

ONLINE 9

LIVING AND ACTIVE: THE POWER OF THE BIBLE

What's been your experience of reading the Bible?
What excites you about it? What do you find difficult?

The Bible is absolutely fundamental to Christianity. It's the creator's book to his creatures about himself and his creation. Apart from God's Word, the deepest and most important questions about our lives remain unanswered. In 2 TIMOTHY 3v16 Paul tells us that "All Scripture is God-breathed..."

What does it mean for all scripture to be "God-breathed"? Why is this important?

God has given us the Bible so we can get to know him better and live the life he created us for:

PSALM 19 v 7-11 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. 10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. 11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

What adjectives are used to describe God's words?

What effect does his Word have on us? (What verbs are used?)

How does the word have these effects?

Have you experienced these things in your life?

A Christian group called the Navigators use the simple illustration of a hand to help us think through how we can get to grips with God's Word. The aim is not simply to know what the Bible says, but to have it shape our lives, our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, relationships and actions. As we hear, read, study, memorise and meditate on the Bible, God works deeply in us and begins to bring our life into line with his.



The Bible is not just a work of philosophy or a set of good ideas, but the very words of God to the world. Our response to God's Word accurately reflects our response to God himself; whether we take it seriously and seek to understand and obey it, or whether we pay it lip service and ignore its blueprint for living.

MATTHEW 7:21-29 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' 24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." 28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

v 21-23

What might cause us to suspect these people are true followers of Jesus?

What marks them out as fake followers?

What is your reaction to these verses?

v 24-27

What does building the house represent?

What do the wise and foolish builders have in common?

What distinguishes them?

What are the consequences?

Where does this challenge you?

How can we evaluate how effectively we're putting into practice what God says?

v 28-29

Why does Jesus' teaching have authority?

How do you experience this in your life?

There are four dimensions for us to really get to grips with the Bible and apply it. The order may vary, but ultimately we should look to engage with all four:

HEAR / READ

We find out what God says

UNDERSTAND

We figure out what God means and how it makes sense

BELIEVE

We are deeply convinced by the truth and goodness of what God says

OBEY

We work out how to put what God has said into practise and do it

In our lives, how can we recognise the difference between understanding, believing and obeying God's word?



Until we've obeyed God's word, we're still foolish builders. As you come to read the Bible, pray that God would help you understand it, believe it and embrace what he says through it. Read a passage and then re-read it slowly, reflecting on the meaning of what you've read. As you read, consider the following questions:

Do I clearly understand what this passage is teaching? How does it relate to me? Is it a reality in my life? If not, how can it become so?

Why is the Bible vital for us to grow as a disciple?
How can we make it part of our everyday life?

