

January to March 2012  
Teens RPG Series on  
**“Importance of the Bible”**

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. Memorizing 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 Teens RPG committee*

*"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

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## **WHAT IS THE BIBLE?**

Even in today's secular society, every major bookshop in Singapore stocks up Bibles. A tourist to Singapore might wrongly assume Christianity is the major religion in Singapore, given that well over half the religion section in any such bookstore consists of Christian literature. Given the popularity of the Bible, why isn't Christianity so?

1 Thessalonians 2:13 tells us "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, 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, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Therefore there are many who purchase the Bible who assume the Bible is human literature, "the word of men"; written by holy men perhaps, but not divine literature. Perhaps they arrive at such assumptions given that in bookshops, the Bible sits alongside other "religious scripture" and other attempts at teaching moral standards.

However, to every true Christian believer, the Holy Spirit reveals the Bible is none other than the very Word of God. Dean Burgon said it best: "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 who 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 that you by faith 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.

## **WHAT DOES INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE MEAN?**

Some critics of the Bible say that the different books of the Bible clearly show evidence in their style of writing that different writers wrote them, so the Bible could not possibly be the Word of God, but the words of men. Is that true?

2 Timothy 3:16 affirms “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, meaning that every word of the Bible is spoken by God. God’s servants then transmitted the message, moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). While each writer has his own style, the divine author is God.

2 Timothy 3:16 is 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.

We can see clear evidence that there is only one divine author for the Bible, for consider that although the Bible was written by some 40 men over a span of 1,600 years, there is one consistent message: God’s love for sinful man. The one message implies one author, and with the multiplicity of writers across time, surely the author must be divine. The Apostle Paul affirmed this in Acts 28:25b “...Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers”.

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!

**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 every one 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 realize God’s plan for man’s redemption from sin. John 5:39 says “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 realize that every one of us is a sinner, whether our sin is small or great in our own eyes. Without the Bible, we do not realize 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 realizes 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 realize how important the Bible is. For the problems that you face in life, do you realize that the Bible is the solution? Do not look for worldly solutions, look towards God instead and see what God’s Word tells you to do.

**THOUGHT:** Do I realize that the Bible is the solution to every one of life’s problems?

**PRAYER:** May I look to the Bible first!

*“...they received the word with all readiness of mind,  
and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”*

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## **WHAT IF WE DID NOT USE THE BIBLE?**

Dear teen, when 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 teachers?

Let us see Isaiah 8:19-20 “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.

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” instead; 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 realize 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.”*

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

Charismatic churches often claim that experience is more important than the Bible. If the charismatic pastor claims that Christ will return on a certain date, even though the Bible says no one knows the exact time of His coming, his flock tends to believe him and act accordingly. When his prophecy is later proven wrong, the flock becomes disillusioned.

Peter in 2 Peter 1:16-18 asserts he has not been following “cunningly devised fables”, but he speaks the truth as an eyewitness to both Jesus’s baptism and transfiguration, at both times God confirming that Christ 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.” Even though Peter had the wonderful experience of witnessing the ministry of Christ, though true and certain, this still paled in comparison to the written Word of God, for the latter was available to all generations and would abide forever. It is the Word of God that saves, not experiences. The scriptures are sufficient for our faith (Psalm 119:105), a light to reveal our sin in this dark world we live in, 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 do not speak well 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, that if something feels so right it cannot be wrong, that desires to follow brilliant leaders. 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 test everything by God’s Word!

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 6**

*2 Peter 1:21*  
**Memorise 2 Peter 1:21**

*"...holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

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## **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, 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 too, 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 are the very Words of God.

Dear teen, may you thus never doubt the source of the words of Scripture. Because it is the very Words 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 to him that many of the doctrines which he believes in such as the assumption of Mary are actually taught nowhere in the Bible! However, he answered that these doctrines have been laid down by the Pope, who is able to give infallible statements of doctrine in certain circumstances.

What warning does the Bible give against such additions to itself? 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! The "plagues" refer to the many methods that God has set out to bring severe judgment upon His enemies, and while it may not literally mean that every single plague written in the Bible will befall those who add to the words of Scripture (although it could very well be the case!), it emphasizes 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 stand for the proposition that we can lose our salvation; rather, it signifies the fact that those who could commit such a heinous sin are probably not even saved in the first place, and thus have no part at all in heaven.

Dear teen, 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.

*"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning..."*

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## **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 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.

But what does the Bible have to say about this? First of all, we read that "the word of the Lord endureth for ever". Amidst all the changes on earth, Bible remains 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, we read that 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? 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 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 realize 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. Have you been living with this in mind?

**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.

**MONDAY, JANUARY 9**

*1 Corinthians 2:14*  
*Memorise 1 Corinthians 2:14*

*"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God..."*

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## **HOW COME MY FRIENDS CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT?**

Recently while tracting, I met a young man who had attended 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 spiritually discern: 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. And 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 about 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 spiritual eyes will be opened to the marvelous 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 provide illumination into every sinful heart through the Holy Spirit.

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

**PRAYER:** Lord, thank you that you have opened my spiritual eyes.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 10**

2 Peter 3:16  
Memorise 2 Peter 3:16

*"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..."*

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## **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 could not really understand was about reconciling 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 recognized 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 simply unable to comprehend, while still in our sinful states, the wondrous things of heaven and eternity etc. 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". We are to be wary of those who would twist and pervert the Word of God, promoting some false doctrines in order to lead others astray. Ultimately, such people will face punishment – but in the meanwhile, many could 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 in Your Word.

**ARE THERE PARTS OF THE BIBLE THAT ARE SIMPLE?**

I was once talking to a friend who was studying at a very prestigious university about Christianity. He shared with me that he sometimes wished that he could be more simple-minded and trusting; however, because of his intellectual nature that makes him test everything by logic and reason, he is unable to accept the simple truth of the gospel.

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 unlearned he is, he is able to understand the truth of the gospel, and to accept it. That is why even children can come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ from 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 simple. We are all sinners in need of a Saviour, and if we confess our sins and accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour, we can have eternal life and need 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 its followers need to do, Christianity is different in that it is about what has already been done – Christ's finished work on the cross of Calvary.

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 on 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 the gospel.

## **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. We should therefore leave it to the historians, geographers and scientists instead to provide the authority on these matters. What do you think about this view? Is this one 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 inserted a very meaningful phrase here to describe the character of God – "God, that cannot lie". The meaning which he seeks to convey 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 truth, and truth alone.

With this belief as our starting point, we can then easily answer the question as to whether the Bible is correct in all areas. In the previous few days, we have already established that the Author of the Bible is none other than God Himself. Therefore, knowing that the One who wrote the Bible is also One who cannot lie, there can be no doubt in our minds at all that the Bible is free from all errors and mistakes – not just in areas of faith and religion, but in every single area! 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 the record of fallible and sinful men, or of God, that cannot lie? "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 in some areas, but be fully persuaded in your heart that the Bible is indeed correct in all areas. May you also not be afraid 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 eventually will not actually carry these plans out. I have since learnt not to put too much weight on this friend's words, for they usually turn out to be not backed by action.

Perhaps you have encountered people like that too. Sometimes, it can be disappointing when we realize that those promises were just mere 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 future. The record of all the great men and women of the Bible are true, and have been placed there 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. And even 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 mistake? 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 may 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.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 14**

*Hebrews 4:12*  
*Memorise Hebrews 4:12*

*“...the commandment of the LORD is pure... enlightening the eyes.”*

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## **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 always seem so suited to whatever I am experiencing in life at the 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 rebuke by reminding me of the need to be humble.

Today’s reading teaches us very well the amazing power of the Word of God. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged 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 asunder. No matter how much we may try to put on a false face and deceive the world that we are good and 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 discern 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 with the Word of God, all the sinfulness 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? 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.

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

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## **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. Although this verse was given by Paul to Timothy primarily to remind him of his great responsibility as a minister of the Word, it applies just as much to 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. No, we are to study the Bible – to search the Scriptures diligently, to meditate and chew on its words, to draw out lessons and understand the riches of its deep and marvelous 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 need to be ashamed before God because you have not been studying His Word diligently? May you realize 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.

**MONDAY, JANUARY 16**

*John 20:31*  
**Memorise John 20:31**

*“...that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...”*

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## **HOW DOES THE BIBLE AUTHENTICATE CHRIST?**

This verse 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 this message is? How do we know that it is really true and not some kind of fraud? It is legitimate to ask whether this is really the truth.

Since this verse comes from the Bible, we need to ask whether the Bible is really God’s Word. We have learnt that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...” from 2 Timothy 3: 16. Since it is God-breathed, we accept that it comes from God but holy men wrote the words as “they were moved by the Holy Ghost “ (2 Peter 1:21). Thus God made doubly sure that His words were from Him because He breathed into them. The Holy Spirit was at work as the holy men wrote. As we read too, the Holy Spirit indwelling us, speaks to us and confirms the truth of God’s Word too.

Furthermore, the verse before this, in verse 30, we read that Jesus performed many other signs before his disciples. These signs are really miracles that Jesus performed. But they are called signs because these miracles authenticate whom Jesus claimed to be. The Bible records the miracles of Jesus to show that He was indeed the Son of God as He said that He was. The ultimate miracle was the resurrection of Jesus, seen by 500 witnesses. Paul records for us (1 Corinthians 15) that many were still alive at that time and able to witness to the truth of his writing.

Dear teen, you often trust 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, you simply believe it and be blessed by the truth.

**THOUGHT:** Faith is believing what God says in His Word.

**PRAYER:** Lord, ever more 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.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 17**

*Hebrews 12:1*  
*Memorise Hebrews 12:1*

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

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## **HOW DOES THE BIBLE USE GOOD EXAMPLES?**

These great “cloud of witnesses” are the good examples that the Bible furnishes us with. In the great heroes of the faith chapter of Hebrews 11, Paul had already referred to them – from Abel to Enoch, to Noah, to Abraham and even Sara. They had great faith and they pleased God.

Likewise, we should also exercise faith, great faith, like them. Then we would understand that God spoke and the world came into being. There is no basis to believe the millions of years of evolution to make the present world we live in. Simple faith knows that God can do anything and God can do the impossible. Faith also means obedience to what God commands. If it is an animal sacrifice that God instructs, then Abel offered thus to God and God accepted his excellent sacrifice. Enoch believed God and God was pleased to translate him into heaven, without dying. He thus became the first example of a believer who was raptured.

These examples of men of faith should teach us to trust God and His promises. Romans 10: 9-10 tells us that whosoever confesses with his mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in his heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead, he shall be saved. Have you confessed Jesus and believed that He died for your sins? If you have, it shows that you trust and obey God. If not, now is a good time to confess your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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 perfectly obeyed all the laws of God.

**PRAYER:** Lord, may I constantly keep before me, the lives of these great men of faith and especially Jesus my Saviour. Thus may I overcome all temptations and glorify my Father in heaven.

## **HOW DOES THE BIBLE USE BAD EXAMPLES?**

There is actually a whole passage here, from verse 1 right up to verse 11 that narrates some bad 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 marvelous things for them. They were provided with water and manna from heaven. Yet they sinned against the Lord. Their hearts were still in unbelief. They still worshipped the idols of 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." 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.

Do you want to be like them? Then you must never complain and murmur when things go wrong. Just look to the Lord to provide and direct. He knows the end from the beginning and you should never fear. If you have confessed Jesus as your Saviour, remember that all is well with your soul, come what may. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. Romans 8:35 tells us that even persecution and the sword cannot prevent God from loving us. He will be with you to the end. Then, why do we complain and murmur?

Dear teen, learn what to avoid and never to do, seeing that God is displeased with those who are faithless and disobedient. It is wisdom indeed 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 of 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.

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 19**

*1 John 5:13*  
*Memorise 1 John 5:13*

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

## **HOW DOES THE BIBLE GIVE US KNOWLEDGE?**

Whatever the Bible writes of science, of geography and of history, is always accurate. However, the Bible is above all a message from God about how mankind ought to worship and live for He is Creator and we His creatures. It reveals to us who God is and what sinners must do to reconcile themselves to a holy God. Above all, we are to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had come and laid down His life for us. He was the propitiation for our sins, the satisfaction that had to be made to appease the wrath of a holy God against the sins we have committed. 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. The ever-increasing height and knowledge of God's Word will enrich and delight your soul. Spiritual things are slowly discerned, as the Holy Spirit reveals God's truth little by little. 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 teens pride themselves in 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. Are you learning as much as you can beyond what you can learn in class? 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 to seek the kingdom of God? If we liken the Word of God as 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.

**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, by ignoring Scripture, it would be as if they do not know the Scriptures. As we know, the Scriptures are the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God. It is authoritative and is our rule for faith and life. When we deny it, we have lost the authority to speak for men's word cannot be counted to be infallible. 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 seed 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 is 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 below 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, would 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. A better approach is to accept the whole Bible, knowing that there are certain parts that are hard to understand. We humbly submit that we are not mature yet to understand all of the Bible. We admit that our finite minds cannot understand fully an infinite God but we have faith that all His ways are righteous and all His works are holy. That is the faith that pleases God.

**THOUGHT:** “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways” (Isaiah 55:9).

**PRAYER:** Gracious heavenly Father, make me to go in the path of Thy commandments: for therein do I delight.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 21**

*2 Timothy 2:15*  
*Memorise 2 Timothy 2:15*

*“Study to shew thyself approved unto God...”*

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## **DOES THE BIBLE REALLY GIVE US AUTHORITY?**

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. It was the Bible who gave him the authority as it 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” (Hebrew 4:12). Not only did John Sung preached with all authority, resting on all the promises of God, but the hearers were also 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. The authority of the Bible is the authority of God Almighty who inspired and preserved it. The Holy Spirit has authenticated the Bible so that as believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we readily accept its authority as we have been inwardly taught of the Spirit. Thus when we live our lives and walk according to all that is written therein (which implies that we know and study our Bible), we are resting on God’s authority. The Bible is our sole and supreme authority for faith and practice.

Dear teen, though it is the business of the preachers and the pastors to study the Word of God, as the Apostle Paul reminded his spiritual son Timothy, it is also our duty to study it too. In the New Testament, all of God’s children are deemed priests unto God (Revelation 1:6) and therefore it is our duty to study God’s Word to be approved unto 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.

**WHAT STANDARD DOES GOD USE TO JUDGE US?**

The two verses preceding this verse tell us how important Christ is, not only to us but also to the world. He is the light of the world. He has all power in heaven and earth. He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him. None can pluck us out of the hand of Him who is one with the Father. He can make all our way to heaven bright and plain and cheerful; like the morning sun cheering the traveller.

This verse tells us that there is a judgment day for all mankind. In that day, God's judgment will be whether we have heeded the words of Christ. He has come to save the world and yet there are many who reject Him. 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 Christ uses to judge the world is not arbitrary. It would be according to His revealed will, even with that 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 may can read God's Word in their own language.

The believer need not fear judgment day. For him, there is no condemnation. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1). It is the man who rejects Christ, and will not hear His call to repentance – he is the man who in the judgment day will have reason to tremble in fear of hell fire. Dear teen, let the thought of judgment have a practical effect on the way we live. Though there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, God will still deal with us when we sin wilfully. Let us live godly lives for our Lord.

**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 Your words abide in me, always looking to Thee with a singular love and devotion.

**MONDAY, JANUARY 23**

*2 Chronicles 34:19*  
*Memorise 2 Chronicles 34:19*

*"...when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes."*

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## **IS IT CRITICAL TO BRING THE BIBLE IN WITNESSING?**

Josiah was a godly king. His grandfather king Manasseh and Amon his father had caused the land of Israel to sin. When Josiah became king he resolved to purge Judah and Jerusalem from all the idols. He also wanted to repair the house of the Lord. It was in the course of the repair work 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 Shapan 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 a whoring after other gods. King Josiah 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 ways of the Lord.

This incident shows the power of the Bible to convict sin and bring a change of heart. The Word of God has the spiritual power to open the spiritual eyes of men lost in their sins. It is the Holy Spirit that uses God's Word (Hebrews 4: 12) to bring conviction of sin and show our need of the Saviour. There are many verses that show us how to receive Christ as Saviour (eg. Romans 10:9-10), provide answers to questions which prevent us from receiving Christ and give us assurance of salvation.

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. How well have we used it? Whether we own one or not (as in the days of king Josiah), the situation is the same if we do not know the contents well. Resolve, then, dearest 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.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 24**

*1 Thessalonians 5:27*  
**Memorise 1 Thessalonians 5:27**

*"I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren."*

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## **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 the way God has designed in His Word. Thus worship can include praying, reading God's Word, singing, participating in the Lord's Supper, prayers, giving of our tithes and offerings as well as serving others. In Acts 2:42, when the early church met, they "continued stedfastly 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 see to it that this epistle that he is writing to them be read to all the believers. This charge is serious as it puts them under oath by the Lord. It is more than a command. It is binding them by an oath. However, not only is this epistle to be read, but it is also God's command that we be instructed in the whole counsel of God (Acts 20: 27) so that His people are well versed in His truth, the whole truth and thus grow in His ways. It is to be read in all the churches when they are assembled together. It was not merely designed for the individual or individuals into whose hands it might happen to fall as it contained matters of common but vital interest, and was designed for the whole body of believers at Thessalonica. It was not to be suppressed or kept from them. Injunctions of this kind occurring in the Epistles, tell us that the apostles were under divine inspiration, and had authority to give infallible instructions to the churches.

Dear teen, the Bible is to be read not only in public worship but also in your own individual Quiet Time of worship. As you pray for God's blessings and protection upon you every morning as you set off for school, you will need to read God's Word to hear Him speaking to you, to direct your paths. Some of you might even be spending more time in studying certain books of the Bible or topics in the Bible. This sort of in-depth Bible study is most commendable. Your soul will grow – as if planted by the rivers of water and you will surely bring forth fruit in due season.

**THOUGHT:** "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

**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..."*

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## **WHAT MUST BE OUR RESPONSE TO SUCH READING?**

The children of Israel had assembled at the foot of Mt. Sinai. They had heard the Lord speaking to them out of a smoking and fiery mountain (Exodus 19:9). They heard the Ten Commandments but it is 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.

First, Moses took the book of the covenant which he had just written, read it before the people. They listened intently and carefully. They that promised that they would obey all that the Lord wanted them to do. They understood the message of the Lord. They 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 sprinkled 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 accept unreservedly 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 would 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, allowing wandering thoughts to creep in and thereby not profiting from the preaching of God's Word? Beware of such bad habits when you are listening to God's Word. If you are aware, but feel helpless, you can pray about it. 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.

**WHY MUST THE PREACHER THEN EXPOUND ON IT?**

On this important occasion when the people of God met to worship and thank Him for the completion of the wall of Jerusalem, 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).

Observe too that the Word of God was read “distinctly”. It was reading that sought to deliver the word clearly, as those who understand what they say and are affected with it themselves, and who desire that those they speak to may understand it, retain it, and be affected with it likewise.

Then the preachers “gave the sense” which is expounding God’s Word. Reading is only the first part. It has to be followed by preaching which is giving the sense of it. Many are unable to understand what they read. God’s Word has to be expounded, explained to show the meaning. It does not edify if God’s people do not understand the meaning of what they read. Therefore, the preacher must explain the context, define words and give illustrations to throw more light into the particular passage or chapter that is read.

It is therefore required of preachers that they explain the word and give the sense of it. Understandest thou what thou readest? Have you understood all these things? These are good questions to the hearers. How should we except someone guide us? It is a proper question to put to their teachers, as the Ethiopian eunuch put to Philip the evangelist in Acts 8:30-31. The end result of such faithful exposition leads to great joy, which is the strength of God’s people as Nehemiah 8: 12 tells us.

Dear teen, if the labour of every preacher is to open the Book of Life to the listeners, what duty do we have as hearers? Every preacher seeks to edify the people of God. Are you seeking to be taught? Then we need to give our full attention to the preaching of God’s Word and pray for light and understanding as the Word of God is being preached. It is a great joy to understand the Words of life and know that the great and mighty God is speaking to you personally and it strengthens your faith.

**THOUGHT:** God’s Word is the double-edged sword that can convert sinners and convict saints.

**PRAYER:** Our Father in heaven, open thou my eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law.

## **WHY MUST I BELIEVE IN VPI?**

For those of you who do not know, 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 the book *Theology for Every Christian*, Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo wrote, "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: 4, Jesus, tempted by Satan in the wilderness, answered and said, "It is written". Indeed it is observed that Christ answered and baffled all the temptations of Satan with, "It is written". He is himself the eternal Word, and could have produced the mind of God without having recourse to the writings of Moses; but He gave honour to Scripture, and, to set us an example, Jesus appealed to what was written in the law; and He says this to Satan. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, the only offensive weapon in all the Christian armoury (Ephesians 6:17). It is able to defeat Satan and this method we must take when at any time we are tempted to sin; resist and repel the temptation with, "It is written". Thus to live "by every word of 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. To believe otherwise, and say that only certain parts are inspired is wrong. There are some who think that Bible is true only in regard to 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 in their doctrine and kept quiet when liberals deny the experience of Jonah who was swallowed by a big fish and was there for three days and three nights. To believe in VPI is the high ground on which we must stand. The Holy Spirit that indwells us will confirm this to our hearts.

**THOUGHT:** The Holy Spirit has authenticated the Holy Book, that 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.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 28**

**1 Corinthians 2:13**  
**Memorise 1 Corinthians 2:13**

*"not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth"*

## **HOW DO I KNOW GOD GAVE EVERY WORD?**

If you read 1 Corinthians 2:10-13, you will find that the passage teaches us four important truths about the Holy Spirit and the believer. Verse 10 teaches that the Holy Spirit reveals the truth of God to us. Verse 11 tells us that the Holy Spirit can reveal the truth of God to us because He knows the mind of God infallibly. The Holy Spirit knows the mind of God because the Holy Spirit is God. He searches out the "deep things" of God. Nothing is hidden from Him. Because He knows the mind of God, He can communicate the truth about God to us.

Furthermore, verse 12 tells us that the Holy Spirit enables us to understand "the things that are freely given to us of God." Of course "the things...of God" include the message of the cross, the life, the work and the resurrection of Christ as well as all that God wants us to know that is recorded in the Bible. Finally, verse 13 teaches us that the Holy Spirit teaches the Apostle Paul what to say and in our time teaches us what to say when we witness to others. The Holy Spirit helps us as we depend on Him. He enables us to speak spiritual truth in spiritual words.

Thus we understand that if "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" and therefore God-breathed, it means that every word recorded in the original languages is chosen by God. We know that God gave every word also because the Holy Spirit that indwells every believer is taught by Him and there is an inward affirmation as a result. Thus God not only gave us the words but also ensured that the Holy Ghost supervises the understanding and the preaching of it.

Dear teen, what a precious book we have in our hands, when we read our KJV Bible. Let us endeavour to read and study it with all the time you have despite your busy schedule. The world makes many demands on our time and our stress is great in keeping up with expectations. 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 production of each and every word (1 Corinthians 2:13). Thus 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. The Holy Spirit preserved them from all kinds of errors. The "dictation theory" whereby the Spirit of God used the Bible writers as one might use a tape recorder is not fully applicable for all Scripture. For example, the Ten Commandments and many of the words of the glorified Christ in the book of Revelation were written from dictation. Other portions of Scriptures like Luke 1:1-4 where Luke explains his dependence on sources were certainly not dictated. There is no contradiction between the personal research of the writer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Peter expressed it well: "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 inspired, influenced and assisted them as they wrote.

We actually know very little about the precise method of inspiration. How God did it is not explained in the Bible. The product, not the process, is what is important. However God did it, the result is His Word. What got written down was what He wanted written down.

Dear teen, how do you respond when people tell you that there are errors in the Bible? The most important thing is to dismiss their words. But you yourself 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? David Cloud has written a book called Things Hard to be Understood and in it, he refutes the errors that men have claimed to be in the Bible. Dr. Jeffrey Khoo has also lectured on how to harmonize the apparent discrepancies in the Bible. In the end, we will discover that we need to be humble and submit to the supreme authority of the Bible.

**THOUGHT:** The Holy Spirit has authenticated the Holy Book that we should bow to its every dictate.

**PRAYER:** I thank thee, Lord, that thou hast show 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 also in the divine revelation of Scripture. The Holy Scripture is of much greater use and benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe in, or the light of the sun. Because of the fallen nature of man, the Word of God is necessary to recover him out of his fallen state. Aided by the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, is made plain and clear to him, and he is convicted of his sins and comes to Jesus, who has taken away his sins of the cross of Calvary.

The psalmist gives an account of the excellent properties and uses 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 extols the perfection of the divine original. It is perfectly free from all corruption, perfectly filled with all good, and will make the man of God perfect. This is inerrancy which means free from error. Secondly, when we say "infallible" it means the Word of God is incapable of error or the impossibility of error. Infallibility describes ability or potential. Inerrancy describes actuality. Both qualities stem from the fact that the Bible has its origin in God and was superintended by His inspiration. Clearly, inerrancy and infallibility does not extend to copies or translations of the Bible. It is restricted to the original manuscripts of the Bible.

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. Indeed Galatians 1:8-12 strongly condemns those who do not believe in the infallibility of Scripture and preach a different gospel and say that they will be accursed.

**THOUGHT:** To reject Scripture is to reject God for Scripture is the only way to find reconciliation with God.

**PRAYER:** Gracious Father in heaven, increase my faith and give me grace to see how glorious thy Word is. They are all perfect, sure and right, rejoicing my heart.

## **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 some evidences supporting these claims. 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 replete with evidences of confirmed prophecy – over 600 of them). In Deuteronomy 18: 21-22, God evidently knows that such an occasion would occur, when men speak words that need to be verified. This was especially important before a battle or some such crisis. Of course, Deuteronomy 13:2 had already instructed the children of Israel that the fulfillment of a prediction would also not decisively mean that the prophet is to be believed. He would still be rejected and punished if on the strength of his miracles, he sought to seduce them to idolatry. Nothing therefore contrary to the revealed truth of God was to be accepted under any circumstances. Thus God is very concerned that we have the right touchstone to try the words we hear, that we may know what that word is which the Lord has spoken or hath not spoken. Whatever is directly repugnant to sense, to the light and plain meaning of the written Word of God, we may be sure is not that which the Lord has spoken. All the fulfilled prophecies of God recorded in the Bible show us that the Bible is amazingly accurate and thus perfect and inerrant. One famous example is the indestructibility of God’s people, the Jews. God foretold in Ezekiel 36:19, “And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries; according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.” This came to pass when after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the Jews were dispersed all over the world, the nation of Israel was reborn in 1948 when after World War II, the Jews were gathered together again in their homeland.

Dear teen, it would be good if you do a study of some of the prophecies of the Bible that were fulfilled with such amazing accuracy. Indeed a study of the prophecies concerning the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ would yield 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 (700) 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 abated 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, divine inspiration of God’s written Word and its preservation and inerrancy...the list goes on.

Even the miracles recorded in the Bible have come under attack. Moses did not part the Red Sea (strong winds and currents did), Jesus did not really walk on water (rather, He did some nifty stone-stepping), neither did He rise from the dead (He merely fainted and was wrongly presumed dead), the universe came about from the “Big Bang” (and therefore not created from nothing by God in 6 literal days), the walls of Jericho collapsed due to resonating sound waves from people yelling (and God had nothing to do with this).

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 was not perfectly preserved through the ages.

Believing God’s Word means to take at face value 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 in no wise 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 had been 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 7:4) 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). He even foretold His own resurrection on the third day after His death (Matthew 20:19) during which He was buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9).

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 symbolized 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) that 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?**

In Luke 11:49-51, the Lord Jesus mentioned the beginning and the end of the OT by mentioning the names of OT saints and prophets that have been killed- Abel (Genesis) and Zechariah (2 Chronicles). In the Hebrew order of the OT, 2 Chronicles is the last book. Therefore from Genesis to 2 Chronicles, there are a total of 39 books in the Hebrew OT. Jesus once again made reference to the complete OT in Luke 24:44. The Jews divided the OT into three portions; the law of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), the prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings, which were called the former prophets; and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve smaller books from Daniel to Malachi, which were called the latter prophets) and the Psalms which also referred to the holy writings consisting Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and the two books of Chronicles. These are all of the 39 books of the OT mentioned by Jesus Himself.

Some people argue that the "oldest texts" are the most faithful (referring to the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus), but these survived the ravages of time because they were corrupt texts which were hardly used. There was less wear and tear and therefore there was no need for scribes to make copies of them. The original OT scriptures, on the other hand, no longer exist due to wear and tear. They were reproduced with great care by scribes. They copied the scriptures when they were worn, which is why the most reliable texts are not the oldest ones but rather the newer ones. Scribes were extraordinarily careful in copying these texts. They would count the letters going each way. If they found one mistake, they would destroy that page. Through God's providential hand by way of the great care and faithfulness of the scribes and the role of the Jews and the nation of Israel as the custodian of OT scriptures every book, word, letter, jot and tittle of the OT Hebrew Masoretic Text had been preserved through the ages (Psalm 12:6).

**THOUGHT:** Surely an all-powerful all-knowing God is able to keep His Word and preserve it perfectly.

**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 them to the truth. Just as an infant who is yet mentally immature can recognize 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 his quest to identify those NT books which were truly divinely inspired in 367 A.D. 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). Was a particular book which was written by an apostle or a close associate (Authorship) and was commonly used and practiced in the churches throughout the Body of Christ (Universality)? Were there recognisable marks of inspiration? In other words, did the book have a spiritual character that agrees with the Holy Spirit which indwells all believers (Inspiration)? He went by the logic of faith, 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 did not specifically say that there would be 27 NT books. Nonetheless we can be absolutely sure that the logic of faith correctly guided the early church leaders with the canonization (official acceptance) 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 rumor 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 recognize 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:** The logic of faith helps me to tell God's Word from lies. God's Word gives me the ability to apply the logic of faith.

**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 were penned by four Major Prophets and twelve Minor Prophets. These made up the 39 books of the Old Testament" and "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 was a profane fisherman. 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 is probably because they had terrible tempers (Luke 9:54). Even the Apostle Paul who wrote the majority of the NT 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).

In spite of all their flaws, the Holy Spirit used them for God's glory by inspiring 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 or Verbal Plenary Preservation simply means “all (of God’s) words kept completely intact”. 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), Calvin’s Institutes (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 essence of our reformed faith should have been branded as heresy because they were all newly coined 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 which already exists - God ensuring that His Word is kept completely intact and unadulterated for every generation of believers.

People who oppose VPP actually do so not because VPP is unbiblical but because they have no faith that a 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 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 say “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not before God’s words pass away”. Which view is more glorifying to God and therefore true? Appeal to your logic of faith!

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

**PRAYER:** O Lord, Your Word declares the Gospel of Salvation through Christ unto a sinful and wicked world. Thank You for preserving every jot and tittle of it.

## **WHAT IS THE 1ST BIBLICAL AXIOM OF VPP?**

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, "How are God's people to know today that everything that God says would be fulfilled if we have a Bible with mistakes?" So-called minor errors would not be so minor anymore if we cannot even rely on the Bible to verify if every one of God's jots and tittles 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 indeed the rest of the Bible would have absolutely no authority and integrity whatsoever. This is the 1st axiom of VPP.

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 is even 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 His every Word, simply because You have preserved Your every Word.

**WHAT IS THE 2ND BIBLICAL AXIOM OF VPP?**

In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter knew that there were certain things in the Bible which the Jews would find difficult to accept and understand. In the book of Galatians for instance, Paul spoke against the Judaizers who taught that faith alone had to be supplemented by law-keeping (e.g. circumcision) to be sufficient for salvation. The Judaizers who disagreed with the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone perverted God’s Word to suit their own opinions.

Likewise today, many speak against the doctrine of VPP. Like the Judaizers who could not accept that salvation is not earned but comes through faith alone, they find this doctrine difficult to accept. God’s promise that He will keep His words pure forever is not quite good enough for them. They have to either seek out errors in the Bible which do not exist or come up with percentages for the degree of error 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.

To take what God says at face value and trust His Word as absolutely and completely true without trying to change its meaning in any way is the 2nd biblical axiom of VPP.

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 it’s meaning or alter it’s 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 rationalize my doubts by twisting Your words.

## **WHAT IS THE 3RD BIBLICAL AXIOM OF VPP?**

The phrase “pass away” in Matthew 24:35 means to fail. 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.

If God declares that His words shall not pass even when heaven and earth shall pass, He is declaring a truth based on certain assumptions. The first assumption is that these words are available for man to behold through every period of human history. In order for this to happen, all His words have to be preserved through the ages. The second assumption is that God wants to communicate that which He has spoken to man. He spoke the world into existence in Genesis 1 even before man was created and yet He made it a point to have it recorded in the Bible for us to know. If VPP was not a foundational biblical principal which God Himself instituted right from the very beginning of creation, we would have every reason to doubt Him from Genesis 1:1 through to Revelation 22:21. That His words shall prevail forever is the 3rd axiom of VPP.

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 tempering of such a document would render it invalid in a court of law. If human wills are subject to such stringent measures, then how much more the will and testament of an omnipotent God? Any tempering of His Word would erode its authority and veracity. Since our God is omnipotent, He never fails in anything He does. If He is not even capable of preserving His Word then He would cease to be the God of the Bible.

**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.

## **WHAT IS THE 4TH BIBLICAL AXIOM OF VPP?**

Matthew 6:24 says, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

From here it is clear that our Lord Jesus wanted to expose the error of believing that man, in the spiritual sense, is able to serve two masters with opposing characteristics. Jesus says that this is impossible. We will either hear the voice of Jesus and follow Him, or we will hear the voice of mammon and follow the world. We cannot do both. Neither can we sit on the fence and not follow either Jesus or the world. We will do one or the other. In view of John 10:4-5, it is therefore prudent to examine ourselves and determine the true spiritual direction in which our lives are heading. If we say we belong to Jesus and yet live carnal and worldly lives then we are deceiving ourselves.

Likewise, pertaining to VPP, we cannot follow two masters. God says that His Word is truth, but Satan says otherwise. If God's truth is absolute and is based on His Word, then a prerequisite for this to be so is for His Word to be perfectly preserved. Instead of saying outright that God is a liar, Satan now tries to deceive us in a most subtle way by saying that God did not preserve His Word perfectly. He is still calling God a liar.

The spiritual discernment that God gives every believer to recognize right doctrines from wrong teachings will point towards the truth of VPP. This is the 4th biblical axiom of VPP.

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 will follow any other voice they may hear. Likewise, the Bible is God speaking to us. We recognize 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 that my faith shall not be shipwrecked.

## **WHAT IS THE 5TH BIBLICAL AXIOM OF VPP?**

Jesus declared in Matthew 28:18-20 that He had the authority to command His disciples to go forth into the world and preach the Gospel everywhere they go. He also said that they are to teach “all things” which He had commanded them.

Herein lies the key phrase “all things”. Throughout His ministry Jesus taught courageously without fear or favour. He corrected, rebuked and encouraged whenever it was appropriate and never shied away from declaring the truth to those He preached to. In obedience to the Great Commission, every Christian has a duty not only to share the Gospel to the rest of the world but also to preach God’s Word in the way that Jesus had commanded - teaching them not just some part of God’s Word but all of it.

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. 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 had 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.

The doctrine of VPP is biblical and must be declared together with the rest of God’s Word simply because VPP is a part of God’s Word. This is the 5th biblical axiom of VPP.

**THOUGHT:** Preaching God’s Word and sharing the Gospel without believing in VPP is untenable.

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

**WHAT IS THE 6TH BIBLICAL AXIOM OF VPP?**

What's in a name? Companies spend millions of dollars every year on advertising to promote brand awareness so that when we see their logo or hear their brand name being mentioned we will immediately identify with the wonderfully pleasant images depicted in their commercials and hopefully buy their products. Likewise, during elections, candidates will place banners everywhere bearing pictures of themselves and their names so that we will remember them and what they stand for come election day.

Undoubtedly, we place much importance on names, and so does God. His name embodies every one of His perfect characteristics, but Psalm 138:2 tells us that there is something else that has been given a position even higher than God's name, and that is His Word. Given that God has elevated His Word to a status that rises beyond His name, it would be inconceivable that His Word is not perfectly preserved. 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 of the biblically sound doctrine of VPP. That God places His Word above even His name is the 6th biblical axiom of VPP.

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 to be perfectly preserved.

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13**

*Psalm 12:6-7*  
*Memorise Psalm 119:140*

*"Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it..."*

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## **WHAT IS THE 7TH BIBLICAL AXIOM OF VPP?**

It can hardly be any clearer than this. God says in Psalm 12:7 that He shall preserve His Word from this generation forever. Of course, "clever" theologians will argue that God is not referring to the perfect preservation of His Word in this passage. Rather, they argue that "them" in this verse refers to God's people. He will keep His people forever (but not His Word), so they say.

Again, it is the same untenable statement we get to hear from time to time. Even believing (and wrongly so) that God is talking about the preservation of His people forever here requires one to trust in His Word in the first place and to assume that none of the words in this passage has been lost or altered in any way. Without the doctrine of VPP, the unbeliever would rightfully be able to say that he does not have any reason whatsoever to believe the Bible. Of course, if we study the syntax, grammar and the context of Psalms 12:6 & 7 in Hebrew, we know that "them" in verse 7 refers to the main subject in the previous verse (God's words) which says that God's words are pure and like silver purified seven times (perfectly pure).

To have a different interpretation of this would be to go against the flow and logic of this part of scripture and also to make a mockery of God who clearly says that His Words are pure. For God's words to be pure, kept and preserved from this generation forever means that VPP must be true. The purity of God's Word demands that it be perfectly preserved in the first place. This is the 7th axiom of VPP.

We all know what purity means. Objects made from precious metals are worth so much more because the high degree of purity of the gold, silver or platinum used to fashion them. Likewise, what can be more precious than God's Word? And yet sinful man finds every excuse to say that God has neglected to keep His Word pure. God is not a negligent Father, so we have every reason to believe in the perfect preservation of His Word.

**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 linguistic 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 used every available manuscript in the OT and NT for their work. Whenever there was any doubt about how to translate any part of the Bible, they would 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 the 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 men who exercise not only their intellect but also their faith.

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, being 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). The two approaches represent emphasis, respectively, on readability and on literal fidelity to the source text.

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. However, for readability, 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.

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 us a stern warning not to change God's Word in any way be it adding or taking away. 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.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16**

*Matthew 7:17*  
*Memorise Matthew 7:17*

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

## **HOW SUPERIOR IS THE KJV THEOLOGY?**

An essential doctrine 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 denial of the virgin birth of Christ. These watered down versions of God’s Word have also been the base 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 it does not matter about the background of a Bible translation, 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 tired out near the end. The Israelites of old who were tasked to copy the Old Testament could not be that slip shod 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 organized 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 of “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 made 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 do fall through, 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.

**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 two 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 in italics 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 which involved 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 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 truth 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!

**HOW CORRUPT IS THE TEXT OF WESTCOTT & HORT?**

Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton J A Hort were two men who 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 obviously considered corrupted 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 unfortunately had no grounds for this theory and had conjured it to defame the Textus Receptus.

Wescott and Hort themselves had very questionable doctrinal beliefs and practices. They admired Darwin and his theory of evolution, at the same time, rejecting the literal interpretation of the Genesis creation account. They were partial to the Roman Catholic Church and even worshipped Mary. They were "unlearned and unstable" as described in 2 Peter 3:16 and altered 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 Wescott-Hort Greek text and yet still persisting in using them, is dishonoring 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.

**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.

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20**

*Matthew 5:18*  
*Memorise Matthew 5:18*

*"...our Heavenly Father who loves us can and will give us His perfect Words..."*

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## **SURELY ONLY THE AUTOGRAPHS ARE PERFECT?**

If you find yourself in a debate with a Neo-Fundamentalist, you will find that both of you will agree on one point. That is that the autographs, or the very first 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. Your Neo-Fundamentalist friend 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 centuries can be 100% perfect.

It is sad that the Neo-Fundamentalist looks more to Man than to God. He is focusing on Man's imperfect effort 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 in His time knew that the Old Testament He held then 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. With no 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 exercise faith to believe in it. Inability to believe in VPP often comes about if we misplace our faith in Man's ability to accurately copy God's Word. We forgot 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.

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 disregard much of the Bible as inaccurate. 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 VPP are great.

THOUGHT: How would you feel if you had 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?**

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 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, instead of forming their view from what the Bible says. It is a serious sin to distort God's Word especially if the perpetrator is a preacher or a leader in church.

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. It is sincere, Paul's motive is pure. It is by divine appointment. Paul is an apostle appointed by the LORD not himself, nor any another. It is transparent, before God he has nothing to and can indeed hide nothing. The gospel of Christ, this is the gospel he preaches.

Even in the early days of Christianity, many false teachers had snuck into the church and busy corrupting the Word, and in the very church that Paul himself founded. These teachers were numerous and the speed and ease in which they were able to come into the church and wreak havoc is frightening. How much so more 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 has 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 at 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 vigilant, guarding against false teachers creeping into their fellowship groups, church and personal life. Do not be complacent of 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 a harmless sheep's clothing. False prophets will be people in leadership, theologians, spiritually learned, full of good works, and articulate thoughts – all the appearance of godliness. From the outside, there will be no difference between them and genuine believers. Subtly, and unaware will they beguile, confuse and deceive.

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% anyway? Whilst we cannot see into their hearts, we can consider the 'fruits' of their contention that quantifies the perfection of the Bible at 98.7%. 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 qualifies 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.

There will be wolves who will come into your life and church with charisma, clever arguments and sweet words seeking to 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 98.7% God?

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

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25**

Luke 12:51-53  
Memorise Matthew 10:37

*“...He that loves his father or mother more... is not worthy of me...”*

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## **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 closest relation, dividing them against one another, 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 does bring division, but this is a good thing. It separates those who wholeheartedly love the Word of God from those who do not.

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.

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, (eg. Ps 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 a reading of God preserving His words rather than 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 of 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 which 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, one of the most popular and widely available modern versions. The problem 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 know 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 a few.

The Bible is not just any book to a Christian. It is the foundation of our faith, which determines not just 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 error, albeit minor. 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 great and desirable thing, such 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 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 contention does not build up, but rather stumbles 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 belaboring 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 be unfeasible for most.

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 say spiritual and formulate views and theories that really have no profit, and are 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 contend 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 a wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove.

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 29**

*Psalm 119:89*  
*Memorise John 1:1-3*

*"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.

Nevertheless, the ultimate author is none other than the Creator of the heavens and the earth – God. In contrast, the most scholarly and intelligent of men is a man at best, a creature of the creator. His mind is changeable and will fade over time, and come to its inevitable end. God is infinite. Man is finite.

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

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.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 1**

*1 Timothy 3:15  
Memorise 1 Timothy 4:6*

*“...study to shew the self approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

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## **DO YOU KNOW THE WORD?**

Today's passage of scripture is not easy to understand and contains a very important aspect of the church. In this sense, the church that is referred to here is not the physical building but is instead made up of believers. This is called the “invisible church” that consists of all believers from the start to the end of time. In this epistle, Paul is writing to teach Timothy on the things of God. In verse 15, Paul especially writes about God's Word and how it relates to the church. Paul describes the church as the “pillar and foundation” 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 of. This duty and honor was given to the nation of Israel and 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 says of the great privilege and importance that God has chosen to place on 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 fulfill this responsibility.

I hope you realize 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 Word?

**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?**

New born babies don't do very much. They sleep, cry, poo and ...eat. 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 its survival. There is no baby in the world that can go on without food indefinitely. This is exactly what Peter teaches regarding how Christian's should naturally desire for God's Word. Peter says that just as a newborn baby naturally desires milk for food, the true believing Christian should also similarly desire the Word of God. Just as milk is lovely to the tongue of a baby, likewise, the Word should be something sweet and refreshing 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 is neither a lukewarm response nor one of indifference. Instead it is passionate and lovely. The last part of the 1 Peter 2:2 speaks of another aspect God's Word as food, which we mentioned earlier, is that it enables a Christian to grow in the same way milk helps a baby to grow. Without milk a baby will not grow and will die. Likewise, a Christian will not grow spiritually if there is no Word. The Christian will not die, however, because a true Christian is forever alive in the Lord. But a Christian who is not sufficiently fed in the Word of God will be constantly weak against sin and lack true joy. 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 or find ways to learn more about God's Word? These are questions that should answer in the affirmative. If not, you must check your life. Are you in disobedience and sin? You should also check if you truly know the Lord. If not, don't wait, come quickly to 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)?**

The context of the passage for today can be found in the earlier verses. Christ was teaching the crowd when all of the sudden, a certain woman raised her voice and said loudly that the womb that bare Christ is blessed. It was almost like the woman was making an announcement! This was, of course, referring to Mary. What this statement also meant was that those that were close to Christ would have special benefit or blessing as compared to others. It was as it were if you were friends with Christ from his youth or if you were his sibling. God would look upon you differently and favourably. Christ, instead, retorted by saying that more blessed are those who not only hear God's Words but keep them. What this meant was that 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, who shouted, 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 to God, meant little.

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 that would be all right. Romans 2:13 tell us that it is not the hearers but the doers of God's 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.

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

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**ARE YOU DOERS OF THE WORD (II)?**

For many in church, God's Word is not offensive. It is all right to hear it 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 the hearts of these, God's Word stops the moment they step out of church and step back into their worldly pursuits Sundays or otherwise. James describes this situation very well. It is like looking at oneself in the mirror. You see the flaws on the face, but when you turn away, the memory of what you saw are quickly forgotten. The sight from the mirror had no impact at all. In the same way, God's Word changed nothing in the life of the hearer. As soon as it is spoken, it is forgotten. Such believers can be described as being "lukewarm" which means; neither cold nor hot. 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 choose a comfortable life though it means not needing to obey God or serve Him. Christ describes the lukewarm with strong words in Revelation 3:16, 17. They are described as wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. God is not pleased with the lukewarm. Choosing to be hearers and not putting God's Word into practice in your life does not please God at all.

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 2:37, which is our passage for today, and Acts 5:33. Acts 2:37 was the high point of the event known as 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 prophesies that Jesus was truly the Son of God and to their rebuke. Peter reported that how they crucified Him. God raised Christ from the died and 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 next response; “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter told them to repent. That very day, three thousand were saved! Acts 5:33 was a very similar account. Peter again was in the forefront. 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 Word of light, one was moved to repentance, another was moved into greater sin.

Which group do you belong to? When you hear God’s Word, what is your response? Do you feel any conviction? 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 God’s Word contains all that you need to attain eternal life. If you seek it, you will find. It is there for you.

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

PRAYER: Father, pricked my heart unto repentance.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 6**

*Colossians 3:16*  
*Memorise James 5:13*

*“...singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”*

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## **DOES YOUR SINGING REFLECT THE WORD?**

It is a common sight today to see people walking about with music earbuds stuck into their ears. Music is truly an important part of the lives of people. Music 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 graces and music is not spared. In fact, music is one of the most abused mediums 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 created to move man to praise God, it can also be used to create the very opposite of it. Sadly, in these last days, the abuse of music far far exceeds the godly use of it. More sadly is the fact that many Christians, especially teens, allow themselves to be exposed to ungodly music. Being exposed, they also allow their hearts to be affected and moved to which ever direction the composers have intended. Mouthing the words and singing such music becomes common and then before long, their hearts become shaped and molded 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. Why do we then allow ourselves to be filled with such then? 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, 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 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 not a day goes by without you not spending at least 1 hour even when your schoolwork is suffering as a result. 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 context and understand their sin better. The people told the prophets not to prophesy anymore. They called 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 and horrific. God is to be feared.

Are you the same? Do you prefer that those who bring you God's Word even in rebuke to cease doing so. Like the people of Israel, 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 hold no more sweetness in 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.

**DO YOU MEDITATE DAILY IN THE WORD?**

Psalm 1 is a well-known psalm. It describes what a person would 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 may find joy in reading. With things that you enjoy, you may find yourself spending a lot of time in and not realize it. Time passes by and you don't even feel 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 this; "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 sins of Christendom today is the arrogance that so-called Christians approach God's Word. God's Word must come in their own terms. 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 is not a nice doctrine to speak about, so they emphasize love and unity. God's Word speaks out against ungodly forms of worship, but people ignore it because drums and electric guitars used for worship just sound so right. This is a great sin and has resulted in great error in churches today and in the many centuries before. We see this in all the modern day churches that have departed from God's Word and even the Roman Catholic Church that is filled with man-made laws that contradict God's Word. Man 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 but as with all sins, there is nothing light about it. Man approaches God's Word without meekness. Self comes before God. Before long, the salvation message is lost 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. Simply, one can 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". Already, one is guilty of pride before God's Word. James 1:21 tells us very clearly that we are to receive God's Word with meekness. With humility. When Isaiah was transported before God into heaven, this was his response; "...Woe is me, for I am undone" (Isaiah 6:5). Isaiah recognized his true state before God. If only we too recognize our true state before God. If we hold the Bible as the true Word coming from God Himself, our response should 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 felt rebuked by God's Word?

PRAYER: Father, keep me always humble.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 10**

Acts 18:28  
Memorise 1 Corinthians 15:3

*“...I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.”*

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## **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 living 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.

THOUGHT: When was the last time I share 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 like to have, or what kind of shoes you like to wear or the style of clothes you choose? Do you choose these things because your friends choose 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 finished your studies and have some free time? What affects your decision for 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? 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 shows him the way his life should take. A lamp giving out light is very necessary when the way is dark. 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 dark because of sin because it makes us wiser about these dangers so that we can avoid them. Furthermore, the Words of God teachers us how we should order our lives so that we are kept from harm.

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 can come from it. In fact, what is popular among the masses in the world is almost certainly to be avoided 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 live according to God's Word (Romans 12:1-2). Study God's Word diligently so that you know what God requires in our lives 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.

**MONDAY, MARCH 12**

Acts 17:11  
Memorise 2 Timothy 3:13

*“...for many deceivers, are entered into the world.”*

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## **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 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 their 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. However, despite what has occurred, we are told that the Bereans were nobler. How so? Closer examination of verse 11 gives us the answer. We are told several things. Firstly, that they received the Word with readiness of mind; meaning they were eager and willing to receive God's Word from Paul and Silas and not just from them but from God Himself as it were. This describes a people who had a deep love for God's Word. However, their attributes did not end there. We are told that the Bereans not only received the Word gladly, they searched the scriptures daily to determine what was told to them 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 words of man. For this, the Holy Spirit in scripture commended them as nobler. Such an attribute was considered more 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 take the words of man only but checked them with 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.”

**TUESDAY, MARCH 13**

*1 Peter 4:11  
Memorise Proverbs 15:4*

*“...let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.”*

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## **DOES YOUR SPEECH REFLECT THE WORD?**

It is not easy to order our lives so that we live it out as how 1 Peter 4:11 says we should. Let's look at what our passage for today 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 often 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 tell 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 both 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 make our speech seasoned with salt meaning that it 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 it is a time you look forward to where you find you can find rest in the Lord? Or do you instead find QT a chore where you go only because you are forced to? Our love for God's Word has a lot to do with our love for God. If we do not love God's Word, it is very possible that we do not love God either. This is a stark truth that we cannot deny. If we do not find an eagerness for God's Word, if God's Word is bland and tasteless, 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 not, 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.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 15**

*Psalm 19:10  
Memorise Proverbs 4:5*

*"...Happy is the man that findeth wisdom."*

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## **HOW PRECIOUS IS THE WORD TO YOU?**

Have you ever experienced long periods of time where 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 are filled with testimonies for the love and preciousness of God's Word. Psalm 63:5 describes the soul as being satisfied as marrow and fatness; meaning overflowing and with fullness. Has your heart ever felt empty, the Psalmist testifies that God and His Word can fill the soul's emptiness to excess. How wonderful that one need not feel empty and unhappy. The Psalmist in our reference today speaks of God's Word as more to be desired than the best gold. Although gold can enrich and fulfill one's needs and wants, but the psalmist would rather have God's Word over the finest gold. The psalmist draws another comparison to honey that in those days would have been one of few sources of sugar. 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 of the blessings of God's Word in our lives, we should not hesitate to be prepared to forsake all for it. God's Word should mean everything to us. Without it, we are truly miserable and undone.

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?**

If you are asked to speak on the topic "joy", what would you say?

I had that experience once! The first thing that I thought of was epistle of Paul to the Philippians, which some have called "the epistle of joy"! If you read through the four chapters of Philippians, you would come across the words "joy" and "rejoice" many times! We learned much about Christian joy from the book. Do you know that Paul was in prison when he wrote to the Philippians? And yet he was constantly **rejoicing** even though he was in prison. He **rejoiced** in many things eg he loved the Philippians greatly because of their "fellowship in the gospel". But most of all he "**rejoiced in the Lord**"!

But in the end, I spoke not from an epistle of Paul, but from an epistle of Peter! Read 1 Peter 1:8, "*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye **rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory***".

Today we read in Psalm 19:8, "The statutes of the LORD are right, **rejoicing** the heart".

Do you **rejoice** in the statutes (or precepts) of God?

But you ask – are statutes not something we would usually consider as restrictive? How can we **rejoice** in them?

I can think of two reasons:

1. As the psalmist says, "the statutes of the LORD are **right**". As children of God, we have been made **righteous** through faith in Jesus – so we want to do the **right** things because we love Jesus!
2. The statutes of the LORD come from God, and if we love God, we would not only obey His laws, but love them and rejoice in them!

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

Read your Bible with a heart of love and joy!

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!

- firstly, we don't have "**princes**" in Singapore
- secondly, 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*" just 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. "I still reverence thy word. I am not deterred from keeping thy law by any threats or intimidations." (Barnes)

Dear teen, think about it! Many of our troubles come from our lack of reverence for God's word! If we are not "in awe of" God's word, then when we read the Bible, or listen to a sermon or message, we do not take it seriously, and spend half the time daydreaming.

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?**

You might remember the lesson on Friday, *"Do you rejoice in the Word?"* Today, we read, *"I will delight in thy statutes"*. In addition, the psalmist says, *"I will not forget thy word"*. This is similar to a very familiar verse (because we sing it often!) i.e. Psalm 119:11: *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"*. (the word **"hid"** here means that we treasure God's word).

Dear teen – question time!

How do you do in memory verses? Do you like it when your Sunday School teacher asks you to *"do"* memory verses? How many verses have you memorised? Do you understand these verses? Do you find them useful?

Is memorizing bible verses a good thing? You may say – what a question to ask! Of course, it's a good thing! Are you sure?

Think – the Pharisees must have been champions in memory verses! But did these benefit them?

Think – Satan is probably the world champion in memory verses. He tried to use these verses to tempt our Lord Jesus!

Yes, we should memorise bible verses – but even more important, we should understand them and obey them!

I love to memorise whole chunks of the bible. Do you know that Eph 1:3-14 sentence is a single sentence in Greek? Same with 1 Peter 1:3-12. Both are fantastic *"chunks"* to memorise (and understand and love!). I have tried to memorise them, with some success! I was also impressed with a Christian brother who recited to me 2 Peter 1:3-11! He obviously has *"hid"* the Word of God in his heart!

Read, understand, memorise and do!

THOUGHT: If the government ban 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 me work in my heart and soul so that I will love you more in spirit and in truth.

**MONDAY, MARCH 19**

*Psalm 119:11*  
**Memorise Psalm 119:11**  
*"Thy word have I hid in mine heart..."*

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## **WHAT IS YOUR INTENTION OF MEMORIZING?**

Dear teen – Does the verse today sound familiar to you? I believe you not only can recite it, but can hum the tune too! It's such a wonderful verse. Remember – the word "**hid**" implies that we should treasure the word of God. It's indeed a "pearl of great prize"!

In modern parlance, the word "**hid**" also means "**internalization**" – that is, not a matter of "one ear in, one ear out", but that 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 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 memorizing?** 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 win over these temptations? The answer is clear: Paul says "*flee youthful lusts*", and David (the psalmist) says "*take heed thereto according to thy word*"!

Memorise at least one verse every week – with understanding.

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.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 20**

*Job 23:12*  
*Memorise Proverbs 4:5*  
*“Thy word have I hid in mine heart...”*

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## **WHAT PRIORITY DO YOU PLACE ON GOD’S WORD?**

*“Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food”*

Today’s verse comes from the Book of Job 23:12. But let us read the preceding 2 verses too:

*Job 23:10-11, “But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.”*

Does verse 10 sound familiar? – yes, the words in this verse provide the lyrics for one of our favorite hymns, “Rejoice in the Lord”!

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 faithfully “esteemed” and kept them.

Some people have labeled Job as the “most enigmatic book” in the Bible. And rightly so. It takes great spiritual maturity to understand the book, but certain things are clear - for example, how did Job ever managed to continue to be faithful to God despite all his trials and suffering? The answer, I believe, is in the verses we have read today.

The answer is: Job knows God’s word, and not only “**internalized**” it but also “**prioritize**” it!

Dear teen, how important is the Word of God to you? If you ever have to suffer like Job, how would you react?

One very practical thing we can do to “prioritize” God’s Word in our lives is to have regular quiet times daily, and keep the Sabbath holy.

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.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21**

Psalm 119:66  
Memorise Psalm 119:66

“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 did not believe. I asked the pastor of the church many questions, but he was stumped, could not answer my questions, and I remained an unbeliever!

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 my serious in my search for answers to my questions, and found that Christianity is a very reasonable faith! Then I understand Jeremiah 29:13 *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart”*.

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 the bible more seriously, and He is faithful to increase my faith. I have come to believe the Word more and more, and daily receive His blessings more and more. I can say, like the father in Mark 9:24, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief”.

How about you?

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1)

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.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 22**

Psalm 119:42  
Memorise Psalm 119:42

*“So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me...”*

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## **DO YOU TRUST IN THE WORD?**

We should read the 2 verses (Psalm 119:41-42): *“Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy 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?”

So how are you going to answer him?

Learn from the Psalm how to answer him! Pray to God for His grace, 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, and have trusted in Him previously as you went through other trials – so you know you can trust what God has promised in His 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 your 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”*

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## **CAN ONE BE SAVED WITHOUT THE WORD?**

I would like you to read with me 6 verses today (even better, read the whole of John 20!). This passage described Thomas as a “**skeptic**”, who did not believe that our Lord has risen from the dead, even though the other disciples told him that Jesus has appeared to them!

I can surely sympathize with him! I was a **skeptic** for many years, and was a “**doubting Thomas**” who asked the pastor (of my previous church) so many questions that he couldn’t answer me. Thank God for opening my eyes eventually through His word.

Sometimes we may wish that Jesus would appear to us like what He did to Thomas, who became dumbfounded, lost his swagger and could just say, “My Lord and my God”!

However, Peter says we have something better! He wrote (2 Peter 1:19b): *“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed”*.

Imagine if we don’t have the Word of God – then anybody can just say “I’ve seen Jesus! He has appeared to me and assured me of my salvation”. The church would be in total chaos, as we won’t know whether anybody is saved.

Thank God we have His assured Word. That is why the apostle John wrote his gospel: *“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”*.

When we read the word of God, remember – these are the words of life, the words that give us new life, new birth!

THOUGHT: The Bible says that in Christ, we are “new creatures”. The word of God is dynamite.

PRAYER: Lord, thank you that we have Thy Word, “a more sure word of prophecy” (1 Peter 1:19).

**SATURDAY, MARCH 24**

*Ephesians 5:26*  
*Memorise Ephesians 5:26*

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

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## **DOES THE WORD CONTINUE TO CLEANSE YOU?**

We should read the 2 verses together, Ephesians 5:25-26. *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word”.*

Paul says that our Lord Jesus loves us, and gave Himself for us. He has cleansed us of our sins, and sanctified us (separated us from sin unto himself). This cleansing and sanctification is confirmed by the sacrament of **baptism** (“washing of water”). But **baptism** is not a magical rite – it is only efficacious if done according to the Word!

Calvin wrote: “we do not separate the **sacraments** from the Word at any time”, for “to have the **sign** without the promise added to it is but a frustratory and unprofitable thing”.

But, of course, **baptism** is just the beginning. It is so easy for us to go astray, and to sin against God. So Psalm 119:9 asked this question: *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?”* The answer? – *“by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”*

But this passage in Ephesians does not stop here, with sanctification. Read on: *“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Ephesians 5:27).

Read this carefully, and imagine – what a glorious day it will be. *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”* (Revelation 21:5).

So, let’s go back to the question: “does the Word continue to cleanse you”?

We don’t have the ability to clean ourselves. Only the Holy Spirit can – through the Word of God

**THOUGHT:** Do you want to be clean, now? Or are you just glad to be saved, and refused to be cleansed, as you want to live your own life your own way?

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

## **DOES THE WORD GIVE YOU UNDERSTANDING?**

When I'm writing this message (August 2011), our church is in the midst of a series of messages on the Bible, entitled "**Earnestly contend for the Word**", at the Sunset Gospel Hour. If you have attended these messages, 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. So 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 paying the Bible 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 gives us our true lives!

What do you understand by saying that "*thy words giveth light*"? It means 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, why 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 manners 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*".

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7)

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 God for dispelling the darkness of my soul.

*“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul:  
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”*

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## **DOES THE WORD CHANGE YOUR LIFE?**

When you play games, do you not shout and jump up and down when you get a “perfect” score? And when you get 100 marks for your test paper? But, in our lives, can we be perfect? You say, “it’s impossible!” And I agree with you!

But what does the Bible say? Paul wrote (2 Timothy 3:17) *“That the man of God may be **perfect**, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. James wrote (Jas 1:4), “But let patience have her **perfect** work, that ye may be **perfect** and entire, wanting nothing”.*

You ask, “how can it be”? Jesus said, *“With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible”* (Matthew 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. Read Epistle to the Philippians, and feel the love that he has for our Lord Jesus. 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!

*“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature”* (2 Peter 1:3-4a)

**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 you 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.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 27**

**Psalm 119:49**

*Today's verse says, "Remember the word unto thy servant,  
upon which thou hast caused me to hope."*

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## **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 – in that case, you do know that you are destined for hell!

You might remember these verses from 2 Corinthians – *"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life"* (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

Yes, the Bible is the **most divisive book on earth** – that is why it is so hated by so many people, who burn it, who reviled it, who wrote whole books to "disprove" it, and by so many governments who ban it! But for us, it the the most **"hope-ful"** book!

We can fill many pages with the hopeful promises of the Bible. Can you think of some (maybe your favorite verses?) What about John 3:16 (*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*)? Or Romans 8:28 (*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*)?

Or the lovely Shepherd's Psalm (*"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me..."*)?

We can go on and on and on...

Fill your mind with the promises of the Bible. This is the best "self-help" book – for it is the God of the Bible who is "our hope for years to come."

**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!

*“And it shall be with him, and 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”*

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## **DOES THE WORD CAUSE YOU TO OBEY?**

Today’s passage actually starts from Deuteronomy 17:14. This is God’s instructions (through Moses) to the Israelites before they entered the Promised Land. This passage spoke about the duties of the king, who “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.”

We may not be kings, but we are better than kings! We are God’s children! So, we should “**read**”, “**learn**”, “**keep**” and “**do**” “all the words of this law”! “Do” of course means “obey”.

### Does the Word cause you to obey?

Or we can turn the question around – look around, even in our church, and you can see that most people do not obey the word of God. Even better – look inside yourself? Do you obey His Word?

Another question: why do people not obey God’s word? I can think of a few reasons:

1. Some do not know God’s word (no excuse for Christians).
2. Some may know, but do not believe (can a Christian be like that?)
3. Some think they know, but they do not (very common in many churches where the Word of God is not preach faithfully eg the Roman Catholic Church, and the Charismatic churches).
4. Some believe in the head, but not in the heart, and not in actions.
5. Some fear men more than God.

Are you in category 1, 2, 3, or 4 (or maybe you have other reasons not to obey)?

Learn from Daniel! – who “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.....”

THOUGHT: Can you remember when you deliberately obey God’s word? Why?

PRAYER: Lord, teach me to “flee from youthful lusts” and obey Thy Word.

*“Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips  
I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer”*

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## **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

Who or what is the **destroyer**? It needs not be something **violent** (like joining gangs) or **obvious** (like pornography). What is more dangerous is often the more **insidious temptations** – like interesting innocuous books that take us away from godly activities (there’s a time for such things, but we must guard our limits); or even **subtle sins** like pride, impatience, sloth, or a desire to be popular, to fit in with your peers.

In saying all these, I am preaching to myself too!

Each of us have 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 glorifying to His name!

Know the word of God well, and learn to discern the destroyer.

THOUGHT: Learn to pray like Paul: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ” (Philippians 1-9-10)

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

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

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## **DO YOU GRIEVE WHEN OTHERS DISOBEY THE WORD?**

As I am writing this, the events of the riots in London are still clear in the mind. Did you read the news of the riots or even watch the videos? I was saddened when I watch young people going on rampage in the riots and looting in London and Birmingham, for no good reasons.

The British prime minister (Mr David Cameron) said that the riots reflected the "moral decline" in British society. However, the ex-primer minister of UK, Mr Tony Blair, rebutted him, and said, "'Elevate this into a highfalutin wail about a Britain that has lost its way morally and we will depress ourselves unnecessarily, trash our own reputation abroad, and worst of all, miss the chance to deal with the problem in the only way that will work."

Who is right? What do you think?

How the country has fallen! Great Britain used to be a great nation - the nation of the puritans, John Wesley, and George Whitefield, and from which many missionaries came to Asia (and Africa and other parts of the world). The glory has departed from Britain, as it has forgotten about the God of the Bible.

What do we feel when we see such sad state of affairs? We can see this right in Singapore too, even in the churches. Do you feel a sense of disdain and self-righteousness, or do you grieve for the ungodly? Learn from King David (in the verse for today), and even better, learn from our Lord Jesus. In Mark 3:5, we read: *"And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts".*

Grieve for those who have never heard of God's truth, God's love. Grieve for ourselves, if we have known His truth, His love, and yet remain like unbelievers.

**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.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 31**

Psalm 119:33  
Memorise Psalm 119:33

*“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.”*

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## **ARE YOU WILLING TO BE TAUGHT THE WORD?**

Most parents in Singapore are very KS (kiasu) and try very hard (sometime, very very hard) to get their kids into the best schools! I have a patient whose parents move to the condominium just next to Methodist Girls School to ensure that their daughter is accepted into MGS!

But here, we have **the BEST school – God’s school**, and it’s a **FREE school!** The only “fee” you have to pay clean hands and a pure heart!

And there’s only one textbook – the Bible – **The BEST book.**

And we need only one teacher – the Holy Spirit – **The BEST teacher!**

Our Lord told His disciples: *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth”.*

Oh yes, one more thing – most of us also need assistant teachers – Sunday School teachers, elders, pastors. I thank God that we have excellent faithful teachers in our church, and we should take every opportunity to learn God’s word, and “to keep it to the end”.

Have you heard of students who somehow managed to get into the best schools and yet failed badly? Yes, it’s not enough to be in a good school, but we should be **“teachable”** – not “one ear in, one ear out”, but somebody who will *“keep it to the end”*

Jesus said: *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”* (John 10:27).

Do you hear His voice? Do you follow Him?

Always discipline yourself whenever God’s word is preached – pray for freedom from distractions and a teachable spirit.

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

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