

Introduction

I'd like to begin by asking you a question. What are the three best books you've ever read? I have with me the three best I've ever read. This is *The Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard. This is *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer. And this is *The Bible* by God by God. But I'd quickly say this. Of those three, the best, by far, is *The Bible*. If I could own only one book, it would be this one. *The Bible* is *the* book for me and that's what I'm going to preach about today.

The Bible Is God's Word

Let's start with verse 97 and the term, "**Your law.**" That term refers specifically to the first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis through Deuteronomy. Those books were the psalmist's Bible. The equivalent for us is the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament combined. Those books are our Bible.

Now, notice what the Psalmist calls the Bible in verse 101, "**Your (God's) word.**" That's the most important truth that chapter 119 teaches us about the Bible. It's God's word. That doesn't mean He Himself mechanically wrote it down. It does mean He revealed its contents to men and empowered them to accurately write that down. That's makes the Bible utterly unique. Human beings wrote *The Divine Conspiracy*, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, and every other book in the world, except the Bible. God wrote it, which makes it His word.

The Best Teacher

God of course is all-knowing, all-wise, and good. And the book that He wrote is the best teacher because He is. We see that in verses 98-100 and the three bold claims they make. The Bible makes us wiser than our enemies, more insightful than our teachers, and more knowledgeable than the aged. It's often said, "**Experience is the best teacher.**" That's

flat out wrong. These three verses reveal that Bible is.

Don't misunderstand what that means though. It doesn't mean that it tells us everything we want to know. I make that point because some Christians think it does. They think its purpose is to guide us in all the details of our everyday lives.

That explains a practice called "**Bible Roulette.**" To get guidance, some Christians stand the Bible on edge and allow it to fall open. After that, they randomly stab their index finger on to one of the opened pages. They then take the "stabbed" verse as God's word for the specific detail about which they're concerned.

I was taught to do that in my younger years as a Christian. I did it, for instance, to decide whether or not I should try out for my high school basketball team. I was cut as a junior and wanted to know if I should try out again as a senior. So I played Bible roulette and randomly selected Ezekiel 34:20, "**I will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.**" I took the lean sheep to mean being cut my junior year and the fat sheep to mean I'd not be cut my senior year. So I tried out, but was cut again.

The moral is that the Bible doesn't tell us everything we want to know. It doesn't tell us what college to attend, what profession or job to choose, what person to marry, what car to buy, what location to live, and so on. It doesn't guide us in all the details of our everyday lives.

But having said that, I'd also say this. All the principles that we need to live our lives well are there. As far as the principles are concerned, the Bible says all that needs to be said. Or, to say it differently, the Bible gives us the best information about the most important matters in human life. If we know it, therefore, it makes us wiser than our enemies, more insightful than our teachers, and more knowledgeable than the aged. One of our culture's foremost authorities on money, for example, is Suze Orman. But if we know what the Bible says about money, we're more insightful about it than she is.

I'd sum up the three claims in verses 98-100 in terms of an old

Amish axiom, **“Too soon old, too late smart.”** Thankfully, it doesn't have to be that way. Learn what the Bible teaches. We'll be **“soon smart”** if we do. The Bible is the best teacher.

And we need to do two things because it is.

Meditate on the Bible

One is found in verses 97 and 99 and the words, **“my meditation.”** We need to meditate on the Bible.

Some Christians, including me years ago, engage the Bible by reading it through in a year. While doing that does have some value, it clearly isn't enough. It isn't possible for that much material in that space of time to become a living reality in us. Reading the Bible quickly and without concentrated thought isn't the right ambience for it to achieve its purposes in us.

So, we meditate on it instead. The 17th century saint, Madam Guyon, wrote an inspiring little book titled *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*. In it, she explains what it means to meditate on the Bible: **“If you read quickly, it will benefit you little. You will be like a bee that merely skims the surface of a flower. Instead, in this new way of reading with prayer, you must become as the bee who penetrates into the depths of the flower. You plunge deeply within to remove its sweetest nectar.”** I love that language, don't you? Plunge deeply into the Bible and remove its sweetest nectar from it.

Here, as a practical matter, is how we do that. With paper and pen in hand, we choose a text from the Bible and withdraw to a quiet place where we can meditate undisturbed. We then do the following. First, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to meet with us in and to speak to us through the text. Second, read the text all the way through without pausing. Third, read the text again slowly, taking in. Fourth, highlight, underline, or write down any word, phrase, or idea that seems to jump off the page to us. Fifth, quietly reflect on what we highlighted, underlined, or wrote down to determine how it applies to us. Ask

questions like **“What is my life like or not like because this is true?”** and **“How should I think, feel, speak, and act because this is true?”** And finally sixth, talk with God about what He revealed to us in the fourth and fifth steps. Confess, repent, express thanks, rejoice, worship, and so on as His revelation to us prompts us to do.

Several years ago, I meditated on 1 John over the course of a month. I worked my way through the book and eventually came to 4:16-21 one night. First, I prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to speak to me through the text. Second, I read it all the way through without pausing. Third, I read it again slowly, taking it in. Fourth, I was just gripped by the opening words of verse 18 as I did and so, wrote them down, **“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts our fear.”** Fifth, I reflected on how those words apply to me. If I love people, I won’t intentionally harm them, which makes them utterly at ease with me. Sixth, I talked with God about what He revealed. I confessed that I’ve intentionally harmed people and asked Him to forgive me for that. I then made the decision that I would never do it again, beginning with my wife Jill.

That illustrates one thing we should do because the Bible is the best teacher. Meditate on it.

Obey the Bible

Verses 100-102 reveal another thing we should do. Verse 100 – **“I have observed your precepts.”** Verse 101 – **“That I may keep your word.”** And Verse 102 – **“I have not turned aside from your ordinances.”** We not only meditate on the Bible. We obey it as well.

Our ultimate aim when it comes to the Bible isn’t to know it. It isn’t to become a scholar who impresses people with our grasp of it. That’s a trap that many in Christian fellowships fall into. It’s a dreadful thing that cultivates quarrelsomeness, pettiness, and pride. Knowing the Bible isn’t an end. It’s a means to several ends, one of which is obeying it.

To obey it means to live consistently with the principles, commands, and truths it reveals. We think, feel, speak, and act according to them.

And we don't think, feel, speak, and act contrary to them.

Let's go back to 1 John 4:18. I told you the decision I made. I will never intentionally say or do anything to harm anyone, beginning with my wife Jill. I made that decision and have, to the best of my ability, carried it out. Responding to criticism with criticism, for instance, is only a way of hurting our critic. So, when Jill or anyone criticizes me, I've tried and trained not to criticize back.

Obedying God's written word is essential to He giving us His spoken word. In typographic cultures like ours, the human mind naturally credits the printed word with an authority it doesn't credit the spoken word. If we don't listen to God's written word, therefore, we'll likely not listen to His spoken word either. Most of us want God to speak to us. But His question is, "**Why should I?**" If we don't listen to His written word, why should He give us His spoken word? The fact is that He usually won't.

Those then are the two things we should do. Because it's the best teacher, we should meditate on and obey the Bible.

The Consequence of Meditation and Obedience

Notice the consequence in verse 102 if we do, "**For You yourself have taught me.**" That line doesn't refer to God teaching us through His written word, the Bible. It refers to He teaching us through His spoken word. If we meditate on and obey His written word, He Himself will give us His spoken word. He speaks to us in the context of an overall life of meditation and obedience.

Dallas Willard explains the dynamics of this well. We're seized by God's spoken word as we meditate on His written word. This is different than you and I seizing the words of the Bible. That is scholarship and study, which is a necessary thing. But in this case, we're seized by God's spoken word in the presence of His written word. This seizure can be so vivid and real that it's almost as if He is speaking audibly to us.

John Bunyan was renowned for writing his allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. But he wrote another book as well titled *Grace Abounding to*

the Chief of Sinners. In it, he describes his own experiences with regard to what I'm talking about. In one of those, he was musing on the words of Hebrews 2:14-15 and as he was, "**I thought that the glory of these words was so weighty on me, that I was both once and twice ready to swoon as I sat, yet not with grief and trouble, but with solid peace and joy.**" Notice how he explains what happened, "**swoon as I sat**" and "**the glory of these words was so weighty on me.**" Bunyan was seized by God's spoken word as he meditated on His written word.

And we will be as well. I know that because I've experienced it, many times. I was meditating on 1 John 4:1-6 one night when these words of verse 1 suddenly struck me like a neon sign, "**test the spirits.**" The Holy Spirit drove those words deeply into my mind and heart and through His still small voice clearly said, "**Don't let the people you pastor be duped by false teachings. Equip them so they won't be.**" He told me what to do and I did it. I subsequently taught a six-month long Sunday school class titled *Biblesmiths*, which instructed people how to correctly interpret and apply the Bible.

I've learned something over the years. God's written word is the primary vehicle through which He gives us His spoken word. The celebrated pastor and evangelist F.B. Meyer explained it this way: "**The written word is the wire along which the voice of God will certainly come to you if the heart is hushed and the attention fixed.**" I draw your attention to the word "**certainly.**" He wasn't exaggerating. Meditate on and obey God's written word. You'll experience His spoken word if you do.

Conclusion

What I've said today is behind the words of an old child's song that I'd like to quote in closing. It's called "The Bible Song" and goes like this: "**The B-I-B-L-E, yes that's the book for me. I stand alone on the word of God, the B-I-B-L-E.**" That's my testimony and I hope it's yours. Of all the books in the world, the Bible's "**the book for me.**"