

9. The sWORD of God

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There are somewhere between 600,000 and 1,000,000 books published every year in the US alone, depending on which stats you believe. Many of those – perhaps as many as half or even more – are self-published. On average, they sell less than 250 copies each.

Of course, this stat does not include e-books, a.k.a. digital books which can be read only on computers or other electronic devices. E-book reading is increasing in the US, since by 2014 28% of adults had read an e-book, compared to 23% in 2013. This is increasing because 50% of Americans by 2014 had a dedicated device, either an e-reader or a tablet, compared to 30% owning a device at the end of 2013.

Speaking of many books, the Library of Congress is the largest library in the world, with more than 158 million items on approximately 838 miles of bookshelves.

Out of all these books, there is one Book stands above all else – the Bible. It is not a mere religious book, nor is it a fairy tale book as some try to push aside. Like no other books in human history, this Book has been persecuted; many people tried to destroy it; many other people, including some religious people who claimed to serve the same God as we do, tried to ban it from the public access.

The Bible was written over 2,000 years (from around 1900 B.C. till A.D. 96), over 60 generations, by more than 40 authors, on three different continents, in many different circumstances and places, in different times, different cultures, in three languages – Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, concerning scores of controversial subjects, but it speaks with one united voice.

It is the most published and popular Book ever written – far and away. Anything else is a distant, distant, second; It was the first Book translated, and has been translated into more languages than any other book in existence; It has survived the ravages of time, manual transcription, persecution and criticism; It deals with the sins and failures of its heroes in a manner quite unknown among ancient literature; The Bible has had, by far, a greater influence on culture and literature than any other book in existence.

Why? Why is it that the Bible can change millions, if not billions of people's lives unlike any other religious books? It is because the Bible is the Word of God from the Lord Himself. It is not because of any preachers, pastors, or Bible teachers, because it is simply the voice of God.

A. THE DISCERNER

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

There are so many verses in the Bible that I love, but this particular verse should be one of the top ten on my list, because it speaks about the Word of God in such a profound way. Let's start to dissect in smaller bite sizes since it is loaded with mind-boggling truths.

The Holy Scripture functions much like a mirror. I don't like to see any mirror right after I wake up in the morning. The image I see in a mirror scares snot out of me. The image should be rated as "F" for "Forbidden." Like that mirror, the Word of God shows everything, it provides a clear picture of what's going on in our lives whether we like it or not.

Does it mean that the Bible only shows the bad side of us and nothing else? Of course, not. While you are reading a portion of the Bible in your daily devotion, or while you are listening to a pastor's teaching at the church, all of a sudden, the things that you didn't understand before or had questions about became known to you. Yes, God is speaking to you through His Word. You needed someone to talk to regarding the situation that you are in. As that person speaks biblically based advice, God is speaking to you through His Word. While you are listening to a song from your Christian radio station as you drive, the song that includes Bible verses starts to minister to you and draws you near to your God. Yes, God is speaking to you through His Word.

Regardless of the vessel it is poured from, the water is the same refreshing, life-giving Word of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

Once received, the Word of God becomes an active power operating continually in the life of a believer.

This v12 started to describe the Word of God in three characteristics:

1) It is living – Throughout the centuries millions upon millions of people were affected, changed by this Word of God. The Bible is the perfectly relevant Book to all humans, regardless of one's cultural background, intelligence, language, and financial status, because it deals with the human nature and spirit.

I lost the number of times I went through the entire Bible in 28 years of walk with the Lord Jesus, but I continually find that the Word of God speaks to me in fresh and new ways to cater to each situation. As long as you seek God's way in your life through His Word, you will find what the Lord wants you to do.

Jeremiah 29:13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

2) It is powerful – Do you know any book in the world that is so inspiring enough to give life to a dead spirit of a live person? Some of you may not understand the meaning of "a dead spirit of a live person." Hear me, please. When our ancestor Adam and Eve committed their first sin of pride and disobedience, their sin contaminated the entire human race. We are sinners because we are born with the sinful nature and because the sinful choices we make in our lives. Christians had dead spirits within us until Jesus saved them through His power of resurrection, so that we can be born-again which means "born from above."

The Greek word of 'powerful' is "energes" where we get our English word "energy." The Word of God has power and life. It touches us where nothing else can reach. News articles may inform us. Novels may inspire us. Poetry may enrapture us. But only the living and powerful Word of God can transform us from a dead spirit to born-again.

3) It is sharper than any two-edged sword – This is a rather short sword. The Greek word for this ‘sword’ is “machaira” which was worn by any Roman soldier. The author of the Book of Hebrews is not suggesting that God uses His Word to slaughter His believers. Rather, the power of the Word of God is able to penetrate and expose the inner heart of a believer. Some of you may wonder why the author used the word “sword” to describe the Word of God. I believe that the author is apostle Paul or a man who was influenced by him.

Ephesians 6:17b and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

A sword is not a sword if it cannot pierce and cut through. We need to find two capabilities of this sword of God:

1) It pierces even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow.

There is no medical surgeon in the world who can do a surgery of soul and spirit with his or her scalpel. No surgical procedure can correct a rebellious spirit, a lustful heart, a heart that is filled with hatred, unforgiving spirit, or a broken heart or an addicted mind like the Word of God can. These are all spiritual problems and must be taken care of through spiritual methods by God’s Word.

Before we go to the next capability of the Word of God, I believe that we need to distinguish the difference between ‘soul’ and ‘spirit.’

Many of Christians think that while they are having soulish experience, they assume that it is a spiritual experience. We can say that soul seems to focus more on individuality regarding the inner life – often defined as the mind, the will, and the emotions. The spirit seems to focus more on supernatural contact and power in the inner life.

They go from one exciting experience to another in their charismatic church services or special events, but they never really grow spiritually, because the ministry they receive is a “soulish” and “hyped-up emotional” experience. I am not saying that all the soulish experiences are wrong. But when a believer learns the truth from the Word of God and is ministered by the Holy Spirit through His Word, that person is having a deep spiritual experience and it enriches the soul and spirit of that person.

2) It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Greek word for ‘discerner’ is “kritikos” where we get our English word “critical” and “critic.” The Word of God sees through our thoughts and intents in our hearts. Everything in our hearts is completely revealed in the Lord, who knows and sees all things. What you and I are thinking right now is known to Him. Some of you are not thinking because you are busy sleeping.

Someone with a wisecrack said this: “A philosopher is someone who always knows what to do until it happens to him.” I kinda agree with this. But our Lord knows what He is doing. Let me ask you this: since this v12 says that the Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, is it for God to discern our heart for Himself? No way, Jose. It is for us to know. For us to sin, we first have to convince ourselves that it is perfectly OK to sin and we won’t get caught and we don’t have to pay the consequence. Guess what? Every single criminal thinks exactly like that.

B. NOTHING IS HIDDEN FROM HIS SIGHT

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Ever since the first sin by Adam and Eve, mankind likes to hide from the all seeing eyes of God. Their choice of coverings of their nakedness was fig leaves which would make their bare skin very itchy. The second step they took was hiding from God. When the Lord asked them, "Where are you?" it wasn't because He couldn't find them from this silly hide-and-seek game, rather He was giving them an opportunity to repent from their sins.

Genesis 3:6-10 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

Let's ask ourselves this very important question: "Would I sin next time if I know that the Lord is right there and watches me?" What would it be our answer? It will be a resounding "NO!" We, as born-again Christians, all have the Holy Spirit lives in us and He goes wherever we go 24/7. With that reminder, let me ask ourselves again, "Would I sin next time if I know that the Lord is right there and watches me?" I don't care whether it is a ginormous sin or a small white lie, a sin is a sin. And all sins are against the Lord.

C. APPLICATIONS

1) The Bible is the perfectly relevant Book to all humans, regardless one's cultural background, intelligence, language, and financial status, because it deals with the human nature and spirit. Obey it.

2) There is no hidden sin from God's all-seeing eyes. Let's not convince ourselves that we can hide from them.