

## The Bible

The Bible contains writings that were carved in stone, pressed into clay, and penned onto papyrus or parchment between 1900 and 3500 years ago. So, what good is a Bible? Or what use can a Bible be? Is it relevant today? The short answer is: The Bible informs, equips, and encourages God's people. God, who is eternal and does not change, has provided a book that serves His purpose throughout time.

Much of the Old Testament is history and documents God's work in creation, world affairs, and teaching humans how to live in a hostile world. Parents passed the knowledge orally to their children for many decades. When finally written, it became the standard of knowledge and faith in God. The New Testament is a written account of Christ's life, written by eyewitnesses to the events. It also contains the final teachings from God that are to be circulated to all people on earth. There are letters included that explain the finer points of Christ's teaching and how to become a child of God.

The Bible reveals much more than facts. From the first verse (Genesis 1:1) to the final verse (Revelation 22:21), the Bible reveals God's nature in particulars about Him, His actions, and the actions of His people. The prayers and songs in the Psalms show God's mercy and love. God's holiness and justice are displayed in the accounts of Jerusalem's destruction by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The life and teachings of Jesus reveal God's faithfulness and forgiveness. Every portion of the Bible increases a person's understanding of both one's self and God.

Paul states the purpose of the Bible in a letter addressed to Timothy. *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Paul's words help explain the full capability of the Bible to inform, equip, and encourage God's children. It describes the "Whole Armor" provided to protect and defend the saints (Ephesians 6:10-20). As a gift from God, the Bible has no rival. Therefore, we have a responsibility to read, study, and understand the words and teaching in the Bible (Romans 15:4). Then, with that understanding, we are obligated to reshape our lives to conform to the example of His Son and show that example to the world (Ephesians 2:10).

Therefore, the Bible is a book to be studied. Not just read, but to be digested and applied to the student's daily life. God described the learning of His word to Ezekiel this way: *"Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel"* (Ezekiel 3:1). John also uses this analogy in the final book of the Bible. *"So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, 'Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey'"* (Revelation 10:9).

Throughout the Bible, there are examples of godly people hearing God's word, then studying and meditating on it. The man Job probably lived around 2000 B.C. He did not have the benefit of the entire Bible as we do. But he said this of God's word. *"My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside. 'I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food'"* (Job 23:10-12). One thousand years later, King David said, *"They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward"* (Psalms 19:10-11). *"The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of gold and silver pieces"* (Psalms 119:72).

David also wrote of the valuable knowledge he obtained from God's word. *"Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts"* (Psalms 119:98-100). *"From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path"* (Psalms 119:104-105).

When he wrote to the church in Colossae, Paul said that he and those with him prayed that the brethren there would be filled with the knowledge of God's will. Further, with that knowledge they would *"please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God"* (Colossians 1:9-10). It is interesting to note that Paul never spoke in Colossae. Every word they received came to them by letter or messenger. That knowledge is available to us today through our Bible. The Bible can fill us with the same knowledge and understanding Paul desired for the Christians at Colossae. We can read, meditate on, and study the Bible with others. It is bound together in one volume, making our reading and study much more convenient. Let us take full advantage of every opportunity to study it.