass away! His perfect promises will continue to stand for eternity, and His perfect Word will always be preserved for us, kept pure through the ages.

When we make our last will and testament, a copy of this is given to the lawyer for safekeeping until such time when it is needed. Any tampering with such a document would render it invalid in a court of law. If human wills are subject to such stringent measures, how much more the will and testament of our omnipotent God? Any tempering with His Word would erode its authority and veracity. Since our God is omnipotent, He never fails in anything He does. What a wonderful promise!

Thought: To think that man can keep his will safe and not God is the epitome of pride and presumptuousness.

Prayer: O Lord, I know not every intricate detail of how You have preserved Your Word, only that You have done so.

HOW DO WE IDENTIFY GOD’S PRESERVED WORD?

So we know that God has certainly inspired and preserved His Word. We know that He will never allow a single word to be lost, and that He will make sure that believers always will have access to them. However, the question then begs – where do we find these preserved words? How do we as believers identify them?

As believers, the bond that we have with God is often described in terms of a sheep-shepherd relationship (e.g. Psalm 23). One characteristic of such a connection is the fact that the sheep will always know and recognise the voice of its own shepherd. When the shepherd calls, the sheep will know how to identify which voice is that of its shepherd, and it will follow only its master. However, if a stranger calls and tries to lure away the sheep, they will not follow, but will run away from him, for they do not recognise the voice of this stranger.

When we apply this principle to the Word of God, we would quickly realise that God has placed in each believer this ability to discern and recognise His true Word, and also be able to reject the false. This is the process whereby the inspired canon of Scripture was identified by the early church fathers, and is also the process whereby we can identify God’s preserved Word today. By the same logic of faith, we will understand God’s Word would be that which has always been in the hands of God’s people. That is how we conclude that God’s Word is found in the Greek and Hebrew words that underlie the King James Version, for that is the time-tested version that has been in use by the people of God for more than 400 years. No other translation of the Bible has stood such a test of time, and is clear evidence that this is what has been heard and followed by the sheep of God.

Sheep rely on the fact that a shepherd’s voice does not change because if it did then they would either end up getting confused or they would follow any other voice they heard. Likewise, the Bible is God speaking to us. We recognise God’s voice through His Word, and He ensures that it is perfectly preserved so that His children will not get confused or misled.

Thought: God’s Word declares itself to be immutable and true, and VPP helps us understand how this is possible.

Prayer: O Lord, help me to be able to discern Satan’s subtle lies and avoid them.

HOW IS THE GREAT COMMISSION RELATED TO VPP?

In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus commanded His disciples to go forth into the world and preach the Gospel everywhere they go. He also said that they were to teach them *“to observe all things”* that He had commanded them. These two elements of the Great Commission then form the mission of the church and every believer throughout the ages, whereby we are to testify of the gospel to convert unbelievers, and then teach the whole counsel of God to encourage believers. The only way that can be fulfilled effectively, is if we have the perfect and complete Word of God in our hands today! Indeed how can we have confidence in the gospel if we are not certain that we have the message of Christ in its entirety? How can we teach believers to observe all things, if we are not even certain that we do indeed have every single word of God with us?

In Acts 20:27 the Apostle Paul said that he had not shunned away from declaring *“all the counsel of God”* to those whom he preached. In this he showed that he had confidence in the Word that he was preaching, for he was able to teach the whole counsel of God. By application, this means the preacher of God’s Word must preach every doctrine in the Bible, leaving nothing out. In order to do so with conviction and authority he has to also believe in every single one of those doctrines. This applies as much to VPP as any other doctrine in the Bible. When we try to share God’s Word with others while not being convinced that what we are preaching from has been perfectly preserved by God’s providential hand through the ages, then we can expect our words to sound hollow and unconvincing. This is going to be glaringly obvious when we are asked by the person we are witnessing to if we believe the Bible has mistakes. It would simply make no sense for that person to believe a single word we have uttered regarding the Bible if we cannot even be sure ourselves that the Bible is perfect. On the other hand, when we are certain of our conviction in the doctrine of VPP, then we can have every confidence to declare that we have the perfectly preserved Word of God with us, and in it we have the absolute truth of God to guide us to know Christ, and to know the full and complete gospel of salvation.

Thought: Preaching God’s Word and sharing the Gospel without believing in VPP is indeed a contradiction!

Prayer: Help us, O Lord, to boldly declare all of Thy counsel to all whom we witness to.

HOW IS THE WORD OF GOD ABOVE HIS NAME?

In Psalm 138:2, the Psalmist makes a rather astounding claim. In the midst of praising the name of God, he then declares that *"thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name"*. What does this mean? How is it that the Word of God is magnified even above the name of God?

When we think about one's name, it is a word that we use for identification purpose. The name itself does not intrinsically carry much meaning, for it is but a representation of the person, organisation or thing that it points to. Yet names can be a very powerful thing, for names carry with them authority, recognition, status and identity. When it comes to God's name, it is far more than just a means to identify Him. It is also something that evokes reverence, fear, worship, love, respect, comfort, and a whole host of other responses. The Psalmist, as he meditated upon the name of God, praised Him for His lovingkindness and His truth.

Yet he then went on to praise the Word as being magnified above God's name. Why is it so? We realise that the only way that we can know of God's name, is through His Word. The meaning, emotion and reverence that we can have towards God's name can only come about if we know His Word well. Thus we see the great importance placed in the Word of God. In light of that, it would be impossible to reconcile the fact that an unchanging, perfect and all-powerful God would take offence at us taking His name in vain and yet allow His Word to be corrupted. Thankfully, we do not have to reconcile the two because we know that He has perfectly preserved His Word!

God cares about His name. He cares about His Word just as much, if not more. In the old days, people found guilty of blasphemy would have been executed. Sadly today, many Christians say that they love God and have a high regard for His Word while denying that God cares enough about His Word to providentially preserve it in the same breath. This also, is blasphemy, but cleverly disguised in the form of scholarly "theological differences". We should not view the denial of VPP as anything less serious than the way people viewed blasphemy in the old days.

Thought: I cannot imagine anything more perfect than God's name and yet He has declared His Word to be above His name.

Prayer: Give us the faith to understand and believe, O Lord, that You care too much for Your Word to not have perfectly preserved it.

WHAT IS THE CLEAREST PROOF TEXT FOR VPP?

There are many verses in the Bible that clearly declare and promise the fact that God will perfectly preserve His Word, and that it will endure for ever. In George Skariah’s doctoral dissertation on the Biblical Doctrine of Perfect Preservation of Holy Scriptures, he identified over 50 passages of Scripture that clearly taught the doctrine of VPP. However, perhaps the clearest and most irrefutable passage would be the verses found in Psalm 12:6-7, and so let us look at it more closely.

In Psalm 12:6, the Psalmist confidently asserts the purity of God’s Word. He compares the purity to that of silver that has been tried in a furnace, purified seven times. In ancient times, this was the most common process used to extract silver from their ores. It involved heating them to very high temperatures to melt off and eliminate the lead and other impurities from the ore, so as to obtain pure silver. Through the Psalmist’s expression, he speaks of the Word of the Lord as if it is like silver that has gone through this refining process again and again, 7 times in total, the number of perfection. What then remains is only the purest and most perfect elements, completely without any impurities – errors – at all!

Then in verse 7, the Psalmist asserts that these perfectly pure words will most certainly be kept and guarded by God Himself. He will preserve them in their perfect purity, such that no impurity will ever creep into His Word. God will personally see to it that every generation of believers will always have access to this perfectly pure word, for it is through His Word that we can come to know of God and our saviour Jesus Christ.

If we approach this passage by simple faith, and understand the clear teachings of God’s Word, we should have no doubt that all of God’s Word is perfect, and that God has certainly promised to preserve it, such that by God’s singular care and providence, it will be kept pure through the ages.

Thought: Wars have been fought over lands rich with precious metals. How much more should we then fight to defend VPP?

Prayer: May Your Spirit, O Lord, open our eyes to every spiritual truth taught to us through Your Word.

HOW SUPERIOR ARE THE KJV TRANSLATORS?

To get a good translation, one needs good translators. It sounds obvious at first, but what does “good” mean, and in what way were the KJV translators superior? The translation of God’s Word, just like the copying of God’s Word by the scribes, is not just a physical or intellectual exercise. Rather, it is a spiritual exercise which requires godly men with sound doctrinal understanding of God’s Word to use their linguistical and translational skills for God’s glory.

Even though there were forerunners of English translations of the KJV by faithful men like William Tyndale and John Rogers, the actual KJV translation took place from 1604 to 1611 involving 57 scholars divided into 6 companies. Men like Lancelot Andrews (conversant in 15 languages), Miles Smith (expert in Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic) and John Bois (expert in Greek and Hebrew) were involved in the work of translation. They had access to almost all the available manuscripts of the OT and NT for their work. Whenever there was any doubt about how to translate any part of the Bible, they would have a rigorous system of consulting with each other and also other leading scholars of their time. They would also use their sound doctrinal knowledge to help them. They would be guided by their faith and would always translate every part of the scriptures in a way which would be consistent with the rest of the Bible, in the right context and which would be glorifying to God.

This is in contrast with Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort who came up with the corrupt Westcott and Hort Text which underlies other modern English translations. They were individuals who did not submit themselves to the authority of the scriptures and who denied every fundamental doctrine in the Bible. When we use any English version of the Bible other than the KJV we are allowing ourselves to be exposed to the satanic work of Westcott and Hort rather than the work of godly men through God’s special providence.

Thought: A good faithful translation is one where the translators are gifted and godly men who have a love, reverence and respect for God’s Holy Word.

Prayer: Thank Thee indeed, O Lord, for leading us out of the spiritual dark ages with the gift of Thy translated yet perfect Word.

HOW SUPERIOR ARE THE KJV TECHNIQUES?

There are different translational techniques which may be used to do translational work, namely formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. According to Wikipedia, dynamic equivalence (also known as functional equivalence) attempts to convey the thought expressed in a source text (if necessary, at the expense of literalness, original word order, the source text's grammatical voice, etc.), while formal equivalence attempts to render the text word-for-word (if necessary, at the expense of natural expression in the target language). One approach's emphasis is literal faithfulness to the original text whilst the other's is readability.

The KJV translators used formal equivalence to do their translation as this would keep the translated version as faithful as possible to the original text. They did not inject their own thoughts and biases into the translation (as would someone using the dynamic equivalence technique) but introduced words into the translated text in parentheses or italics so that the reader would know which were the actual translated words and which were added in for readability. It is clear to see that not only is the formal equivalence technique superior in terms of faithfulness to the original, the dynamic equivalence technique used by translators who do not have a high view of God's Word is dangerous as not only words but also the author's thoughts are translated. As a result, it is not so much a translation, but more like a commentary where the 'translator' is interpreting the verse instead of just giving a word for word translation.

Though there are many who shun the KJV in favour of other versions due to ease of reading, this is done so at the expense of accuracy and faithfulness to God's Word. Revelation 22:18-19 gives a stern warning not to change God's Word in any way by adding or taking away from it. This alone should compel English speaking people to use the most faithful and literal translation of the Bible, the KJV.

Thought: We must choose between a “more readable” but less accurate version and a “less readable” but more faithful version.

Prayer: Your providentially preserved Word, O Lord, shall be my guide to spiritual wisdom in all matters.

“...we cannot and should not ignore the origins of the Bible version we are using...”

HOW SUPERIOR IS THE KJV THEOLOGY?

An essential teaching in the Bible is that of how faith without works is dead. The Bible is not teaching a religion of works but rather how true faith will manifest itself in good works. The difference between the two is marked. Faith that is rooted in God’s truth springs forth good works as a result of that truth, like a *“good tree bringeth forth good fruit”*. Conversely, doing good works to earn your faith has at its roots a selfish desire for your own salvation and hence can only produce *“evil fruit”*.

This litmus test of “knowing a tree by its fruits” can also be applied to the different translations of God’s Word. The corrupt tree, from which modern versions sprout from, holds at its core corrupt and rejected texts which Wescott and Hort based their Greek text on. Wescott and Hort themselves were corrupt as they believed in false doctrines such as the worship of Mary and evolution. It is no wonder that the modern versions that have come forth from this rotten core have given rise to heresies such as theistic evolution and the denial of the virgin birth of Christ. These watered down versions of God’s Word have also been the basis of the false movements of today, such as Ecumenism, Neo-evangelicalism and Modernism.

The KJV, on the other hand, is based on the Traditional Masoretic Hebrew Text and the Traditional Greek Text which have been preserved by God and accepted by fundamental churches throughout the centuries. The KJV translators were men of great faith and maturity in doctrine who were also remarkably learned and skilled in the original languages of the Bible. With such a rich core, it is no wonder that the KJV is the Bible of fundamentalism and all who hold true to the tenets of the 16th century Reformation. Indeed, this is the good fruit that testifies of its origins in its *“good tree”*.

We cannot and should not ignore the origins of the Bible version we are using today. Some may say that the background of a Bible translation does not matter, as long as they understand it and find it easy to read. That is naïve thinking! A corrupt tree can only bring forth evil fruit. Be careful that you do not blindly ingest this evil fruit as your “spiritual” food!

Thought: What sort of fruit will you produce if your doctrine comes forth from a corrupt tree?

Prayer: Grant me discernment to judge a “tree” by its “fruit”.

HOW WAS THE OT COPIED THROUGH THE AGES?

In this modern age, making a copy of a document is extremely easy. We just need to find a photocopying machine and press some buttons to get the exact duplicate of the original. We definitely cannot imagine if we had to copy every single word of the document by hand. You would probably think that you would make more and more mistakes as you become tired nearing the end. The Israelites of old who were tasked to copy the Old Testament could not be careless as they were dealing with the Word of God. They *"were committed the oracles of God"* and thus had put in place very strict guidelines and rules in the copying of God's Word.

First of all, they only used the skin of clean animals to prepare a parchment and made special black ink to write, showing how highly they treated even the materials they used to copy God's Word. They organised each page first by drawing columns of between 48 to 60 lines. They had to follow strict regulations regarding how the letters were written and how far apart they could be. They were never allowed to copy from memory and had to have an authentic copy of the OT in front of them at all times. They then had to read out aloud each word before writing it down. When they had to write God's name *"Elohim"*, they would clean their pens first. If they had to write the name *"Jehovah"*, they would have to wash their whole body first. When they proofread and checked the copies, they had to count every word and letter. If there were mistakes, they had to be revised within 30 days or else the whole manuscript would be discarded. One mistake on a page condemned the whole page and if there were three mistakes in any page, the whole manuscript was destroyed.

Knowing how reverently and carefully the Israelites treated God's Word, we can be assured that they made accurate copies of the Old Testament. Yet, even though the human effort involved was airtight and foolproof, our faith that the Old Testament was copied accurately should lie in God's ability to preserve His Word. Human beings are never perfect and despite all the safety nets in place, we can still make mistakes. However, if mistakes occurred, by God's preserving work of His Word, they are discovered and removed.

Thought: Do we treat God's Word with the same reverence that the Israelites did?

Prayer: Lord, thank You for preserving Thy Word.

“...They had the highest regard for the Holy Scriptures and trusted in God’s sovereign preservation of His Word...”

ARE THERE SCRIBAL ERRORS IN THE BIBLE?

1 Samuel 13:1 is a verse that is the subject of much debate. If you read your KJV bible, it says, *“Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,”* and then it proceeds on to verse 2 which describes how he chose men to form an army. You may think that this is a simple enough verse, meaning that in the first year of Saul’s reign, nothing remarkable happened but after two years, the subsequent events took place. Surprisingly, if you read the NIV or NASB, this verse is totally different. It says, *“Saul was forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-two years over Israel”*. The numbers were added into the text to fix what the translators felt was a scribal error in the Bible. They thought that this verse was describing at what age Saul started ruling and for how long he ruled for. Therefore, they explained it as a copying error and inserted their own words into the verse to fit their own interpretation.

If these modern translators could so easily add their own words into this verse, what else could they have done to the rest of God’s Word? They used the dynamic equivalence method to translate the Bible where they only focused on the interpretation of the verses. This is in contrast to the formal equivalence method employed by the KJV translators using a literal approach to translation. Their aim was to produce an English translation that would be the closest, purest and most faithful to the Hebrew and Greek text. They had the highest regard for the Holy Scriptures and trusted in God’s sovereign preservation of His Word. They did not assume that apparent scribal errors were definitely errors if they at first did not understand them, but stayed true to the original text. The modern translators had a low view of God’s Word and assumed that any discrepancy must be a scribal error. Instead of humbling themselves and considering that their understanding may be erroneous, they concluded that God’s Word must be wrong and changed it to suit their interpretation.

Oh how dangerous it is to think like these modern translators! Once you reject the doctrine of God’s preservation of His Word, you open the door to enormous doubt and confusion. Apparent scribal errors which can actually be logically explained will stumble your faith and you soon find that you are not able to tell which parts of the Bible are true and which are false. Don’t let yourself fall into this state!

Thought: Any doctrine that exalts God and His Word is true.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to love and revere Thy Word!

WHO WERE WESTCOTT AND HORT?

Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton J A Hort were two 19th century liberal Anglican scholars from Cambridge University. They were strong proponents of textual criticism, and set out to displace the Textus Receptus which was the accepted Greek text of the church. They sought to replace it with the Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus which had been rejected by the church. These texts were considered to be from a mutilated text produced by the Adoptionists, a Gnostic sect. In fact, the Codex Sinaiticus had been discovered in 1844 placed next to a stove in the Convent of St Catherine waiting to be burnt. Despite this, Westcott and Hort claimed that these older texts were more accurate although they were clearly considered corrupt by the church. They claimed that the orthodox church had been hiding these texts and made revisions to them to produce the Textus Receptus. They had no grounds for this theory and had conjured it to defame the Textus Receptus.

Westcott and Hort themselves had very questionable doctrinal beliefs and practices. They admired Darwin and his theory of evolution, at the same time, rejected the literal interpretation of the Genesis creation account. They were partial to the Roman Catholic Church and even worshipped Mary. They were like the *“unlearned and unstable”* men as described in 2 Peter 3:16 who sought to wrestle and alter God’s Word. Would you trust the Word of God in their hands?

It is irresponsible of God’s children to blindly use any Bible translation without studying the background on how it came about. It is our duty to find out and we cannot claim ignorance. Knowing that the modern versions have their roots in the corrupted Westcott-Hort Greek text and yet still persist in using them is dishonouring to God and we will need to answer to Him in the end. We are accountable to God to use the most faithful translation of the preserved Hebrew and Greek text in the language we use. We should never take God’s Word lightly, for ultimately the one who will lose out the most is ourselves!

Thought: Do you think most users of modern translations of the Bible do so in ignorance of the background of these translations?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be God-fearing and never tamper with Thy Word.

SURELY ONLY THE AUTOGRAPHS ARE PERFECT?

If you find yourself in a debate with one who rejects VPP, you will find that both of you will agree on one point. That the autographs, the very first original scripts containing God's Word, are perfect. You will both agree that they are totally inspired and God-breathed, the very words of God put to parchment. Thereafter, your disagreement starts. He will believe that these perfect words of God have been forever lost with the destruction of the autographs and all we have now are partially accurate copies of God's Word. However, not to worry, he would say, because he is sure that the accurate portions of the Bible he holds are those concerning important doctrines. Those containing accounts of historical events including Creation may not be accurate but he would say that they hardly matter to our faith. You ask him to tell you how he can be sure which parts of the Bible are accurate and he just shrugs his shoulders. He just cannot bring himself to believe that a Bible copied by human beings over the centuries can be 100% perfect.

It is sad that those who reject VPP look more to man than to God. They focus on man's inability rather than God's perfect providence. If he truly believed in God's omnipotence, would he not see that God preserving His own Word is an easy task for Him? Jesus said, *"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."* Jesus knew that the Old Testament He held at that time was perfect. Surely, if God can preserve His Word from the beginning till Jesus' time, He can definitely preserve it to our time.

Let us trust in God and not in man. Let us have faith that our Heavenly Father who loves us can and will give us His perfect Words. It seems ridiculous to think that God would give us His Word right at the beginning and then leave us to our own devices. God is very much involved and working in the lives of His children. Without a doubt, He can work through His children to preserve the very Words He gave us at the start. His Word is spiritual food and life to His children. He would never feed us anything tainted or blemished.

Thought: How would you view the Bible if you only believed that the autographs were perfect?

Prayer: Lord, grant me faith to believe in Thy wondrous preservation of Thy Word.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T BELIEVE IN VPP?

When you first accepted Christ as your Saviour, you needed faith to believe. Your walk with God now requires faith that He will guide and protect you. Your whole life now is an exercise in faith, in God's doctrines and promises. Hebrews 11:6 says, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* We can see from this verse that your exercise of faith pleases God and He will reward your faith.

The doctrine of the Verbal Plenary Preservation (VPP) of God's Word is like the other doctrines in the Bible. It requires us to have faith to believe in it. Often times, people reject VPP because they look to man rather than to God. They forget that God is an all-knowing and all-powerful God who can ensure that His Word is preserved. It seems strange that we can believe that God can preserve us and our physical being but yet not believe that He can preserve His own Word which is precious to Him and the foundation of our faith (See Romans10:17).

If we have faith to believe in VPP, God will reward us. We will not be treating God's Word skeptically like those who reject VPP and open themselves up to the possibility that there are errors in the Bible. We will not doubt whether a historical account in the Bible is true. We will know that we have God's perfect Word and that His promises to us are real and not inaccurate imitations. We will have the assurance of our salvation and not be plagued by the nagging thought that maybe what the Bible said about Christ is a scribal error. We will not be using those modern translations that subtly omit vital words in the Bible and introduce false doctrines and destroy fundamental ones. Indeed, the rewards of our faith in God and His Word are great! Let us diligently continue to seek God's Word, and learn more about its wonderful purity, perfection, and of all the wondrous truths within it.

Thought: How would you feel if you have to keep second-guessing what you are reading in your Bible and therefore, by extension, second guessing God?

Prayer: Lord, faith comes from Thee. Grant me faith to believe in Thy preservation of Thy Word.

DON'T THE OPPONENTS OF VPP CITE THE BIBLE TOO?

Does it mean that if someone quotes the Bible, that person must be right? What then would you say about the devil himself who quoted parts of Scripture when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4)? The Devil did not believe in God's Word but he twisted it to use it to his advantage. Jesus knew God's Word completely and replied the Devil with Scripture as well. For example, when the Devil quoted Psalm 91:11 about how the angels will bear Jesus up if He cast Himself down, Jesus countered with Deuteronomy 6:16 which states that one should not tempt God.

2 Corinthians 4:2 speaks of how the apostles aimed to be honest and truthful in all they did, especially in preaching God's Word. They said that they did not want to “[*handle*] the word of God deceitfully”. It is therefore possible to not be speaking God's truth even though you are quoting His Word by distorting it to support your view. The opponents of VPP do quote the Bible but we need to be wary that they may be choosing verses that will fit into their view, and take them out of context, misinterpreting them instead of forming their view from what the Bible says. The Bible never contradicts itself. It is a serious sin to distort God's Word especially if the perpetrator is a preacher or a leader in the church. Furthermore, Paul then warns us in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that Satan, who is the god of this world, is actively preventing people from coming to the truth, and are blinding them from seeing the glorious light of the gospel. One of these ways, is through casting doubt on the Word of God! When pastors and preachers preach against VPP, and even use Scripture to back their position, they are acting as agents of Satan to turn people away from the wonderful truth of God's Word!

We need to be careful when we hear God's Word being quoted. We should always check the Scriptures for ourselves like the Berean Christians and seek to know the Bible well so that we can defend God's truth by quoting accurately from God's Word.

Thought: Are there other examples of people or movements misquoting Scripture to fit their agenda?

Prayer: Lord, grant me discernment to know if Thy Word is being misquoted. Help me to know Thy Word well so that I may better defend it.

SURELY ONLY A MINORITY ARE AGAINST THE WORD?

Many false teachers have crept into the church leading the people astray. The Greek word here for “*corrupt*” means to engage in retail business, implying deceptiveness and greedy motives. In this verse and throughout 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul defends the gospel he and his co-labourers have preached. His ministry in contrast, is not like the majority of false teachers. It is sincere, as Paul’s motive is pure. It is by divine appointment, as Paul is an apostle appointed by the LORD, not himself nor any other. It is transparent, as before God he has nothing to and can indeed hide nothing. The gospel he preaches is the gospel of Christ.

Even in the early days of Christianity, many false teachers had snuck into the church and were busy corrupting the Word, even in the very church that Paul himself founded! These teachers were numerous and the speed and ease at which they were able to come into the church and wreak havoc was frightening. How much more so is the case today as the day of the Lord’s return draws closer. In this age of television and Internet, books and films, peddling a corrupted Christianity have undeniably brought wealth and fame to many.

It is foolhardy to believe that only a minority are against the Word. The heart of sinful man and our adversary Satan remain unchanged, and thus their hatred for the Word. The most dangerous attacks against God’s people and the church will be to the Word – the foundation of our faith. And these will be from within Christianity. This can cause the greatest trouble to God’s work, rather than unbelievers or other religions.

Thus, it is every believer’s responsibility to be equipped with knowledge and prayerfully always be vigilant, guarding against false teachers creeping into their fellowship groups, church and personal life. Do not be complacent to the many devices of Satan for we are in a battle!

Thought: What principals are there in 2 Corinthians 2:17 to guard my life and church against false teachers?

Prayer: May I be a discerning and vigilant member of my church.

ISN'T IT OK IF THE BIBLE IS 98.7% ACCURATE?

Christ our Lord warns of false prophets and how to identify them, by the type of fruit they produce. It is not possible for a good tree to bear evil fruit, nor a corrupt tree bear good fruit. Consequently, an examination of the fruit will tell us whether a tree is good or evil, because it will not be obvious whether a teacher is genuine or a dangerous predator in harmless sheep's clothing. False prophets will be people in leadership, theologians, spiritually learned, full of good works, and articulate – having all the appearance of godliness. From the outside, there will be no difference between them and genuine believers. Subtly, they will beguile, confuse and deceive those who are unaware.

The number 98.7% sounds pretty good – it is close enough to 100%, perfection. If you received 98.7% on an exam, you would think that was an excellent mark. How many people can attain 100%, 100% of the time anyway? Whilst we cannot see into their hearts, we can consider the 'fruits' of those who claim the Bible is 98.7% perfect. Does this strengthen people's faith in the Word of God? Does it draw unbelievers to Christianity? Whose word is elevated, God's or man who puts this judgement and limitation on God's Word? We believe in a God who did not preserve His Word completely and perfectly? Can this possibly be good fruit? Certainly not.

A strong conviction in the 100% purity and perfection of the Word of God will only strengthen our faith in God, and help us to have absolute confidence in the truth of God's Word. Allowing the possibility of anything less than that will cause uncertainty, doubt and ultimately unbelief to creep in. It will affect our faith, and cause us to question the Word of God, rather than just accepting it by faith.

There will be wolves who will come into your life and church with charisma, clever arguments and sweet words seeking to undermine and destroy Christians and the work of God. Examine with spiritual knowledge from the Word of God not the outward tree but with much prayer, its fruit.

Thought: If the Bible is 98.7% perfect, does that mean God is only 98.7% God?

Prayer: May I love the Bible and defend it with knowledge and courage.

DOESN'T VPP BRING DIVISION?

The purpose of the gospel was not to bring peace between mankind but reconciliation between man and God. Consequently there will be division between those who accept the Gospel and those who reject it. The gospel also met with opposition, and hatred as exemplified in Christ's life and His crucifixion. There will be a clear and sharp division between believers and unbelievers, cutting even the closest relation, dividing members of families one against the other, so much so they will be enemies. There will be no neutral, middle ground.

In the prevailing thought of the world, division is something bad and undesirable. Peace is favoured, even at the expense of truth. This is man's thinking. But this is inconsistent with the message of Christ. Christ did not come to compromise with the Pharisees, but to expose their error with truth that they may repent and be saved. The truth will always divide – right from wrong. A lie can change, evolve and be part truth. But pure truth stands alone, uncompromising. Yes, VPP may bring division, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. It separates those who wholeheartedly love the Word of God from those who value their own opinions or those of others more. It serves as a good litmus test to show who would be willing to humble themselves before the Word of God, and who would want to stand in judgment of the Word of God.

Where there is no truth, how can there be unity? What is the foundation? Everyone agreeing to disagree is not real unity either. Yet, Christians who believe in the perfect preservation of the Bible will be united, and the basis of this unity is the perfect and unchanging Word of God. The effect of VPP is division. But, let us look at this division as a necessary and good thing. It is also in obedience to God and His Word.

Thought: To love the truth and uphold it is Biblical/godly love, love that rejoices in truth and not sin. (See 1 Corinthians 13:6)

Prayer: Lord, may I be worthy of Thee.

WHAT DOES THE “THEM” IN VERSE 7 REFER TO?

Does “them” refer to the Word of God in verse 6 or the poor and needy in verse 5? In the original language of the text, the Words of God are a feminine noun and “them” a masculine pronoun. Thus it would seem that “them” must then refer to the poor and needy, according to the rules of English grammar, as the genders must match. However, this ‘inconsistency’ in genders is something that is used numerous places in the Bible, (e.g. Psalm 119:152). This blurring of the genders occurred in Hebrew grammar. Thus it is not conclusive that preservation refers to people. Hebrew grammar (rules that govern the composition of clauses, phrases and words) differs from English and we cannot force it to conform to English grammar.

The immediate context of a verse must always first be considered when interpreting the Bible. This leads to reading of God preserving His words rather than preserving men. Further, an understanding of two devices of Biblical poetry employed here also aids our interpretation of “them”. In verse 6, synonymous parallelism occurs where the 2nd line restates the first, emphasising the first – the preservation of God’s Words. Secondly, synthetic parallelism describes the relationship between verse 6 and verse 7, where the 2nd verse expands on the teaching in the previous.

Lastly, Psalm 12 is about the pure and everlasting words of the LORD in contrast to those of wicked men that are evil. The focus is not the poor and needy.

If God has failed to preserve His Words as some claim, what does that mean for believers today? What is the “fruit” of such an interpretation of “them”? Does this mean over time we will have less and less of God’s Word with us? That the evil words of wicked men are more powerful than God’s? No. We can rest assured, and stand firm on the Word of God, pure and preserved, now and forever.

Thought: Take heart when you experience words of attacks and hurt from man. These words will pass away.

Prayer: LORD, may I hold fast to Your unchanging Word through all the storms and tempests of life.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH MODERN VERSIONS?

“The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him”, reads the New International Version’s translation of Luke 2:33. Yet this is one of the most popular and widely available modern versions. The problems with modern translations are innumerable, including the dubious spiritual integrity of translators, the underlying texts used, and the method of translation. No doubt there is also a great deal of money to be made catering to the myriad and ever changing whims of man. Man, not God knows best what is best for himself.

Nevertheless, what difference does a few words here and there make? A great deal. The Lord Jesus is the son of God, born of a virgin. Joseph is not His father. This seemingly subtle difference is significant. If Joseph is the father of Jesus, is Jesus no different from the apostles – men who performed miracles too? Therefore, no different ultimately from you and I? The undermining of fundamental doctrines has crept in. Immaculate conception, the deity of Christ are all called into question to name but a few.

The Bible is not just any book to a Christian. It is the foundation of our faith, which not just determines how we live our lives here on earth but assures us of salvation. Our faith is precise because our God is. His Word is perfect, with one meaning but many applications. It would surely matter if the formulas in your textbooks were different from one another, even slightly. Or the answers often had errors, albeit tiny ones. How would that affect your confidence in that book to teach you, and the authority of the author? We want the best resources for our earthly studies, but we are willing to settle for less of the Word of God? Other factors like readability are deemed more critical than the accuracy of manuscripts and integrity of translators. We accept the bad fruits of what we know to be bad trees. Perhaps this is why so many Christians fail to live righteous lives – our low view of God and His Word.

Thought: Do you want the best of everything in life even if you have to work and sacrifice? What about the best English Bible?

Prayer: LORD, may I hunger and thirst after Your perfect Word and live a transformed life.

WHAT ABOUT NON-ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS?

A debate can be intellectually stimulating and entertaining for both the participants and the audience - the quick and witty exchange of words, the sharpening of minds. Whilst the study of God's Word is a great and desirable thing, knowledge gained and intelligence God has blessed you with are not to be used in the same manner in the church. Paul wisely instructs Timothy and ministers not to engage in debates and arguments that are futile, driven by pride or a desire to be ingenious. To *'charge before the Lord'* emphasises the severity of this instruction. Such heated disagreements do not build up, but rather stumble believers, particularly young ones, and all believers are distracted from the true work of God.

To wonder about non-English translations is a genuine question. Believers should use the best translation available in their language.

Essential criteria in the choice of Bible versions should be the accuracy of the original manuscripts and the integrity of the translators. We use the KJV because it is the best English translation. Informing or belabouring non-English believers of the shortcomings of their Bible and providing no solution is unhelpful and unloving. This will not strengthen the faith of such believers, nor draw unbelievers to the Word of God in their native language. To learn English in order to read the KJV will not be possible for many. Therefore for any language, the believers are to use the best possible translation that they have, and wait upon the Lord to raise up able and faithful scholars who can translate the Bible more accurately and faithfully for them – it is all in the hands of God!

Do we sometimes argue and split hairs just for the sake of it, just to be right and prove someone wrong? We fancy ourselves intelligent, and dare we say even spiritual. We formulate unprofitable views and theories which maybe actually dangerous to self and to others. It is not wrong to engage in discourse with other believers on contentious issues, nor defend the doctrines of our faith. Much wisdom and love is required to discern the things we should stand up for, the right timing, the correct words, and last but not least the right motive.

Thought: Are you quick to speak and jump into an argument?

Prayer: May I be as wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

BUT THESE MODERN CRITICS ARE SO SCHOLARLY?

The focus of Psalm 119, the longest in the book of Psalms, is the law of God. It is believed to be penned by David towards the end of his life. David's relationship with God had seen him through a great deal, from his humble beginnings as a shepherd, glorious military victories, great persecution, the depths of sin to painful betrayals. Through all this, the author describes God's word as unchangeable, eternal. He had experienced how the Word of God was real in his life, and the promises therein were always trustworthy, and never failed. Thus he declared *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven"*. His faith allowed him to have the simple conviction that God's Word will always be firm, fixed and unchanging. It is settled – a done deal! It will forever be settled, for God the perfect author is the one who is infallibly guarding and protecting it, from His throne on high, in heaven.

In contrast, the most scholarly and intelligent of men is a man at best, a creature of the creator. His mind is changeable, will fade over time, and come to its inevitable end. Man is finite. God is infinite. God has declared that His Word is settled, and therefore by faith we believe. The scholars may write voluminous, complicated and highly technical dissertations in a bid to try to find fault with the Bible. They may sound very convincing and academic. However the one thing that they lack is faith in God and His Word. They have ignored the promises of the faithfulness of God (Psalm 119:90), and instead have regarded the fallibility of man. Sadly, they have committed so much time and effort in a vain and wicked attempt to cast doubt upon the Word of God!

In publishing, even with great authors, good editors and time, there is no perfect book. Over time, revisions are made, and even what was once 'truth' becomes debatable or no longer holds. This verse, and all of the Bible were written by holy men whose words were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Can we say the same about the words of men, however rational and gifted, whose motive is to find fault with Holy Scripture? They seek to qualify and limit God and His Word, elevating theirs. Upon whose word will you trust and obey?

Thought: What is the motive of such 'scholarly' criticism? What good spiritual fruit is produced?

Prayer: LORD, may Your Word be paramount in my life, and no other, including my own.

WHAT IS THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE WORD?

Today's passage of scripture concerns a very important aspect of the church. The church that is referred to here is not the physical building but is made up of believers. This is the “invisible church” that consists of all believers throughout the ages. In this epistle, Paul is writing to teach Timothy about God's Word and how it relates to the church. Paul describes the church as the “pillar and ground” of the truth. It is easy to understand this passage incorrectly and think that the Word of God is dependent on the church and that without the church there will be no Word. This is not true. Instead, Paul is saying that God has chosen the church to be the one to bear the Word of God to the world and that a church that is faithful to that task will become a pillar and foundation or ground which the Word of God will come forth out of. This duty and honour that was given to the nation of Israel is now given to the Christian church. This tells us of the deep importance of a faithful church. God has not chosen any other people or manner for His Word to be borne except by the church. It is not that God has limited Himself, but rather it speaks of the great privilege and importance God has chosen to place upon the church. God's Word is the key to eternal life. The church herein bears a great and grave responsibility to be witnesses of God and to share His Word to the world. However, this passage can have another meaning too. If a church does not bear this responsibility faithfully, it cannot be called a pillar or foundation. In fact, it cannot even be considered a church. In other words, a church that preaches God's Word wrongly or with error has failed to fulfil this responsibility.

I hope you realise the awesome responsibility and privilege that God has given to every believer to be bearers of the everlasting Word of God. God has appointed you to be His messenger. Knowing this, can you say that you know His Word well? Can you say that you can share God's Word of truth with another correctly? Are you determined to study God's Word regularly so that you can be a worthy servant and workman of the Lord?

Thought: Without God's Word, what will happen to all of us?

Prayer: Father, teach me to understand the value of Your Word and the importance of my responsibilities as Your child.

DO YOU DESIRE THE WORD?

Newborn babies don't do very much. They sleep, cry, eat and dirty themselves. Every one of these functions is critical but the most important of all is eating. Without food, the baby will simply perish. The baby knows this and naturally desires to be fed. If a baby rejects food, there is something very wrong and will need the doctor's attention immediately. Food is absolutely necessary for his survival. There is no one in the world that can go on without food indefinitely. This is what Peter teaches on how Christians must naturally yearn for God's Word. Peter says that just as a newborn baby naturally desires milk for food, a true believing Christian should also similarly yearn for the Word of God. Just as milk is lovely to the tongue of a baby, likewise, the Word should be something sweet and nourishing to the believer. This is beautifully expressed by the Psalmist; *“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”* (Psalm 119:103). This should be the response of the Christian to God's Word. It must never be a lukewarm response or one of indifference. Instead it is one of passion, desire and excitement.

Then, when one does have such a desire for the Word, the second part of 1 Peter 2:2 tells us that is how the Christian will grow and mature in the faith. As our spiritual food, the Word of God enables a Christian to grow in the same way milk helps a baby to grow. A Christian will not grow spiritually if there is no Word. If he is not sufficiently fed in the Word of God, he will be constantly weak against sin and will lack true joy in his life. He will be a feeble Christian.

Do you find God's Word desirous? When you open your Bible, are you filled with excitement? Just like a hungry baby yearning to be fed, do you feel you too have a need to be fed? Do you go out of your way to attend Bible study and find ways to learn more of God's Word? These are questions that you should answer in the affirmative. If not, you must check your life. Are you in disobedience and sin? Or do you truly know the Lord? If not, don't wait, repent, believe and trust in Him today.

Thought: Do you find that your love for God's Word can be easily replaced by something else?

Prayer: Father, give me the love for Your Word.

ARE YOU DOERS OF THE WORD (I)?

Christ was teaching the crowd when all of a sudden, a certain woman raised her voice and said loudly that the womb that bore Christ is blessed. It was almost like the woman was making an announcement! She was, of course, referring to Mary. Perhaps she meant it as a praise and adoration of Christ, and in turn to praise the woman that bore Him. But what this statement also perhaps implied was that those that were close to Christ would have a special benefit or blessing as compared to others. If you were friends with Christ from His youth or if you were His sibling, then maybe God would look upon you differently and favourably. Christ, instead, corrected her by saying rather that blessed are those who not only hear God's Words but keep them. Even if one were the earthly sibling or even earthly mother of Christ, if one does not follow after Christ and keep His words, he or she is no better off. What appears to be a special relationship in the eyes of that woman, is actually unimportant and inconsequential. What is far more important is that one keeps God's Word. To illustrate further, Christ spoke of the Ninevites in the time of Jonah. The Ninevites were once cruel and wicked people but because they repented and kept God's Word, they were considered even better than the people of Israel who were disobedient. The special relationship of the Jews with God, meant little without obedience.

Do you feel that it is possible to please God without actually doing His Word? Do you think that there are alternatives to being accepted by God? Some feel attending church is sufficient. Others feel because one's parents are believers, it is enough to be accepted by God. Some even feel that as long as they please God in some areas of their lives while keeping some little pet sins, they would still be all right. Romans 2:13 tells us that it is not the hearers but the doers of God's Word who will be justified. Deuteronomy 5:1 is very clear by saying that the statutes and judgments of God must be learnt, kept and done. This refers to not some, but all of God's commandments. Only obeying God's Word will gain favour before God. There are no alternatives.

Thought: Have I disobeyed God today?

Prayer: Father, help me to be ever sensitive to sin in my life and to quickly repent.

“...every one that heareth ...and doeth them not,
...shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built ...upon sand.”

ARE YOU DOERS OF THE WORD (II)?

Many Christians today have a rather casual relationship with the Word of God. To them, it is something that they are happy to listen to once a week over the pulpit, and in fact, many would agree with what is spoken. But just as quickly as one agrees, one quickly forgets what is said. In their hearts, God's Word stops the moment they step out of church and step back into their worldly pursuits. James describes this situation very well. It is like looking at yourself in the mirror. Perhaps you see some flaws on your face – maybe dishevelled hair or some stains around your mouth from lunch. What will you do about it? Will you just walk away and forget about what you saw? That would be unimaginable, wouldn't it? We would most certainly want to rectify any fault that we see, to make sure that we are presentable, and do not appear strange to anyone. Yet there are many people who look into the mirror of the Word of God, and see their sins being starkly revealed to them, but they care not to do anything about it. Although they listen to the Word of God regularly, it has little or no impact in their lives. As soon as it is spoken, it is forgotten. Such believers are living lives of complacency, and are deceiving only themselves. They do not hate the things of God, yet they have no real love for them either. These are believers who have not been faithful and have chosen a worldly life of disobedience. They care little about the seriousness of sin, or the commandments from God's Word. They are content with their lacklustre relationship with God, and think that all is well, when in actual fact it is not! God is certainly not pleased with such behaviour.

Dear Teen, do you put God's Word in practice? Do you choose the pleasures of this world over obeying God's Word? Do you shun from obeying God if it means painful sacrifice on your part? If it means giving up on a desire because it dishonours your parents, will you do it? James 1:25 contains an encouragement. If one keeps God's Word, he will be blessed and he will enjoy liberty. The law of God is described as *“the perfect law of liberty”*, meaning God's law frees us from the entanglements of sin. Sin does not give lasting pleasure, instead it imprisons us. We do not become happier with sin, we become more miserable. Obeying God frees us from the misery of being a sinner and keeping God's Word makes us blessed.

Thought: Do you have a constant desire to obey God?

Prayer: Father, give me the desire to be obedient in all things that Thou has called me to be.

ARE YOU CONVICTED BY THE WORD?

There are two records in Acts that are similar yet at the same time very different. Acts 2, which is our passage for today, and Acts 5. Acts 2 records the sermon that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Peter spoke from the scriptures to the thousands gathered there that day about how the Lord Jesus Christ was the chosen Messiah foretold of old. He proved from the Old Testament prophecy that Jesus was truly the Son of God. Peter reported how they crucified Him, how God raised Christ from the dead and how Christ now sits at the right hand of God and will return one day. Upon hearing this, the hearts of the people were pricked. Their response; *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* (Acts 2:37). Peter told them to repent. That very day, three thousand were saved! In Acts 5:29-32, Peter was again speaking, but this time the audience consisted of the high priest and the Sanhedrin council. It was a similar message. Peter announced that they were guilty of crucifying Christ who is the Son of God. Acts 5:33 tells us that they were *“cut to the heart”*. But this was different because the next action was that they planned how they could kill Peter and those who were with him. What a completely different response! Both groups of people were given the wonderful truth concerning Christ. One was moved to repentance, another was moved to greater sin.

Which group do you belong to? When you hear God’s Word, what is your response? Are you convicted? Is your heart moved? And if so, is your conviction one that leads you to repentance or is it one that makes you hate God’s Word even more? For some of you, God’s Word may even hold no flavour. It is bland. You hear it, but it moves you not to repentance nor to hatred. If God’s Word does not bring you to God, then beware. Hebrews 9:27 tell us that all man will die and after that, judgment. Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:14 tells us judgment awaits all. Every work, whether good or evil will be brought before God, there is no escape. If you fail to believe and embrace this truth while you are on earth, the consequence is eternal damnation. There will be no second chance. And yet, the same Word that you now hate or have no feeling for tells us in John 5:39 that it contains all that you need to attain eternal life. If you seek, you will find. It is there for you.

Thought: If God’s Word is true, shouldn’t I obey it?

Prayer: Father, prick my heart unto repentance.

DOES YOUR MUSIC TASTE REFLECT THE WORD?

It is a common sight today to see people walking about with earbuds stuck into their ears. Music is truly an important part of the lives of many people. It is a gift from God. God has blessed mankind with many wonderful things that enrich our lives and cause us to glorify God. However, man can and has abused many of these gifts, and music is not spared. In fact, music is one of the most abused media simply because it is such a powerful one. Music can reach into the hearts and move people with instantaneous power. Hence, just as music was given to man to enable him to praise God, it can also be misused to do the very opposite. Sadly, in these last days, the abuse of music far exceeds the godly use of it. More sad is the fact that many Christians, especially teens, allow themselves to be exposed to ungodly, worldly music. When they immerse themselves with such carnal tunes and lyrics, they allow their hearts to be affected and moved to whichever direction the composers have intended. Mouthing the words and singing such music becomes common, and before long their hearts become shaped and moulded to be like the world. It goes without saying that such songs have no value and are unable to teach or admonish one in the walk of the Lord as our verse for today calls us to do. As Colossians 3:16 intimates, the singing, or the music, should be the product of God's Words dwelling in us richly. Hence the music should be rich with God's Words. The listener then receives God's Words in beautiful harmony and melody. The music moves one to godliness instead of godlessness. One hears the music and reflects on the attributes of God and is drawn closer to Him. Music is meant to achieve such a purpose.

Sadly, the music of today is sensual and evil. It is filled with fornication and violence and simply an expression of the evil in the world. They often incite lustful, angry, materialistic and other ungodly desires. Why do we then allow ourselves to be filled with such? We indulge in the pleasurable rhythms and tunes and allow our hearts to be filled with the emotions that are intended to come forth by the composers of such music. We freely allow ourselves to be manipulated and wonder why as Christians, we do not seem to grow. Let's shun such music from now on. Your soul is too valuable for transient and evil pleasures.

Thought: Is it so hard to avoid pop music?

Prayer: Father, remove the love for pop music in me.

DO YOU REBEL AGAINST THE WORD?

It is easy to obey God's Word when it runs in your favour. If you are already firmly set on holding on to the KJV as the best translation, it is easy to tell your friend that his NIV is not good and that he should stop using it. If you have no liking for K-pop music, it is easy to reject it and call it worldly. However, if God's Word calls for you to repent and refrain from one of your pet sins, what would be your response? Perhaps you may like computer games so much that you would disobey your parents to continue playing them. Perhaps Facebook is such an obsession of yours that everyday you will spend at least an hour on it even when your schoolwork is suffering. If God's Word tells you something that you do not like, what is your response? If it is spoken over the pulpit, do you quietly ignore it? Or if God's Word is brought to you face-to-face by someone, perhaps your parent, do you take fault with the person? Do you frown with an angry face in response? It is naturally not easy to take rebuke. When we are told that we are in sin and need to repent, it takes humility to accept it. However, if God's Word is brought to you and your response is one of rejection and even rebellion, you have to be careful of that. Today's scriptural passage is a clear and damning indictment God makes against the people of Israel. If you read the verses before and after verse 9, you will see the context and understand their sin better. The people told the prophets not to prophesy anymore. They told the prophets to stay away from them and even asked God Himself to "*cease from before us*". God describes them as rebellious, lying children. We know from history that God's judgment on them was great. God is to be feared.

Are you the same? Do you wish your pastor, teachers, parents or friends who bring God's Word would stop? Like the people of Israel, would you rather hear only smooth words, even if they are false? If you have come to trust in Christ, this cannot be. If you are in a season of backsliding and God's Word holds no more sweetness for you, you must come to repentance and return to God. If, however, you have never been saved, you must not wait. You must quickly come to Christ as you do not know what tomorrow brings. Salvation is free, but will not always be available.

Thought: What if I die tonight? Am I ready to meet my Creator?

Prayer: Father, help me to always be ready for rebuke from Your Word.

IS GOD’S WORD YOUR DELIGHT?

Psalm 1 is a well-known psalm. It describes what a person will be like if he loves God’s Word and lives by it while shunning all evil. Such a man finds God’s Word a delight. What do you find joy in? What makes you happy? For some it may be the latest computer game. Some find joy in being with friends and doing things together. Others find joy in reading or sports. With things that you enjoy, you may find yourself spending a lot of time doing it and not realise it. That is what it is like when you enjoy doing something. How about God’s Word? When you read the Bible or hear a sermon preached, do you find that you are interested in it? Do you find joy in hearing and reading God’s Word? Or is it something that you find burdensome or even boring? If so, why do you think so? The Psalmist holds a very different view of God’s Word. *“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”* (Psalm 40:8). Doing God’s will is a joy. God’s law is dear to him and resides in his heart.

“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103). Job in all his languishing said, *“Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.”* (Job 23:12). To Job, God’s Word is more important than food.

The desire to turn to God’s Word should be natural. *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2:2). As a baby hungers for food, so should the Christian’s hunger for the Word of God be. Hence, for the Christian to desire to think of God’s Word night and day should in fact be a natural thing to do. For some of us, the love is present, However, the day’s activities with its distractions make it hard to focus on God’s Word. For others, there may be a complete lack of desire or love for God’s Word. If you belong to this group, you must be cautious as you may never have been saved in the first place. Check your heart and ask if you have ever loved Christ. If not, you must seek salvation immediately.

Thought: What hinders me in my love of God’s Word?

Prayer: Lord, renew a passionate love of God’s Word within me today.

DO YOU RECEIVE THE WORD WITH MEEKNESS?

One of the greatest problems of Christendom today is the arrogance with which so-called Christians approach God’s Word. They seem to think that God’s Word must be interpreted and applied in line with their thoughts and desires. If God’s Word does not make sense to the human mind, it must be wrong. If they cannot accept the doctrine of predestination, then the doctrine cannot be true. If they cannot resolve what appears at first to be an inconsistent fact, they say it is a scribal error. Repentance for sin is not a nice doctrine to speak about, so they avoid speaking about it. Instead they emphasise love and unity, at the expense of truth and holiness. God’s Word speaks out against ungodly forms of worship, but people ignore it because drums and electric guitars used for worship just feel so right. We see this in all the modern day churches that have departed from God’s Word. Man now decides for himself what he wants to believe and ignores what God’s Word plainly says. The origin of this starts from what appears to be a light thing; the lack of humility. However, as with all sins, there is nothing light about it. Man approaches God’s Word without meekness. Self comes before God. Before long, the true gospel of salvation is snuffed out, and entire generations condemned. The lack of humility before God’s Word has eternal consequences.

This may appear to be the sin of others. But, that’s where we are wrong. We may claim; “I can’t accept this because it doesn’t make sense to me.” Or, “I’m ok, I’m not as sinful as this passage claims”. When we think this way, we are guilty of pride before God’s Word. James 1:21 tells us very clearly that we are to receive God’s Word with meekness and humility. We must lay aside our abundant sinful selfish tendencies, and humbly accept God’s Word for what it is. We must never try to argue with it, or try to rationalise our sin. To do so would be at a detriment to our souls and our relationship with God!

If we hold the Bible as the true Word coming from God Himself, our response must always be one of great humility. I am wrong, and God’s Word is always right. May we be meek before God’s Word.

Thought: When was the last time you ignored God’s Word or tried to rationalise a sin that you have committed?

Prayer: Father, keep me always humble before Thy Word.

DO YOU USE THE WORD TO CONVICT OTHERS?

What do you think is the solution to all of life's problems? Does finding peace and happiness provide the answer to this? This has probably been the greatest and most lasting question of mankind. Judging from the misery and unhappiness that we see all around us, it is obvious that many have not found the answer. People have a lot of problems and most are deeply unhappy. Sadly, this is also true among Christians. Many Christians are unhappy. Despite the fact that they are destined for glory with Christ in heaven, many still grope around in the dark, busy with the things of the world and live very unhappy lives. Why is this so? The answer actually applies to both Christians and non-Christians alike. Both lack the Word of God in their lives. For the Christian, it robs them of a joyful and victorious Christian life. For the non-Christian, the price is far more severe as they will have to face an eternity of suffering in hell after death. Both suffer even now, because they either have not heard God's Word or have heard it but reject it. Today's passage of scripture speaks about how Apollos shared God's Word with the Jews. The problem with the Jews was that they did not believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah. What Apollos did was that he showed the Jews from the Old Testament, evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. Further reading prior to this verse tells us that Apollos was actually not the most knowledgeable regarding God's doctrines. This prompted Aquila and Priscilla to take Apollos aside and to teach him further in the Word. Apollos learnt humbly and we know he was effective in convincing the Jews eventually. The Holy Spirit used God's Word that was shared by Apollos to convict the hearts of the Jews and converted them.

We can do the same. Just those around us, our Christian brethren may be discouraged and downcast either because of trials or even because of sin in their lives. We can share God's Word that we know and pray that God will use our sharing to convict their hearts. We should also share beyond our circle to those outside the kingdom of God. Without God's Word, they will be lost to eternal damnation. Simply by sharing God's Word, we can change that, and lead them away from damnation to salvation.

Thought: When was the last time I shared the gospel with an unbeliever?

Prayer: Father, help me not to hoard Your Word.

IS THE WORD YOUR WAY OF LIFE?

How do you determine what hair style you have, the kind of shoes or the style of clothes you wear? Do you choose these things because your friends have them and they look so cool? Or are you trying to emulate a pop star you admire? What about the leisure activities that you gravitate towards? What do you like to do when you have some free time on your hands? What affects your decision in the choice? These are some of the questions that are worth some thought and reflection. If you search your heart what answers will you find?

In today's verse, the writer of Proverbs tells us what guides his decisions and his life. God's commandments are a lamp, the law is a light, and instructions out of God's Word show him the way his life should take. A lamp giving out light is very necessary when the way is dark. We need light because the world is full of sin and so too are our hearts. Without light, we can fall into many dangers that hurt us. In the same way, God's Word acts as a light in a world that is in the darkness of sin, for it makes us wiser about these dangers and guides us away from them.

Does the Word of God determine your way of life? Are your decisions to dress in a certain way determined by God's Word or is it determined by the standards of the world? More often, our way of life is determined more by the world than by God's Word. In fact, much of the standards of the world are really ordered by sin. The prince of this world is the devil (Ephesians 2:2) hence we cannot expect much good to come from it. In fact, what is popular among the masses in the world is probably something to be avoided by Christians if we set God's Word as our standard for living. James 4:4 tells us that friendship with the world is enmity with God. If you choose the standards of the world as your way of life, you can be certain that this is not what God desires for you and you are probably already living in a state of sin. Instead, you should learn not to conform to this world, instead transform your life according to God's Word (Romans 12:1-2). Study God's Word diligently so that you know what God requires in your life, then seek to walk after His will and not the ways of the world.

Thought: If I don't know God's Word, how am I going to know how to walk in His ways?

Prayer: Help me to desire to live my life according to Your Word.

DO YOU USE THE WORD AS YOUR STANDARD?

The people referred to in today's passage are those from the church of Berea. The author of Acts, the apostle Paul, noted that the Bereans were nobler than the Thessalonians. This is not to say that the Thessalonians were not good people. When they saw the unrest and knew of the intentions of the Jews to kill Paul and Silas, they immediately sent them away to safety by night. Sending Paul and Silas away would not be something they would do willingly as they would have benefited much from the teachings of the two and their Christian fellowship would also have been dear to them. Sending them off would have been a sacrifice on their part. However, they did so for their sakes.

Yet, despite what has occurred, we are told that the Bereans were nobler. How so? Firstly, they received the Word with readiness of mind; meaning they were eager and willing to receive God's Word from Paul and Silas. They did so readily, with humble hearts that were ready to submit to God's teachings. This describes a people who had a deep love for God's Word. They not only received the Word gladly, but they continued to search the Scriptures daily to determine whether what they were told was true. It was not that they looked upon Paul and Silas with distrust. They would have honoured them as faithful bearers of God's Word. However, they were wise in the Lord and knew that it was necessary to *“try the spirits whether they are of God”* (1 John 4:1). They did not assume that Paul and Silas were always correct despite their good reputations. The Word of God was their standard, not the word of man. For this, they were commended by God as being nobler. Such an attribute is regarded highly in God's sight.

What is your standard for determining the truth? Is it the words of other people or is it science or the wisdom of famous men found in books? Your standard should always be God's Word and none other. If what is said is not in accordance to what God says in His Word, then it must be wrong. There is no comparison. God is holy and all-knowing and there is only truth in Him. Lies are the work of the devil. May we too be like the Bereans who did not automatically take the words of man as their standard but checked them against God's Word to make sure they were true.

Thought: Do you believe God's Word is absolutely true?

Prayer: Father, teach me to “try all spirits”.

DOES YOUR SPEECH REFLECT THE WORD?

It is not easy to order our life in the manner described in 1 Peter 4:11. Let's look at what today's passage has to say. We are told that he who speaks should speak as the oracles of God, meaning, we should speak as though it is God speaking through us, as if it is God who is making the declarations. It is a scary thought, isn't it? How are we supposed to do that? Reading on we see that those who minister to others in God's Word must do so with the ability that God gives him, not with his own abilities. Hence, from this we understand that though the responsibility that comes with speaking on God's behalf is ominous and great, we are not left helpless as we know from the passage that God gives us the ability to do so. Nonetheless, we know from personal experience that we often fail God in this. We often say the wrong things that end up hurting rather than ministering or helping. They are hardly representative of what God wishes to say. We know our tongue when used in sin can do a lot of damage. James 3:5 tells us that the tongue is a little fire that can burn down great things. We can do a lot of damage with our tongues. Yet as believers, God has seen it fit to commit His Word to us. We should be humbled and encouraged that God would still consider us worthy to bear His Word to the world. Hence, we should then do what we can to be worthy of this privilege and do our part to control our speech. Ephesians 4:29 commands us not to allow any corrupt words to come out of our mouths, instead to speak what is good to the edifying of others. In Colossians 4:6 we are told to season our speech with salt, meaning that it should be pure, clean and holy.

Do you control your speech? Or do you speak freely, thinking that that is your right and privilege to do so? There is no such thing as free speech. One can either speak for God or one ends up speaking in sin and for Satan. Christ tells us in Matthew 12:36 that every idle word that men shall speak will be judged and he must one day give an account for. Hence, we should take great care for the words we speak. May we be faithful oracles of God.

Thought: Do you think before you speak?

Prayer: Father, guard my tongue and may I glorify You with it.

DO YOU LOVE THE TRUTH OF THE WORD?

What are your emotions when you read God’s Word or when it is taught over the pulpit every Sunday? Are you bored and falling asleep? Do you struggle to do your QT or is it a time you look forward to find rest in the Lord? Or do you instead find QT a chore that you do only because you are forced to? Our love for God’s Word has a lot to do with our love for God and our understanding of Him. If we do not love God’s Word, it is very possible that we do not love God, or know him well enough. This is a stark truth that we cannot deny. If we do not find an eagerness for God’s Word, if we find God’s Word to be bland and tasteless, then our love for God may well be just as weak and feeble. Perhaps there was a time when you loved God’s Word but it is now weak because you have allowed your spiritual life to slacken. If that is the case, then you should do all you can to revive your spiritual life because there is nothing more important. You should examine your heart for sin as sin may be a hindrance to your relationship with God as well. If there is sin in your life and you refuse to repent, you have then given yourself over to mammon and not God and God is no longer in your life because you cannot love both (Matthew 6:24). Then you must repent and forsake the thing that is a sin in your life and return to God again. Or, you have no love for God because you have never loved God before. You have never come to believe and trust in God and have never been saved. If so, you must understand that when you pass from this life, you will be confronted with an eternity of damnation and suffering and there will be no return. This is your chance to escape that condemnation by receiving Christ’s offer for salvation.

The lack of love for God’s Word is a sign of a lack of love for God Himself. Have you forgotten what Christ has done for you? Have you forgotten how you once loved God? Why have you forsaken such great a gift? Is your sin more precious than the love of God that you rather choose your sin over God? Return to God today and love Him once again and may God’s Word shine in your heart.

Thought: Have I been loving God’s Word in my daily life?

Prayer: Father, search my heart and reveal all hindrances to my lack of love for You and Your Word.

HOW PRECIOUS IS THE WORD TO YOU?

Have you ever experienced long periods of time when you were not able to read God’s Word? How did you feel about that? Did you even feel anything? Did you yearn for the opportunity once again to read the Bible or were you numb and indifferent to it? Imagine that you were put into prison and allowed only one book to bring with you, which book would you choose? Would it be the Bible? Is the Bible precious to you? If one loves God, one will love God’s Word and if one loves God’s Word, he will find it the most precious thing on earth. Nothing can compare. The Bible brings joy to the heart like nothing else. Nothing soothes the heart better than the Word of God.

The book of Psalms is filled with testimonies for the love and preciousness of God’s Word. The Psalmist in our text today speaks of God’s Word as more to be desired than the best gold. As we know, gold is one of the most precious and desired metals known to man. Throughout the ages, it was highly valued as both a form of currency to be traded, but also a material to be used in jewellery, decoration and other adornments. Although gold can enrich and fulfil one’s needs and wants, yet the psalmist would rather have God’s Word over the finest gold. The psalmist draws another comparison to honey. In those days it would have been one of few sources of sugar. It was also used as a preserving agent, and was known to have medicinal properties. Fresh honey therefore was precious and would certainly have brought delight to the tongue. And yet, the psalmist would give that up in exchange for the Word of God.

What would you give up to have God’s Word? Would you give up sleep? Would you give up your treasured hobbies to free up more time for God? Would you give up watching your favourite TV programs so that you can spend the time to study God’s Word? Would you give up sin? If sin kept you from God’s Word, would you give it up? Is your love for God’s Word so great that you would give up all so that you can have it? If we have truly tasted the blessings of God’s Word in our lives, we should be prepared to forsake all for it. God’s Word should mean everything to us, for it can provide us with great spiritual wealth, and bring great delight to our soul.

Thought: What will you not give up in exchange for God’s Word?

Prayer: Help me to love Your Word above all else.

DO YOU REJOICE IN THE WORD?

Statutes are formally written laws that govern or regulate an organisation or nation. Every country has their set of statutes that are considered as a primary source of authority for the land. As citizens of a country, the expectation is that we would all abide by the statutes of the land, for to do otherwise would be breaking the law. However, there may be times where you disagree with a certain law. Perhaps you think that certain laws are too harsh or strict, that it impinges on your rights, or restricts your freedom in a certain way. Certain countries with corrupt rulers may also impose oppressive or unjust rules upon their people. As a result, they are angry and resentful about the law, and may choose to rebel against it.

However when it comes to the Word of God, we can have complete and absolute confidence to know that His statutes are always right! They will always be completely just, fair and righteous. We can never argue or dispute with the law of God, for they are given to us by the perfectly wise Creator of the whole universe. He is the one who made this world and gave us life, and He has every right to dictate the standards that we are to live by.

For that reason, instead of being indignant about certain aspects of God’s law, or refuse to conform to some of its standards, our response ought to be like the Psalmist, one of rejoicing! We can have every certainty to know that God’s law is always right, and the best possible thing that we can do in this life is to obey them! When we say that we have faith in God, we also have faith in His Word and His statutes. We have faith to believe that the best possible life we can have would be when we obey His Word and follow His will. We should be overjoyed that God has given us a rule to follow, and ought to do our very best to obey it down to the very jot and tittle.

Dear Teen, do you rejoice in God’s word? This is a good reflection of whether you trust and love God!

Thought: The more we love God, the more we’ll love His word. The more we love His word, the more we’ll love God!

Prayer: Lord, teach me to love Thy Word more and more each day.

ARE YOU IN AWE OF THE WORD?

When you read the words *"princes have persecuted me without a cause"*, you may wonder, this verse has nothing to do with me! Well for one, we don't have *"princes"* in Singapore. Furthermore, you may not have met any obvious persecution – with or without a cause (whether the persecution is fair or not)! But think a bit more, and you can see something wonderful in this verse.

Firstly, the meaning of the word *"prince"* has changed since the days of the King James Bible. We understand *"prince"* to mean the son of a king, but during those days it just meant *"leader"*. So, you can start thinking again! Have I been unjustly treated by somebody more senior than me (maybe your school monitor, or prefect or even your older brother or sister)? You are the junior person, so you can do nothing!

Secondly, what can you do when this happens? Some people are afraid (*"in awe"*) of people in authority, and are just too plain scared to do anything when they are treated unfairly. But the psalmist said something wonderful! *"but my heart standeth in awe of thy word"*.

As Christians, if we fear God, we do not need to fear anything else and anybody else! Isn't that great? If we fear God, we would also be *"in awe of"* (reverence) His word. What this means is that in the midst of persecution, *"I still reverence thy word. I am not deterred from keeping thy law by any threats or intimidations"* (Barnes). Notice how the Psalmist stands in the face of persecution, not cowering and wavering. His faith in God's Word is strong and resolute.

Dear teen, think about it! Many of our troubles come from our lack of reverence for God's word! We fear man rather than trust God's Word which contains many promises of wisdom and protection for times of persecution. Or when troubles come, we start to doubt God's Word. If we are to be *"in awe of"* God's word, then when we read the Bible, or listen to a sermon or message, we need to take it seriously, and with deep respect. Furthermore, you cannot be in awe of something you do not know.

Thought: If we love God's word, we will do those things that we know will please Him. If we fear God, we will NOT do those things that we know will displease Him.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for the many times I take Thy word lightly.

DO YOU MEMORISE THE WORD?

As Christians who love God's Word, one of the best things that we can do is to devote time and effort to memorise God's Word. It is something that we train our children to do from the earliest age, emphasising Bible memorisation in the youngest classes of Sunday school. Later as they progress through fellowship groups, and even in our worship services, there is a continued focus on the need to memorise portions of God's Word. There is certainly very good reason to do so, as many spiritually mature Christians can and do testify of the great blessings that they have received from hiding God's Word in their hearts.

In Psalm 119:16, the Psalmist declares the godly desire that he has, that he *"will not forget thy Word"*. The reason for this is because he finds delight in the statutes of God. Because he loves God's Word, and understands their great value, he never wants to forget them. Instead, he will devote time and effort to ensure that he will always remember God's Word, and abides by it. This is the firm resolute conviction of the Psalmist, that he wants to memorise God's Word, for he knows the great value of doing so.

Dear Teen, how about you? Do you delight in the Word of God, and if so, would you then take the effort to memorise portions of God's Word? Do you see it as a chore and a burden when there are BMC (Bible Memorisation Course) quizzes in your fellowship groups? Or are you thankful for the opportunity to be able to hide God's Word in your hearts? But more importantly, do you then apply these verses in your lives, by opening them and living it out? It is no use if these verses are in your head, but not in your heart.

It would be a good practice to write out certain verses that are precious or meaningful to you, and take time to commit them to memory. Or you could follow the BMC program that has been set by your church or fellowship group. If your church does not have such a program, maybe you could even be the one to initiate it, and encourage others to be involved in the memorisation of God's Word!

Thought: If the government bans the Bible one day, will you have the Bible verses in your head and your heart?

Prayer: Lord, help me not only to memorise Bible verses, but to understand them and let them work in my heart and soul so that I will love You more in spirit and in truth.

WHAT IS YOUR INTENTION OF MEMORISING?

Dear teen, does verse 11 of today's passage sound familiar to you? I believe you not only can recite it, but can hum the tune to the hymn too! It's such a wonderful verse. Question is, have we applied this verse in our life? Do you have God's Word hid in your heart, and has that helped you to stay away from sin and temptation?

The word *“hid”* implies that we should treasure the word of God, for it is indeed a *“pearl of great price”*! The word *“hid”* also implies *“internalisation”* – that is, not a matter of *“one ear in, one ear out”*. Rather, the Word of God becomes an integral part of who you are – you remember it, you can recite it, you love it, and you obey it!

When we hide God's Word in our hearts, the Holy Spirit will guide and help us to be discerning such that we may make right decisions based on God's Word and glorify Him. So, to answer the question for today – what is your intention of memorising? I hope your intention is not primarily to win prizes in memory verse contests! But that you might not sin against God.

The previous verse (Psalm 119:9) gives another excellent answer to the question: *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word”*.

Aren't you exposed to temptations daily? How can you triumph over these temptations? The answer is clear: Paul says *“flee ...youthful lusts”* (2 Timothy 2:22), and the Psalmist here says *“(take) heed thereto according to thy word”*! When we have God's word in us, we understand the will of God better, and know the right godly way to react in any circumstances or temptations that we might face.

Let us strive to memorise at least one verse every week – with understanding. If you can do so for a year, you would have memorised more than 50 verses. In 10 years, you would have more than 500 verses hid in your heart. Imagine that!

Thought: Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”.

Prayer: Lord, help me to let Thy Word be so much a part of me that I will love what You love, and do what You want me to do.

WHAT PRIORITY DO YOU PLACE ON GOD'S WORD?

Some people live to eat, others eat to live. Whatever your relationship with food is like, one thing is common to everyone – we need to eat. We may be able to skip a meal or two from time to time, but if we were to go for a whole day without food, our body will soon start to weaken. Longer than that, our body will soon start to fail, and we will die of starvation. I think you will all agree with me that food is a definite necessity of life.

You know the story of Job – how he suffered from the loss not only of all his properties and his children, but also from a terrible skin disease. But he never blamed God. In verse 10, we see that he took this as a trial of faith. He may not have the Bible that we have now, but whatever he knew of God's word, he had kept them faithfully, and never turned away from them. His firm conviction was that no matter what circumstances he was in, he must never turn away from the commandments of God, for he esteemed the word of God even more than food! This meant that he had a great respect and love for the Word of God, such that keeping God's Word was more important to him than even the food that sustains his physical body. In this we see the priority of Job, for he knew that his spiritual life is far more important than his physical. Physically, he was suffering greatly, and his body must have been weakened from all the pain of his disease. Yet amidst all that, his soul was healthier than ever, for he was abiding in God amidst his trials.

Indeed what an excellent testimony we can all learn from. Job was physically so rich, but lost almost everything. When he had nothing, his priorities never changed. He was still the same godly man who knew the importance of the Word of God. He did not allow his circumstances to change him. Instead, he clung tightly to the one thing which he knew that would sustain him through his toughest trial.

Dear teen, how important is the Word of God to you? We may never go through the same trials that Job had to go through, but our priorities must be like his. For many of us, we prioritise so many things above God and His Word. We spend all our time chasing after the things of the world, in entertainments, eating, studies, socialising. Then only with what little time we have left, we spend with God. Is this how our priorities ought to be?

Thought: The word of God is indeed a *"pearl of great prize"*!

Prayer: Lord, teach me to have Thee first in my heart. Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart.

“Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.”

DO YOU BELIEVE THE WORD?

I have a confession to make – I found God’s word difficult to believe! Did you, and do you? I would like to share my experience of my journey from unbelief to faith in the Lord.

I attended Sunday school as a little boy, but was never asked whether I believe the Word (or whether I believed in Jesus). I took a Bible correspondence course in university (more out of curiosity than a genuine desire to believe). I went to church with a friend for a few years when I started working, but still did not believe. I asked the pastor of the church many questions, but I was never convinced by the answers given. My doubts were mainly intellectual, for example, how can you believe in creation? (I was indoctrinated in the theory of evolution); isn’t the God of the Old Testament rather cruel? Etc etc.

Thank God, He opened my eyes after a few years of attending church! This happened when I started to be serious in my search for answers to my questions, and found that Christianity is a very reasonable faith! Then I understood Jeremiah 29:13 *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart”*.

However, that was just the beginning. I continued to “half-believe” the word, and was a “stagnant” Christian for many years. Thank God, through listening to the faithful preaching of God’s Word, I began to take God’s Word more seriously, and He was faithful to increase my faith. I have come to believe in His Word more and more. I can say, like the father in Mark 9:24, *“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief”*. The more I believed, the more the words of Psalm 119:66 became my prayer as well, whereby I believed God’s Word, and wanted to learn more and more about it. I began to pray that God would teach me good judgment and knowledge out of the Word of God. Believing in the Word of God is the first step that we take in our journey of faith. It is only when we yield to God’s Word and accept it to be totally true, that we can begin to learn more and more of the precious truths found within.

Thought: Jeremiah 29:13 *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”*

Prayer: Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.

DO YOU TRUST IN THE WORD?

Imagine this is happening to you – you are in trouble! Somebody is reproaching or taunting you, and saying: “if you are a Christian, why are you in such troubles? See, I’m not a Christian, and I’m better than you! Where is your God?”

How are you going to answer him?

Learn from the Psalm how to answer him! Pray to God for His grace and His mercy. Pray that He will save you from this situation. For it is only by His help that we can triumph over our enemies! You can answer him because you have experienced God’s grace and mercy as you went through previous trials and have trusted in Him. You know you can trust what God has promised in His Word! This is the firm and resolute conviction that we must have in the Word. We must be able to say in our heart, that no matter what happens, we will always trust in the promises of God. People may mock us, circumstances may try us, our loved ones may disappoint us, but always be able to cry out in the midst of adversity *“I trust in Thy Word!”*

Listen to what Peter said in 1 Peter 1:6-7: *“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”*

So, remember – when you are going through trials, it is often God’s way of testing you, so that you can learn to trust Him more and more each day! How reassuring, too, that we know He sent trials to us only “for a little while, if necessary”!

“Trust and obey, for there’s no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey”.

Thought: The God of Heaven and Earth is the “guarantor” behind His Word!

Prayer: Lord, help me to trust in Thy Word, for this is the inheritance Thou has bequeathed on us.

“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name”

CAN ONE BE SAVED WITHOUT THE WORD?

We know that the only way to salvation is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As Romans 10:9 clearly teaches, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* This process is also described in Romans 10:12-13 as calling upon the name of the Lord. This means we come humbly before Him to invoke His aid, to worship Him, to acknowledge Him as our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

However, the passage then goes on to ask – how can we call and believe in the Lord, if we do not know about Him? If we have not heard of the wonderful gospel message, how will we know about Christ, and how we can have faith in Him? There is therefore the necessity for a preacher that is sent by God, who will preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. Basically, he must preach the Word.

And therefore Romans 10:17 answers the questions and tells us clearly that *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”*. In the end, it is the Word of God that saves. In the Bible, we have the complete message of the gospel, for it tells us of the seriousness and penalty of sin, and the only solution – that is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way, and the only means whereby we can know about Christ, is through His Word.

This is not to say that we would always need the physical Bible with us in order for salvation to happen. But what we need is to ensure that the message of the gospel that is preached, or the tract that is given out, must be from the Word of God. Its content must be biblical, and must contain all the essential points of the gospel. While a good testimony, a helpful gesture, or even a convincing argument for Creation may attract a person to Christianity, those things do not save. Ultimately the Word of God has to be preached, for only in receiving and accepting the gospel, can a person be saved.

Thought: Do I know what are the right biblical things I should say when I try to witness for the Lord?

Prayer: Lord, thank You that we have Thy Word, *“a more sure word of prophecy”* (2 Peter 1:19).

“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”

DOES THE WORD CONTINUE TO CLEANSE YOU?

After we have been saved through the faithful preaching of the Word, we begin a new life in Christ. We do not just become a better person, the Bible tells us that we are an entirely new creature. Our old life of sin is gone, all things are now new (2 Corinthians 5:17). As a born again believer, our journey in Christ has just begun. Just as the Word is what saved us, it is also instrumental in guiding us on our journey of sanctification. We become more and more Christ-like in our lives, as we draw away from the things of the world. This is the cleansing effect that the Word will have on every believer.

Ephesians 5 compares the husband-wife relationship to that of Christ and the church. As the head of the church, Christ has the sacred task of sanctifying and cleansing the church, to prepare her for the glorious marriage supper of the Lamb that will take place after His second coming. His desire is that we will become more and more pure and holy, and cleansed from the putrefying effects that sin has on our lives. In order to do so, He has given us the Word of God to live by. In it, we see the numerous exhortations for us to forsake the sins of this world, to love not the world, and to be holy, even as our God in heaven is holy. This whole process is likened to the washing with water, similar to how we would wash our dirty clothes, or take a bath after a whole day out being exposed to the elements. In like manner, the Lord lovingly presents the Word before us, and exhorts us to *“be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Romans 12:2). This renewing of the mind can only come about through the careful study, meditation and application of the Word of God. That is how we can be sanctified, cleansed, and be made to conform to the image of Christ.

Dear teen, do you desire to be clean? Are you receptive to the Word of God, and do you allow it to renew your minds and change your lives?

Thought: Do you want to be clean now? Or are you just glad to be saved, and refuse to be cleansed? Do you want to live your life your own way?

Prayer: Lord, give me the desire to be like Christ, even now.

DOES THE WORD GIVE YOU UNDERSTANDING?

If you know something about the history of the English Bible, you may have been struck by the cost of the Bible in the early days. For example, Wycliffe's translation was done at a time before the printing press was invented in Europe. So everything had to be copied by hand. Each copy of the Wycliffe Bible cost a few months' wages for an average family! But even more – for William Tyndale, whose translation was the backbone of the KJV, his work on the Bible cost him his life! And this is still happening now – all over the world, many faithful Christians are fighting to have the Bible in their hands, sometimes even paying with their lives!

Why do they do this? One reason is: *“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple”*. The Bible gives us light, it enlightens our eyes and enables us to walk in the light. The phrase *“thy words giveth light”* implies that the world is a dark place! Without the Bible, we'd still be in darkness! The Bible is the only book that tells us truly who we are, what we are here for, what we should do and how we should conduct our lives.

Before I became a Christian, I used to explore all manner of religion, science and philosophy, but these only left me empty. I found life to be meaningless, even though I was privileged enough to be able to study in a university. But when the light of God's Word entered my heart, the Holy Spirit gave me understanding, and I felt the love of God and His blessings everyday. Now I can say, *“I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation”* (Psalm 119:99).

This understanding can be had for everyone. You do not have to be a highly intellectual person, or have high qualifications. The Word is given in such a manner that even the simple can be granted understanding. We must realise that the study of God's Word is a spiritual exercise, and only the spiritual (born again) can discern spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). A person may have the highest IQ in the world, but if he is not born again, he cannot understand the things of God. On the other hand, even a young child, if he is born again, can know of Christ, of the way of salvation, and how to live a godly life for the Lord.

Thought: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Prayer: Lord, thank Thee for dispelling the darkness of my soul.

“That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”

DOES THE WORD CHANGE YOUR LIFE?

When you play games, do you get excited when you get a “perfect” score? How about when you get 100 marks for your test paper? But, in our lives, can we be perfect? You say, “it’s impossible!”

But what does the Bible say? Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:17 that the Word of God was inspired and given to us, *“that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”* The word for perfect has the idea of being complete. It does not mean that we will be entirely sinless, but that we will become the godly man that God wants us to be, that every aspect of our lives are in order, that we are well rounded Christians who do not have areas in our lives that are lacking or persisting in sin. We will be full of good works, pleasing God and bringing glory to Him.

You ask, “how can it be”? Jesus said, *“With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible”* (Mark 10:27). The problem is that we are “too easy” on ourselves! God wants us to aim high! Somebody said, “if you don’t aim at anything, you’re sure to hit the target!”

So, what’s your aim? Where is your aim?

Does the Word change your life? If you aim low, you’ll change little. If you aim high, you’ll see a big change in your life! Aim as high as the apostle Paul. In Philippians 3 he wrote, *“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”*. Has he “arrived”? No, he also wrote, *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended”*. Yes, press toward the right finishing line, and you’ll see your life changed!

There is a goal that God has for all of our lives. That we will strive towards His high holy standard of perfection, of completeness. Yes we will always have to struggle with sin, as long as we are in this mortal body. However we have the Word of God with us to guide us, and enable us to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. In order for that to happen, we must submit to God’s Word, and allow it to change our lives.

Thought: Does the thought of perfection worry you? Remember: *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”* (Philippians 2:13)

Prayer: Lord, I thank Thee for making me a “new creature” with new heart to love You, new ears to hear Thee, and new hands and feet to do Thy will.

“Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.”

DOES THE WORD GIVE YOU HOPE?

If I say, “The Bible is the most “hope-ful” book in the world!” – would you agree? I would say, yes and no! Yes, if you are a child of God. If you have repented of your sins, and trust and obey Him. No, if you are still a non-believer – for there is nothing to look forward to, aside from an eternity of damnation in hell.

For the believer, the Bible certainly gives us much hope, not just for this life, but also for the life to come. And so the Psalmist shares about the Word of God, that it has “*caused me to hope*” (Psalm 119:49). In the following verses, he shared how in the midst of all his trials and difficulties, he knew that he could always turn to the Word of God to find comfort in his affliction. There were the proud wicked people who were mocking him, probably persecuting and oppressing him for his faith. Instead of despairing, he remembered the judgments of the Lord, and was able to find comfort. Indeed, he goes on to share how the statutes of the Lord have been the songs to guide him on his sojourn here on earth, granting him much comfort, peace and joy. Throughout this passage, he continues to emphasise how it is his constant remembrance of the Word that gave him this hope and comfort amidst his difficulties. Because he was able to abide in the Word of God, he was able to remain strong and stay close to the Lord.

All of us have the same access to the Word of God as the Psalmist did. When we face difficulties, trials and temptations, we must also remember the Word of God, and draw strength and hope from it. In order for that to happen, we must first delight in God’s Word and hide it in our hearts. When we are able to remember God’s wonderful promises for us, then we will have the conviction and constant hope to be able to overcome any trial that comes our way, for we are assured of God’s abiding presence with us.

Thought: What a privilege we have to have such verses that give us hope even when we are in difficult situations!

Prayer: Lord, I thank You for such a wonderful book that fills my heart with love and hope and joy daily!

“He shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them”

DOES THE WORD CAUSE YOU TO OBEY?

Today’s passage speaks about the duties of the king, of certain things that he must take note of in order to be a good king in the eyes of God. Amongst the various sins and temptations that he must be sure to avoid, one of the key things that he had to do was to write out a copy of the law. This would refer to the first five books of Moses that would have been available to Saul, David and the other kings that followed after them. He was not just to write it out once and then forget about it. He was to ensure that the Word would always be with him, and *“he shall read therein all the days of his life”*. This would ensure that *“he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them.”* (Deuteronomy 17:19). When that happens, then he would not be a proud or cruel king, but he would obey the commandments of God throughout his reign. He would certainly be a good king, and one whom God is pleased with. His reign would be long, and he would be able to positively influence his people to likewise walk with the Lord and obey His Word.

We may not be kings, but the same guideline would certainly be good for all of us to emulate. We know that as Christians, we must certainly read God’s Word all the days of our lives. The more we know God’s Word, then the more we would fear Him as well. With that godly fear in us, we would also naturally want to keep God’s Word, and actively do it. We would be seen and known as believers who are obedient to God’s Word, as faithful servants who bring pleasure to God.

Again, it all comes down to our relationship with God and His Word. A good king would have no qualms about following such a guideline, and would be greatly blessed for doing so. However a rebellious king would probably find it a chore to have to write out and learn God’s Word, and would not want to do so. Without God’s Word to guide him, he would make many bad decisions in his reign, and become an even worse king.

Which of the two are you? Are you one who will humbly abide by God’s Word? Or will you proudly reject God’s Word?

Thought: Can you remember when you deliberately disobeyed God’s Word? Why?

Prayer: Lord, may you help me to be a disciplined and faithful student and keeper of your Word all the days of my life.

DOES THE WORD KEEP YOU FROM DESTRUCTION?

In this Psalm, King David says that he has avoided the ways of the destroyer. How does he manage to do it? – *“by the word of thy lips”*. When I read this verse, I am reminded of the Lord’s Prayer, *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”*. Yes, every day we face many things that try to tempt us away from God, and lead us into evil.

To avoid falling into the paths of the destroyer, we can do two things:

1. Keep out of the path of the destroyer;
2. Keep close to God by reading and meditating upon His Word.

Who is the destroyer? It refers to the Devil, the Evil One, who is behind all the wicked works of man. His aim and goal is to see the spiritual downfall of all men. His chief targets would be faithful Christians, for they are the ones who are serving God and bringing glory to Him – which Satan hates! Thus he will go forth like a roaring lion, setting up traps and snares to destroy his targets.

The wiles of the destroyed are many. It need not be something violent (like joining gangs) or the obvious (like pornography). What is more dangerous is often the more insidious temptations – like interesting harmless books that take us away from godly activities (there’s a time for such things, but we must guard our limit); or even subtle sins like pride, impatience, sloth, or a desire to be popular, to fit in with your peers. These are all temptations that Satan would place in our way in his quest to cause us to stumble and sin against God.

Each of us has our own weaknesses, and it is often difficult for us to see where our weaknesses lie (it’s much easier to see the faults in other people!). You may ask – if it is difficult, then what can we do? That’s where the Bible comes in. As we read the Word of God, do we see ourselves in it? Read the Bible, understand it, pray, and God will open your eyes to see that you may be in the path of the destroyer. Not only that, but God will give you the strength to get out of the way (resist temptations) so that you will live a life that glorifies His name!

Thought: Know the Word of God well, and learn to discern the works of the destroyer.

Prayer: Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.

"I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word."

DO YOU GRIEVE WHEN OTHERS DISOBEY THE WORD?

As we look at the sin sick world around us, it can sometimes be quite depressing. As we read about all the conflicts in the Middle East, the political turmoil in the countries around us, or the heinous crimes that are committed by wicked men, we may perhaps become quite discouraged or even disillusioned.

Sometimes we don't have to look too far. If we just look at the behaviour of our friends in school, or even in church, we may also experience the works of transgressors. Your friends in school may cheat in tests, copy someone else's homework, lie to the teachers, or cruelly mock you for being a Christian. Even in church, we see ungodly behaviour as well, of friends who disobey God when they don't pay attention in sermons or Bible lessons, bring in worldly influences to the fellowship, or ostracise certain youths for being different.

The Psalmist who wrote Psalm 119 was constantly surrounded by enemies who persecuted him, who sinned with impunity and disobeyed God's law. Instead of becoming angry, or despairing at his situation, or blaming God, his response was one of grief. As he beheld the transgressors, he says in Psalm 119:158 that he *"was grieved; because they kept not thy word"*. He did not desire vengeance against them, but instead expressed sorrow for the fact that they were living in such sin. In a sense he was showing love and care for them, and realised that it was a pitiful state to be in, for they were living godless lives destined for destruction. This is the same response that Jesus had in Mark 3:5 when confronted with the sin and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, for we are told *"and when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts"*.

How do you feel when you see others disobey the Word in such a manner? Do you feel a sense of disdain and self-righteousness? Do you get angry with them, and want to have nothing to do with them? Or perhaps you are envious of how they can sin so freely, and are tempted to join them? Or would you grieve for them, have pity for them, share the gospel with them and try to show God's love to them?

Thought: It's only when we grieve for those outside God's kingdom that we start to love them and pray for them, that they would come to know the true God, and share in the joy of the kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, give me a tender heart, that I may grieve over those who offend You. Help me to do what I can to be Your witness to them.

ARE YOU WILLING TO BE TAUGHT THE WORD?

Through these past three months, we have learnt many things about the Word of God. We have seen how valuable, precious and important it is for every one of us. We have understood a bit more of the history, the qualities and nature of the Word of God. We have seen how it has been divinely inspired and miraculously preserved by God through His singular care and providence, and learnt of how wonderfully it was translated into our language for our benefit. We have learnt of the truth and purity of God’s Word, and how important it is for us to love it, read it, and apply it in our lives. We have seen how the Word of God is able to save us, change our lives, and help us to be pleasing in the sight of God. Perhaps one final question remains – are you willing to be taught this precious Word? It is of no use if we know so much about the Word of God, but are never really changed by it.

And so here in the Bible we have the very best school – God’s school, and it is a free school! The only “fee” you have to pay is clean hands and a pure heart! There is only one textbook – the Bible – the BEST book. We need only one teacher – the Holy Spirit – the BEST teacher! Yes we would also have assistant teachers – Sunday School teachers, elders, pastors. They too would be instrumental in guiding us to learn and apply the Word better.

This was the prayer of the Psalmist, as he cried to the Lord in Psalm 119:33-4: *“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart”*. May this be our desire as well, that we would have teachable hearts that yearn to know more of God’s Word. May we also have the conviction and perseverance to want to keep the law of God all the days of our lives, and to do so wholeheartedly!

Thought: Do you agree that we have the best book, best school, best teacher?

Prayer: Lord, open my ears that I may see, glimpses of truth Thou has for me.

Notes

Notes

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