

1 “THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE WORD OF GOD”

(II Timothy 3:16a)

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable....”

I am privileged to have a large personal library. Over the years, I have been an addictive reader. I could give up many activities of the moment if I could curl up with a book in a quiet corner. Of the thousands of books in my library, I have had the great privilege of meeting a few of the authors of those books. I will never meet most authors whose books are on the shelves of my library. It is not necessary that I meet the author to benefit from the book. In fact, meeting the author might detract from the blessing received from the book!

With the Bible, however, everything is different. It is vital, *necessary*, **indispensable** to meet the Author if you are to understand the Book. Let me say it as dogmatically as it needs to be said. *You will never understand the message and intent of the Bible, nor derive from it the benefit that is there, unless you have a redeeming encounter with its Author.* And the good news is that the Author is always available for an encounter with us. He is ready, willing, and eager to meet us (John 4:23-25). In fact, Jesus said that *God actually seeks us to initiate that encounter.* Every saved person has met God in a transforming encounter. This encounter is so vast and varying in its impact that it is called by numerous descriptive words. As examples, it is called “conversion,” or “regeneration,” or “reconciliation.” In this encounter, Jesus, the Living Word of God, actually comes into the individual at the moment of true faith. When the Living Word comes in, He brings His own affinity (adherence) to the Written Word, the Bible. Suddenly, the new believer is given an insatiable hunger for the truth of the Written Word. The Jesus within Him cleaves to the Bible before Him (just as Jesus did while He was alive in His own body 2,000 years ago). The Delight Jesus had (has) for the Bible is shared with the new believer through their spiritual union.

The Bible has God as its Author, Jesus as its Subject, Man’s highest good as its manward Objective, and God’s highest glory as its Godward Objective. The Bible is God’s Library, containing His own Wisdom about each of these things—and far more. But how is it to be used? What is its practical value? I want to suggest some ten categories of value, some ten uses which the Bible is intended to have in our lives.

I. A REGENERATIVE VALUE

First, the Bible has an inherent *regenerative* value. The truth of the Book is powerful truth. The Bible communicates the “Gospel of Christ,” and the Gospel of Christ is “the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes” (Romans 1:16). This is not merely theoretical, as any truly saved person knows by experience. A saved person bears after his salvation the unmistakable marks of a power-encounter with the Living God through His Word.

Peter, who knew about regeneration through contact with the Living Word *and* the Written Word, wrote, “We are born again, not by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: But the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you” (I Peter 1:23-25). The experience of any truly born again person echoes these verses. This has happened to me! My life was instantaneously and

miraculously transformed when the Seed of Divine Truth had penetrated the “ovum” of faith within me. Following that spiritual “conception,” an incredible spiritual birth occurred. I became a “new creature” in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). Anyone who knew me in that period of my life would have seen a great difference between my “B.C.” days and my “A.D.” days. A member of my own family said (rather reluctantly, because she did not at that time want to receive Christ herself), “I’ll have to admit that there is a great difference between what you were and what you are!” The entrance of the Living Word and the power of the Written Word are the only explanation for the miracle! The Bible’s regenerative power is Divine, dynamic, distinctive and durable. In James 1:18, the half-brother of Jesus (whose life showed the same Line of Demarcation between sinner and saint—after the Resurrection of Christ), wrote, “Of His own will God begot (sired, Fathered) us through the word of truth.” Note the origin of the process within the will of God, and the enactment of the birth through the Word of God. In Luke 8:11, in His interpretation of a powerful parable about the powerful Word of God, Jesus said, “The seed is the Word of God.”

When the movie *Luther*, based on the years in Martin Luther’s life which led to the Reformation, came to Memphis, I was one of the first in line to see it. I was not disappointed! I have read several biographies of Luther and hundreds of excerpts about his life, and the movie was historically accurate and Bible-packed, though it could not cover much due to the brief length of the film. I was reminded of the gigantic place the Bible played in awakening Luther from his lostness in sin *and religion*, and in bringing him to the truth of Christ and His salvation. Luther’s adviser, John Staupitz, recognized that Luther’s agonizing struggle could only be resolved by contact with Scripture, so he engineered circumstances to place Luther in the chair of Bible at a prominent university in Germany. There he came into close and studious contact with the great salvation passages of the Bible. In particular, the Holy Spirit used several of the Psalms (Psalm 22 was especially used by the Spirit) and the great doctrinal sections of the Book of Romans. On the pages of Romans, Luther saw that “the just shall live *by faith*,” not by works or religious rituals or religious formalities. There, he met Christ and received His Gift of Eternal Life . . . and the rest is history!

One of the greatest disciple-makers in history was a man named Dawson Trotman, the founder of the international Navigators organization and the leader of the follow-up program for Billy Graham’s crusade during the last years of Trotman’s life. Let me share the account of Trotman’s conversion as it is told in Robert Foster’s book, [The Navigator](#). “Dawson’s conversion came when he was twenty—through memorizing Scripture. He had had a run-in with the law, the latest of a series, and he made a promise to God: ‘Lord, if you will get me out of this trouble with the police, I will go to church this coming Sunday.’ As Daws expressed it, ‘On the Friday night that I was arrested, Miss Mills was home looking up verses in the Bible, trying to find ten on the subject of salvation which she and Miss Thomas could give to the young people in their church to memorize. Little did she know that the boy for whom they had been praying for six years was going to memorize those verses. When Sunday came along, I decided to go to the young people’s meeting. That was a tough decision, for my favorite pool hall was just around the corner—suppose some of the fellows saw me going to church?’

“It was the opening night for a contest, and points were to be given for various church activities, among them the memorization of Bible portions. ‘Learn ten verses and get fifty points for our side,’ said this lovely little blond gal. I went home and dug out my little Testament, and in the course of a week, I had learned all ten verses. Not because it was the Bible, but because of the pretty high school girl! Then they gave me ten more verses . . . on how to grow in the Christian life.

“How they prayed all that week for me! I went back the following Sunday and got another fifty points for the Red team as well as for the little blond.’ Dawson continued with the climax of the story: ‘One unforgettable event resulted from that contest. . . I was on my way to work at the local lumber company one day with these twenty verses of Scripture stored away in my memory. I had no plans for using them, except to keep my promise and help win the award for the Reds on the following Sunday. I was walking along the highway, minding my own business, with my lunch pail in my hand. Miss Mills was still praying, and the Word of God was working through the power of the Holy Spirit, and all of a sudden that morning, as I walked along to work, one of these twenty verses came into my mind: ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life . . .’ (John 5:24). Those words, ‘hath everlasting life,’ stuck in my mind. I said, ‘O God, that wonderful—a person can have everlasting life!’ I pulled my little Testament out of my pocket and looked it up in John’s Gospel, and sure enough, there it was—‘hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.’ There for the first time I remember praying after I had grown to be a man, ‘O God, I want this everlasting life!’ In that instant, I was born again. That was the beginning. *I believed what God had said in His Word, received the gift He offered, and was instantly saved.*”

Just yesterday, I was in the new home of a dear friend. We were discussing one of the features of the new home. He said, “When we prepared to pour the concrete for the sidewalk, though the concrete was going to be four to six inches deep, the builder insisted that we use a plant-killer on the soil because of the power of seeds and plants to break through concrete.” Many, many times the Bible speaks of the powerful seed of the Word of God. Just as a seed has an awesome germinal power, the Word of God has an awesome germinal and regenerative power. Just as a seed contains the life germ of the plant-line which it represents, so the Word of God contains the powerful, explosive, germinal “life principle” of the God it represents. That power is mysterious, mighty, magnificent. The Bible’s practical value begins in any individual life with its regenerative capability. If you are a person without Christ, and you want to remain that way, you dare not expose yourself to the Word of God. Any seed of Gospel truth planted within you may become like a Divinely-timed bomb, and at any moment you could be blasted off your pedestal of pride and blown into Kingdom Come!

Each point of this study requires a practical implementation if we are to receive the full value of the Word of God into our personal experience. So the question here is, *Have you been born again?* If not, the Word of God is seeking to penetrate your dead heart at this very moment, bringing its own life (eternal life) with it. As it points you away from yourself and every other point of attention *to Jesus alone*, would you admit your sins directly to Him, realize that your sins are aggressive acts against God and require repentance (a change of mind, will and direction), and then receive the crucified and risen Christ into your heart to save and transform you? Then you will know by personal experience the regenerative power of the Word of God.

II. AN ILLUMINATIVE VALUE

Second, the Bible has a practical value for a person’s life because of its inherent *illuminative* value. It brings light to otherwise dark situations, and enables sight for those who have been “issued a new set of eyes” in their new birth. The Psalmist wrote, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). Many a pilgrim passing through the wilderness of this world (the opening phrase in Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress) has found his path aflame with heaven’s light through the illuminative power of the Word of God. The Psalmist added in the same chapter, “The entrance of Your Word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple” (Psalm 119:130). Many people, both saved

people and lost people, walk in darkness because they refuse the “entrance” of the Word of God into their dark and unbelieving hearts, or because they refuse to be “simple” enough to receive the available light. In Psalm 43:3, the Psalmist made this appeal: “O, send out Your light and Your truth, and let them lead me.” Note the combination of light and truth in his appeal. It is wise to appeal to the Holy Spirit for His light before you expose yourself to His truth. It is not enough to have the Word of God. Many people take up the Book and read—and receive no benefit at all. Why? Because they had the truth, but had no light to detect it.

How blind all men are without Divine illumination! How dark their hearts and minds are! “They walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts” (Ephesians 4:18). How desperately and tragically true! How well do I remember the moment when God “turned on the lights in my inner spirit.” My first impulse was to cry, “What is going on? Why have I not *seen this before*? Where in the world have I been?” And I instantly saw the Heaven/Hell, Life/Death, Light/Darkness, Love/*attempt to love* difference between being saved and being lost.

Furthermore, since that time, the Divine Ophthalmologist has been making adjustments on my new eyes. You see, though the Bible does have an *inherent* illuminative capacity, it still must be illumined by the Holy Spirit or that value is totally lost. *Totally* lost! Without the Holy Spirit’s illumination and teaching, the Bible itself is just another book! The Holy Spirit has often “opened the eyes of my heart (Greek, *kardia*) and flooded them with light” (Ephesians 1:18; read Ephesians 1:17-19 carefully), and the result is always amazement and enlarged understanding. Some of the Spirit’s adjustments are corrective and some are progressive (a part of the growth process), but they are definite illuminative works.

When John Robinson disembarked from the *Mayflower* at Delft Harbor on the eastern shore of this continent, in his opening remarks to his fellow travelers, he declared, “I am convinced that the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from His Holy Word.” That light will never ceasing breaking forth upon the “simple” (single-minded) believer who is willing to receive and obey it.

In a recent book entitled The Closing of the American Mind, University of Chicago professor Allan Bloom describes how his “uneducated” grandparents lived on a wise and noble level because of the practical influence of the Bible on their daily experience. Bloom says, “*I do not believe that my generation, my cousins who have been educated in the American way, all of whom are M. D.s or Ph.D.s, have any comparable learning.* When they talk about heaven and earth, the relations between men and women, parents and children, the human condition, I hear nothing but cliches, superficialities, the material of satire. I am not saying anything so trite as that life is fuller when people have myths to live by. I mean rather that *a life based on the Book is closer to the truth, that it provides the material for deeper research in and access to the real nature of things.*” (The italics in this paragraph are mine, not the authors)

How do we reach the practical implementation of this point? We simply read the Bible regularly, all the while dependently asking God to “open the eyes of our hearts and flood them with light” (Ephesians 1:18). We pray with David, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Psalm 119:18). *What you see in God’s Word when this occurs is almost indescribable.*

III. A NUTRITIVE VALUE

Third, the Bible has an inherent *nutritive* value for the hungry soul. It contains “the daily minimum requirement of (spiritual) vitamins and minerals” as well as the very “gourmets of grace” for the person who will come to the Lord’s table and allow the Host to serve His meal. Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will eat with him, *and he with Me*” (Revelation 3:20). I have been studying the Word of God voraciously for over fifty years (!), and I can tell you that no chef on earth can prepare a physical meal that compares with the food of the Word of God! No kitchen table can carry food (no matter who prepares it!) such as the Word of God presents to nourish the soul. Jesus spoke a universal law when He said, “Man (generic man and each individual man) lives not (he *is dead* without this food) by bread alone, but *by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4). Jesus Himself said, “I have meat that you don’t know about; my meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). Don’t miss the obvious meaning of such statements. To hear and heed the Word of God is to have life, healthy, maturing life, but to fail to hear and heed the Word of God is to starve your true self, the self God intended, to death. What a shock it will be for sense-oriented, self-oriented people to come to the end of the trail and find that they have literally starved the spirit, the eternal dimension of their existence, to death.

Peter addressed the new believer in Christ with this counsel, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby” (I Peter 2:2). Again, the implication is clear. For a new Christian to regularly take in the milk of the Word is to grow; for him to fail to do so is for him to be stalemated in a pitiful prolonged infancy.

Jeremiah gave personal testimony to the nutritive value of the Word of God when he said to God, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jeremiah 15:16). Jesus suggested the same idea when He said, “Except a man eat My flesh and drink My blood, he has no life in him” (John 6). Faith is defined as an assimilation of the very Person of Christ that is like the eating of physical food. When food is ingested, digested and assimilated into the body, it is translated in the inner organism into every necessity that is negotiable. The same is spiritually (actually) true of the believer’s intake of the Word of God. When received, the truth is assimilated into the believer’s total life and shows up through him as an incarnation of the very life of God. Job 23:12 echoes the same truth: “I have esteemed the words of Your mouth to be more than my necessary food.” In my values system, Job declares, it is more important to devour the Word of God than to eat a meal. Any spiritual believer will echo and endorse his testimony.

No person reading these words has a normal and deliberate intention to live on earth a single day without the regular eating of meals. In the same way, a Christian should determine that he will not live another day on earth, even a single day, without feeding and nourishing his inner life on the balanced nutrition of the Word of God.

The practical implementation of this point: to receive nutritional value from any food requires appetite, appropriation and assimilation. A person who has no appetite is (at best) unhealthy. His appetite brings him to appropriate (ingest) the food. Then his body assimilates (digests and disperses) the food throughout its parts. A person who has no appetite for the Word of God is either an unsaved sinner or an unhealthy Christian, and both of these are seriously tragic conditions. A Christian who does not ingest substantial amounts of the food of the Word on a regular basis is inviting a spiritually diseased life. The same steps are followed spiritually in receiving the nutritive value of the Word of God that are followed physically in benefiting from daily food.

IV. A REMUNERATIVE VALUE

Fourth, the Bible has an inherent *remunerative* value for the believer who uses it with a devotional spirit on a regular basis. An old hymn says,

“Holy Bible, Book Divine,
Precious treasure, Thou art mine.”

Every child of God who walks in the Spirit and lives in the Word will concur that the Bible is indeed a “precious treasure.” It contains vast riches of spiritual wealth, and it will make that person fabulously rich who knows how to exploit its riches. The Psalmists who wrote one of the great devotional treasuries of Scripture, the hymnbook of the Bible, wrote, “The Law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” (Psalm 119:72). Ponder that evaluation carefully. It would be better, the verse says, to be impoverished in the things the world counts valuable and to be rich in the things the world disregards, because those riches of God are better than all the wealth the world may offer. David again said, “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9). Though it may be made the instrument of either good or evil, gold has no inherent moral value in itself. However, the revelation of God in His Word does have inherent moral value. That immeasurable value is never withheld when a sensitive, seeking soul comes to the Word of God to meet God and receive His treasure trove of truth.

Again, the Psalmist wrote, “I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that finds great spoil.” This is far more true today than it was when he wrote those words. The Big Battles of time and eternity have now been fought and won, and now we open the Book to learn what was won for us through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. Edwin Hodder summarized this dimension when he wrote,

“Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine,
And jewels rich and rare
Are hidden in its mighty depths,
For every searcher there.”

Be wise, Christian, and go deep into the “mine” of the Word of God, asking God to help you detect the “jewels rich and rare (that) are hidden in its mighty depths.” Determine to be a spiritual “searcher” of the mine, and God will fill your life with a vast inventory of spiritual wealth. The Bible will more than repay the effort of any seeker who wants to meet God on its pages. It has a remunerative value.

Let me give one practical outcome of the remunerative value of the Word of God. Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:32). This positive statement has been proven true in the lives of multitudes of spiritual Christians. However, I must add that the flip side of that statement is also true. If you do not know the truth that Christ *is* and the truth that He *tells* and *endorses* in the Bible, you are in bondage to ignorance (and this has nothing whatsoever to do with the number of academic degrees that might be attached to your name). Nothing on earth is more pathetic than to see a “smart” person comfortable in his academic achievement, and pitifully blind to and ignorant of the world of eternal reality.

Now, the practical implementation of this point: you *read* the Word of God in order to *recognize* and *realize* the value it contains and exposes, then you *receive* by faith all the riches it makes known. For example, the book of Ephesians could be viewed as an itemized account of the Christian's inventory. It records the Christian's "spiritual bank account." As you read it, you realize that *all has been given to me because I am in Christ*. But then the question arises, *But how much have I taken of that which has been given?* When I probe these question and their answers, I begin to partake of the remunerative value of the Word of God.

V. A REFLECTIVE VALUE

Fifth, the Bible has an inherent *reflective* value. In a marvelous passage, James the half-brother of Jesus, shows the reflective value of the Word of God. "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass (literally, 'mirror'): For he beholds himself, and goes his way, and immediately forgets what manner of man he was. But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:22-25). What role does the Bible play as a reflector?

First, when we look into the Bible, we see the reflection of *ourselves as God sees us*. The Bible paints our portrait, "warts and all." It points out the devastating truth of our depravity and sinfulness, and it withholds none of the awful truth. Scottish writer R. E. O. White said, "The mirror of the Word is painfully clear." Donald Barnhouse said, "The only safe place to look is in the Word of God, which reflects all things as they are." Every person who has seen the terrible truth about himself on the pages of the Word of God will agree with that assessment of himself. One man said, "The Bible is not such a book as an unaided man *would* have written if he *could*, or *could* have written even if he *would*." Nobody naturally tends to rush to a spot where the horrible darkness of his twisted inner life is exposed. However, when the Spirit breathes upon the Word and the Word shows the sinner his sins, he knows that the picture of him reflected in the Word is accurate.

But the Bible does not merely reflect the accurate picture of the sinner back to himself as he reads, it also reflects the image of Jesus to us as we read it in the Spirit. The Bible not only reflects ourselves as God sees us, it also reflects *Jesus as God sees Him*. In one of the great formula verses of the Bible, II Corinthians 3:18 says, "We all, having had our faces unveiled, and beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (Jesus), are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This is one of the primary purposes of the Bible—to allow us to clearly see Jesus. This verse tells us that we must have all impediments removed from our inner eyes and then we must read the Word of God to gaze upon Jesus. F. B. Meyer, the British Baptist pastor said, "Christian, for every look you take at yourself, take at least ten looks at Jesus." God knows that this rule holds in human life: what you look at longingly, lovingly, and lastingly, you will become like. You will become what you behold; you will be what you see. Since the goal of the Christian life is to be like Christ, He must be regularly seen with the eyes of your inner spirit. This happens as you spiritually read the Word of God. Here is the formula: The child of God looks into the Word of God and sees the Son of God, and the Spirit of God etches the character likeness of the Son of God upon the child of God. This is one of the means by which the Christian is made like Christ. The Bible has a reflective value.

One of the discipleship groups I meet with on a regular basis has begun studying with me John Bunyan's classic allegory, Pilgrim's Progress. As we were discussing the characters of the book, I gave

them this suggestion: “Take these personality pictures and carry them like a candle down into your own heart and let God search your inner being with the light they provide—and you likely will come out chastened and changed.” You can do the same thing with the reflective Word of God. Take it in hand and look at it as a mirror which will realistically expose you to yourself, then will point you away from yourself to look at Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 says, “Look away from (*aphorao*) everything else and unto Jesus.” This is not to be a casual glance; it is rather to be a steady gaze; as you so look, you will experience the reflective value of the Word of God.

How do I practically implement the reflective value of the Word of God in my life? Well, how does one use a mirror? Does he examine the mirror merely to admire and appreciate *it*? No, he uses the mirror to reflect the desired object. Even so, the purpose of the Bible is to reflect a true image of yourself back to you and to reflect a true likeness of Jesus to you. Let the Bible show you yourself as you are, then show Jesus to you as the object of your trust. As you do so, you will experience the reflective value of the Word of God.

VI. A CURATIVE VALUE

Sixth, the Bible has an inherent *curative* value. It is able to heal spiritual diseases and cure the multitudes of spiritual ailments that saints are subject to. Psalm 107:20 says, “God sent His Word, and healed them.” Every Christian could borrow these words as part of his own testimony. The Bible has been called “God’s Medical Book.” The regular taking of this medicine will heal many a diseased part of your life, and will produce great health in your life.

Charles Spurgeon spoke truly when he said, “The medicine that is to reach your case is somewhere between the covers of this book.” Some years ago, I recommended to a new Christian a monthly devotional booklet edited by Richard De Haan and published and distributed by Radio Bible Class, entitled “Our Daily Bread.” It is sub-titled “The daily meditation book.” However, when I sent the note, I read it a final time before dispatching it in the mail. I discovered that I had misspelled one word by just one letter, but what an insight was given by the mistake! I had called it “the daily *medication* book.” The Bible is exactly that, and it should be taken as regularly and faithfully as prescribed medication. It will cure many a spreading disease that is operating through the flesh, and it will prevent many a disease which would beset us if we did not have the health-giving medicine of the Word.

How do we implement the curative value of the Word of God? Very simply, we take it in big daily doses. We may never fully know at the time the value of such consumption of the Word, but we will clearly see it one day.

VII. A COMBATIVE VALUE

Seventh, the Bible has an inherent *combative* value. It is inherently valuable for both offense and defense in spiritual warfare. It is a bulwark of defense against the heavy assaults of Satan and his cohorts, and it is one of the two chief weapons for mounting the spiritual offensive that Christians are to engage in. One of my first Bibles had in the flyleaf this written statement: “Either this Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book,” and this rule has proven true in over fifty years of being a Christian. The Bible is our best line of defense against the attacks of temptation and sin.

Perhaps the most important and instructive single passage on spiritual warfare in all the Bible is the passage in Paul's letter to the Ephesians where he lists "the whole armor of God" which the Christian is to daily "put on" in order to engage in spiritual warfare. At least six weapons are listed, and one of them is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). Of the weapons listed, this "sword" is the only one which we can touch with our hands and see with our eyes. The other weapons are either analogies or they are altogether invisible. The Bible is visible and tangible. We have no greater weapon for both defense and warfare in this desperately serious warfare than "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

Psalms 91:4 says, "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler." Hebrews 4:12 says, "The Word of God is quick (living) and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a discernor ('critic') of the thoughts and intents of the heart." You might say that one edge of this mighty "sword of the Spirit" is for offensive battle, and the other is for defensive purposes. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, He defended Himself – and us—by using the sword of the Spirit. When He ministered with His men, He maintained the Gospel offensive by regularly employing this sword in battling the enemies of man and of God.

Years ago, every edition of *Reader's Digest* carried an article designed to help readers enlarge their vocabularies and communicating ability. The title of the article was, "It Pays to Increase Your Word Power." Christian, *it pays gigantic dividends to increase your WORD power!* The Bible will prove to be a fortress against the intrusion of evil and a force for the advance of good to the person who implements and incarnates it in his daily life.

How to implement the Bible's combative value? Make the pledge of David your daily testimony: "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Hide the Word in your heart through daily study, meditation and memorization, and then take the truths gained as your sword for defensive and offensive purposes.

VIII. A PRODUCTIVE VALUE

Eighth, the Bible has an inherent *productive* value. In Deuteronomy 32:2, God said, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." Throughout the Bible, in every reference to spiritual seed-sowing, harvesting, and bearing fruit, the Bible is the background means of productivity. Any study of the great "sowing" parables of Jesus will reveal that "the seed is the Word of God" (Luke 8:11). We are told that "he who sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (II Corinthians 9:6). Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples" (John 15:8). These statements are only brief extracts from an abundance of references to God's design that each of His children plant the seed of His Word in the soil of men's hearts wherever they are and thus become participants in the miracle of His spiritual harvest.

Furthermore, it must be noted that all the references to sowing and reaping in the Bible indicate that God intends each of His children to be involved in the process of *spiritual multiplication*. Every seed carries within itself the life-germ of limitless future productivity and multiplication. As long as the process of sowing is pursued with the product of each harvest, vastly enlarging future crops are

guaranteed. To put it simply, every wise farmer will extract seeds from the present harvest for future planting, and each of those seeds will multiply a volume far larger than itself. Here we see the genius of Jesus in commanding each believer to be a disciple-maker. Each believer is thus himself a seed (see Matthew 13:38), and must disciple others who also become seeds. Each believer should sow himself in the lives of others, and lead them to do the same thing. This is the process of hands-on, close-up, disciple building—the investment of your life and the truth you know into the lives of others for the sake of Total World Impact. What an assignment, what a majestic involvement, for each Christian! And the result is guaranteed! In Isaiah 55:10-11, God promised, “As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Take the seed of Scripture, Christian, and scatter it over waiting hearts. The fields are white unto the harvest (John 4:35).

How do we implement the productive power of the Word of God in our daily lives? First, be sure that the seeds of the Word are daily sown on the receptive, good soil of your own heart. Someone wisely said, “*Prayer is our sowing seeds on God’s heart, but the Bible is God sowing seeds on our hearts.*” Allow Him to fulfill His will for you by daily sprinkling His seeds of truth over the fertile soil of your heart. Then, sow the truth received on as many other hearts as are reachable. I think of it this way:

Objective:
To
Help
Every
Reachable
Soul

As you receive the seed in the soil of your own heart, and sow it “bountifully” upon the soil of other hearts, you will join the Holy Spirit in God’s great harvest of souls. Thus you will prove the productive power of the Word of God.

IX. A COMPULSIVE VALUE

Ninth, the Word of God has an inherent *compulsive* value. When loosed in the human mind and heart, and when mixed there with faith (see Hebrews 4:2), the truth of Scripture has a most compelling power. A discouraged and disillusioned prophet named Jeremiah discovered this compelling power at the heart of his ministry. Tempted to quit the ministry and defect from his prophetic calling, he discovered that such a response was not as easy as it might seem. In Jeremiah 20:8-9, he wrote, “The Word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His Name. But His Word was like a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forebearing, and could not stay.” I was faced with the ostracisms and persecutions of my society, Jeremiah said, on a daily basis. I tried to quit preaching and teaching in the Name of the God who had called me to speak for Him. But when I vowed to be silent, I discovered that I had a raging fire dammed up in my breast which had to be released. I discovered that my silence was far more wearying than the problems I faced, and I could not stop speaking in His Name. This, dear friend, is an example of the compelling power of the Word of God. Every true believer and minister of God has experienced the same compulsion that Jeremiah spoke about.

Samuel Chadwick, a preacher of a past generation of our history, illustrated this power in this picturesque account. “On the river yesterday, I saw a little steamer, fighting against a strong headwind. Unaided, the boat would have been at the mercy of the wind, but it was actually making stubborn and persistent headway—because a burning fire was shut up in its heart. So it is with the true man of God.”

Hear an echo of the same truth from another prophet: “The lion has roared, who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?” (Amos 4:8). Here again is a testimony to the compelling power of the Word of God.

Now, let me direct you to the New Testament and to one of Paul’s letters for a final testimony of the compelling power of the Word of God. Paul wrote, “Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory (boast) of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel. For if I do this thing willingly (that is, my motive is love), I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation (‘stewardship,’ in which every item of the service is scrutinized legally) of the Gospel is committed unto me” (I Corinthians 9:16).

To implement this point in your life, just live with a tender heart before the Word of God, maintain regular contact with it by daily reading and study, and the Word will exert its own compulsive force.

X. A SUPERLATIVE VALUE

Finally, I will mention a *superlative* value of the Word of God. This note is struck with regularity in the devotional parts of the Bible. David spoke for millions of transformed people when he said, “My heart stands in awe of Thy Word.” May God pity the arrogant self-sufficiency of the natural man’s sinful heart that forces him to totally miss the superlative glory of the Word of God. To that pitiable and pitiful man (however able or academic or affluent), the vast “parallel world of reality” is replaced by the temporary baubles and bubbles of sensory life. Jesus said that he may “gain the whole world” and yet “lose his own soul” (his true identity as a God-related human being, his true destiny with God forever). His *capax Dei* (“capacity for God”) is left empty, while he tries to fill it with trifles and trinkets, or with ideas and empty philosophies. Far too soon, he will see what he has missed—and despair over the loss.

In Psalm 138:2, David acknowledged the superlative nature of the Word of God when he said to God, “Thou has magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name.” That is, there is simply nothing higher in life as we experience it than the Word of God and the truth He brings to us through it. I declare this to be absolutely true—in my experience, in my relationship with God, in my daily life. When I “walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, what a glory He sheds on my way!” When I don’t do so, how dry-as-dust is everything I think and do, and how unfulfilling is the “best” activity.

Thomas Carlyle spoke for those who have touched the live current of the Spirit’s power in the Bible and have been transformed by the truth of the Word of God attended by the great power of the living Holy Spirit. Carlyle simply said, “There never was a Book like the Bible, and there never will be another.” Dear Spirit of God, thank You for the superlative power of the Book You wrote for us, and thank You for Your willingness to attend our minds and hearts today as we open it to hear from You.

About 1600 years ago, Aurelius Augustine, a renegade sinner, heard a young child behind a hedge cry out the words, “Take up and read! Take up and read!” The Spirit of God empowered the child’s challenge in the sinner’s mind, and he went into the nearby house, picked up a Bible as an “accident of grace,” “just happened” to open it to the thirteenth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans, where he read,

“Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh (the drives of the self-life), to fulfill the lusts thereof.” Directed by the Holy Spirit and attended by His power and grace, Augustine repented of his terrible sins, clothed himself by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and received His Covering of Righteousness, and was instantly saved. Again, the rest is history . . .

Long ago, Thomas a Kempis said, “I am never happier than when I am in a nook with The Book.” Dear friend, why don’t you seek a quiet “nook” and spend some time in The Book, and prove the truth of what you have been reading?