

## Talks – Bible – myfishbites.com

The Bible is often referred to as the Word of God. If you are a believer in Jesus, then the Bible should be the main source and inspiration of how you live and think. The Bible is the "Rhema" of God. This is a Greek word (the original language the Bible was written in) and means the written counsel of God.

*Matthew 4:4 - "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."*

The Greek word for "word" here is "Rhema" and this occurs many times across the New Testament of the Bible, with Jesus quoting part of a verse from the Old Testament – Deuteronomy 8.3 – *"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."*

In Genesis 16, the people of Israel had come out of slavery in Egypt. But they were tired and hungry and complained against God. So God sent a form of bread from heaven for 40 years. God did this to provide, to test and to feed the people.

Jesus, out in the wilderness for 40 days, was saying that God actually stopped Israel eating bread in the Old Testament times. Instead, he gave them what the Israelites called 'manna' – Exodus 16 describes manna as *"white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey."* Jesus stated that God's word is more important than anything – out of God's word comes our provision and all that we need.

So God is teaching us about the importance of his Word.

### **Biblical Christianity is completely different. Why?!**

But we must understand that Christianity is not like religions - the Bible is not a book that you have to obey to get right with God..

Let's look at that a bit more deeply at that statement.. In religions, people have to obey rules and do certain things in order to 'please' their gods. They use outside actions to get right with their gods on their inside. In some religions, you may have to pray a certain number of times or do certain things. Only then are you accepted by your god.

If you are a believer in Jesus then what has happened is that you have invited Jesus to be the boss of your life. What happens is that in a spiritual sense, you get a new mind and a new heart. What Jesus does is change you from the inside -> out (as the Hillsong lyrics let us know).

In the Old Testament, God spoke to the people of Israel. Although the church today and Israel are separate, we can learn from what God says, as it relates to the way Jesus is with us today. The Bible often has more than one meaning contained within what it says.

*Ezekiel 36.24-27 - " For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of*

*stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”*

God takes us out of the old way of living (the sinful life) and brings us into his presence through Jesus. When Jesus died and rose again on the cross (and we say yes to him in our life), his innocent blood acts to clean us and make us right with God. God then changes us to work out all the impurities in our system. If you go walking, you can get water purification tablets. You fill up your water from a stream, then put a tablet in the water. But it takes time to purify the water. This is the same for us. As we grow as a Christian, God puts his finger on things in our life over time. God puts a new Spirit (who is holy) in us and gives us a new spiritual heart. Because his Spirit is in us, he moves us to follow God's ways in his Word.

So we don't obey the Bible because we have to, but because the Holy Spirit in you changes you so that you want to obey God, simply because you love him. The Holy Spirit changes us to become more like Jesus. Then the Bible comes alive and when God speaks to you from the Bible, you feel refreshed, encouraged and challenged. God doesn't condemn us if we mess up, pointing a bit finger at us down from the sky. But when we do wrong, he gently lets us know, encourages us to say sorry and then helps us in the future.

Being a follower of Jesus is like having a loving father who passionately cares for you and loves you completely so that you don't want to do wrong and hurt him, as it hurts you. Religions are like having a brutal and angry father who you have to obey everything he says, otherwise he's never happy or satisfied. This is why being a Christian is so unique - as we are changed, we express God's love to others, in a reflection of the way he loves us. So if you want to be more like Jesus, read the Bible and be completely open to what the Holy Spirit (who is like God's personal interpreter) has to say to you. The Bible tells us that if we draw close to God, he'll draw close to us.

### **So why is the Bible so important?**

Today we need the Bible more than ever. We really need to know the Bible because that way we will know God. That means really understanding what God has to say and what's on his heart for our own lives, our churches and the world around us. If we don't read the Bible, if we don't get the information deep on the inside of us, how will we hear God speak to us? Yes, he'll speak through others, through prayer and even in some creative ways (he once spoke to me through a DVD recorder which flashed up the message, 'please wait' when I was thinking of leaving one area to move to another). But the Bible is the main way God speaks to us, challenges and encourages us. People, books, ideas, theories all come and go. But the Bible has stood the test of time because it is God's everlasting truth! Like God, it never changes as it is God's Word. This is its power! Any attempt to change what the Bible says or to 're-interpret' in light of 'modern-day thinking' leads anyone who does that down a dark road. Many Christians have done this and their influence will shrink and they will find themselves falling away from God. The Bible doesn't change to fit what the world thinks - nor do we want to think like people around us! In fact, we and people around us should change in line with what the Bible says! Too many Christians have decided they believe something and then re-interpreted the Bible to fit what they think. This is wrong.

*Matthew 5.13-14 - "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden."*

Jesus tells us we should be 'salt' and 'light' in the world around us. How can we be if we think and act exactly the same as them? If we are, Jesus tells us that we are not good for anything except to be 'thrown out and trampled by men'. Quite a scary thought. Instead, we are encouraged that we are a light for the world, that points to Jesus.

Have you ever been out on a moor or somewhere completely dark at night? Maybe it was cloudy so you couldn't see the stars or the moon. You know that in the distance is a house but you can't see it. How can you find it? Well, if someone in that house turns on a light you will walk towards the light - as the light shows you where to go. This is the kind of life and witness that Jesus wants you to have on those who don't know him. This will be through your words, your time, your actions, your money and your love. Jesus inspires you to want to give, to love, to help, show compassion and do relevant, quality, creative things to reflect the one true God.

Let's read how the Message Bible interprets Matthew 5.13-16 and make it a statement of purpose for your life:

*"Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.*

*"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.*

## **How do I get into God's Word?**

God put you here to help transform this world and bring his Kingdom. We can only do this if we know God, know what his Kingdom looks like and relevantly apply what the Bible says. To do this, we must spend time every day reading the Bible, studying it, thinking about it, praying about what it says to us, talking about it with other Christians, reading books, listening to good speakers talk from the Bible - then put into practice what it says.

Let's list the kinds of things that will help you get to know God's Word, the Bible:

- Make a daily habit of reading your Bible. It takes around 2-4 weeks to develop a habit so go for it and stick at it. Commit to do this no matter how you feel. Find a set time, maybe in the morning or at night.
- Ask God to help you enjoy the Bible and every time you do anything, ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you.
- Reading your Bible can take different forms. Some people read the actual Bible every day. Others read Bible notes (like UCB). Some people read books with the Bible in it.

- Don't feel you have to read through the Bible from start to end - although this is a great idea when you feel ready for it. Instead, decide to read a book of the Bible - maybe choose Mark first, or Acts, or one of the more interesting Old Testament books like Genesis, or Joshua.
- Buy books that are recommended by Christian mates or youth leaders etc. Get stuck in to what God wants to say to you.
- Visit websites and read articles - or in relevant Christian magazines.
- Buy quality Christian CDs in your style - for me that's worship & hip-hop.
- Subscribe to a good podcast or videocast on the web.
- Some people do daily reading guides - or a Bible verse a day to speak out and learn.
- Maybe get a prayer guide to help you pray.
- Watch Christian TV like GOD TV, and choose good programmes where someone relevantly and clearly helps you understand the Bible.
- Reflect on what you've read, don't just read and then move on. Think, talk about and pray about what you've heard.
- When you read, listen or watch anything, check that it lines up with the Bible. Sometimes if something feels right you get a buzz inside in your spirit. If something is wrong, you may feel uncomfortable. But not always - often God makes us uncomfortable by challenging us!
- Get rid of any religious pre-conceptions, expect God to speak to you and be open to the Holy Spirit - alone.

## **The Bible Benefits!**

Jesus wants you to obey him, love him and seek after him. The world seeks after many things - the latest clothes, bands, technology. The message is that you need these things to be happy. The things themselves are cool - we all like nice gear, the latest gadgets etc and God is happy with that as long as it doesn't take his place and become what the Bible calls and 'idol'. (The Bible even tells us in Matthew 6.32 that God knows we need stuff and food, drink). An idol is anything that we put ahead of God and isn't just some statue thing that people worship - we can also worship 'stuff' but shouldn't. In Matthew 6.33, Jesus tells us that we should go after God first. The other stuff will come as we do:

*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you...*

If you want to live fulfilled, happy and provided for, this is the way to live - seeking after God. Again, the Message Bible from Matthew 6.33 gives us a different angle on Matthew 6 and may help you understand more of what God wants and is saying to you:

*What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.*

Beyond this, the Bible brings so many benefits - like wisdom, love, compassion, health, God's blessing - all so we can glorify God and help build his kingdom here on earth, as it is in heaven!

2 Timothy 3.16-17 (The Message) - *There's nothing like the written Word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.*

So the Bible tells us that by knowing the Bible (all of it, yes even the boring bits!) we'll:

- Learn the truth
- See our rebellion to God exposed so we can change
- It will correct our mistakes
- Train us to live God's way

From this, we will be ready and thoroughly equipped for every good work God has for us!

## **A Challenge**

God is looking for a generation who will love him and love his Word. It is fair that not every talk or church is really infused and soaked with the Bible and God's truth. Instead, we can forget the Bible in our attempts to be cool, or relevant. But the Bible is relevant for every day - in everything! It will give you answers and ways you never thought possible - it will unlock all your potential as you give yourself to God - it will guide you, strengthen, encourage and inspire you - it will challenge, convict (identify wrong stuff) and help you deal with it - you will get to know God and in turn be released into his plan for your life which will be more awesome than your mind can even begin to think possible..

Let's get back to the Book! :)