

Holy Scripture

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[0:00] All scripture is breathed out by God. The Bible is still the best-selling book in the world.

! The Bible is still the best-selling book in the world. Millions of copies of the Bible are sold every day in a growing number of languages. The Bible, more than any other book in the history of the world, has the ability to change lives for the better.

Today is our Bible Reading Sunday, where we want to equip you to read the Bible for yourself and to let it change you the way it's changing millions of others in our world today.

More accurately, our lives are not changed by reading a book. Our lives are changed by the God who reveals himself in the pages of this book.

The God of love and of grace and of power and of justice The God who demonstrates his love for us in this, while we were still sinners, he sent his Son to die for us.

[1:08] This book is the Word of God. David Sousey is a famous actor, famous for his role as Hercule Parrrault in the long-running detective series with the same name.

Brought up with no religious beliefs at all, while staying in a hotel room, Sousey picked up a Gideon's Bible which had been placed in his bedside cabinet and started reading Romans chapter 8.

By the end of the evening, Sousey was a changed man. He'd become a Christian and has since fulfilled his ambition to make an audio recording of the whole Bible.

So next time you're watching Poirot on ITV3 during the day, he's a Christian. The Bible changed Sousey's life. It can change yours also.

Well, here in 2 Timothy 3, 16-17, and some of the last words Paul ever wrote, he was a very old man when he wrote these words, he says, All Scripture is breathed out by God, and so on.

[2:25] Well, this evening, led by Evan, we want to be more practical and show how we can use the Bible in our daily lives. This morning, we want to examine the power of God in the Bible.

And we want to do so by asking three basic questions. What is the Bible? What does the Bible do? And what is the Bible for?

So first question, what is the Bible? What is the Bible? The Apostle says, All Scripture is breathed out by God.

Traditionally, we spoke of the Bible being inspired. And what we meant by that was, the whole of the Bible, from beginning to end, was from God.

Now, we still use the word inspired, although in today's English, inspired has kind of changed its meaning. It means something different. We talk of someone's performance in a play, or a film, as being inspired, in terms of it being brilliant.

[3:27] Well, in that sense, of course, the Bible is inspired. It is the most majestic, heavenly book ever to have been written. It's a true work of art. Its brilliant phraseology has shaped our language.

Unwittingly, even the most ardent atheists use its phrases, like, the writing's on the wall. Turn the other cheek.

Let him who's without sin cast the first stone. They're just three examples. So, in this sense, the Bible is inspired. It's brilliant. But it's inspired in a whole other sense, except the opposite of what we might think.

Everyone here is breathing, and I'm very grateful for that. The correct language for breathing in is inspiration.

When we inspire, we take air from outside into our bodies. The opposite movement is expiration. [4:32] When we expel air from inside our bodies to the outside, we breathe in, inspiration. We breathe out, expiration, and the process is called respiration.

Of the two, 2 Timothy 3.16 tells us that God breathed out the Bible. Of course, we want to retain the word inspiration, but more accurately, the Bible is expired, breathed out by God.

He breathed it out. The movement is from within him to outside him, not outside him to inside. God breathed out, and what he breathed out wasn't wind, but word.

This is where the Bible comes from, from inside God himself. Thankfully, I've never been breathalyzed by the police. I believe, though, what happens is that you blow into a machine which tells you how much alcohol is in your system.

You expire, and what's inside you comes out. When God breathed out, he expired word, and that word is the Bible, the word of God.

[5:55] He breathed out what was inside him, his love, his grace, his justice, his righteousness, his compassion, his tenderness, and revealed his loving heart to us.

Now, God did not dictate the Bible. He spoke through living people. He inspired them to record what he expired to them.

We talk about organic inspiration, which means, although the message is the same, each writer of Scripture expresses himself in a slightly different way. John is not Jeremiah, and Moses is not Matthew.

So, as well, therefore, as the Bible being a divine book, it's also very human. It wasn't AI generated. It wasn't the ruminations of a far-off deity.

It is the heart of God breathing out through the words of common human beings. So, what is the Bible? It is the breath of God.

[7:04] And for that reason, the Bible gives life. We read that in the very beginning, God breathed into the nostrils of the first man, Adam, and he became a living being. What classifies something as being alive is that it breathes, it respire, it has the breath of life in it.

When someone has a heart attack, first aiders will immediately administer CPR. They'll try and get the breath of life back into that person. Breath is life, and life is breath.

By definition, a man who is not breathing is not alive. In his expiration of scripture, God is not merely breathing out word, but by and through that word, he is giving life to the dead.

Now, we're familiar with defibrillation. I can never say that word. Brora, the next village to where I'm from, where Ben Campbell's from, don't have the frib, someone say it for me please.

I can't say it. They don't have that because in southern we can't say that word. They have heart start machines, which is a far better term, I think. God's word, the Bible is a spiritual heart start machine.

[8:29] When the Bible is read, God is breathing life into us, just like he did to the first man breathing life into his nostrils. So when the Bible is read, God is breathing life into our hearts through our ears and we become living beings.

At its most basic level, every aspect of our lives depends upon God, physical, material, social, but we're speaking here about an aspect of life which is very much ignored, our spiritual lives.

God is a spirit and the words he speaks are spirit and life. And they speak not just to our minds and to our hearts, but in a most mysterious way. This book gives life to your spirit.

Without this book there is no life. We are spiritually dead. So in 1 Peter 1.23 we read of how Peter came to life.

You have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God. So the Bible comes from within God.

[9:39] He breathes out his inner life as word and that word gives life to those who are spiritually dead because of their sin. So ordinarily no Bible no life no word no spiritual life at all.

You'll notice something else. Paul says all scripture is breathed out by God. All of it. Not part of it. Not just the bits we like but not the bits we don't.

Not just the bits we understand but not the bits we don't. all scripture from Genesis to Revelation from beginning to end and everything in between 2nd Chronicles and Jeremiah it's all being breathed out by God.

It's important to him and therefore it must be important to us. That's why it's important that we make it that aim to be familiar with the whole Bible and not just parts. Of course we can have our more favorite and less favorite parts.

We can find some parts more useful than other parts. But the whole Bible is God's word to us and God's life for us. The Bible is a book like no other.

[10:51] It's not merely composed of words. It is God's word. It's not a book of dead writings. It's a book which brings life. That's how important it is.

More precious than gold. Second question. What does the Bible do? What does the Bible do? Well, every book consists of writing on a page unless you're into manga.

But that book is, that book is, the book that has no writing is no more alive than a rock or a stone.

But the Bible is altogether different. The Bible is alive because its author is alive and the Holy Spirit of God makes it live to us.

As the writer of Hebrews says, the word of God is living and active. When I hold this Bible in my hand, it's quite heavy, but for all that's print on paper, this book is alive.

But what does the Bible do? Now, I've seen people use Bibles as ornaments in their bookshelves, taking pride of place beside an encyclopedia or a dictionary.

[12:04] I've seen them use it as a kind of good luck charm. I've even seen people use Bibles as kind of like putting it under the leg of a table just to make sure the table stays in the letter.

The apostle Paul tells us it's a useful book, it's profitable. After doing some things, we say of them, well, that's a waste of time. But we can never say that about the Bible.

Never. We're all interested in making a profit, right? We can read many books and be the loser for reading them, but we're never losers for reading the Bible.

As being increasingly realized, especially by Gen Z's, reading the Bible is the way to get the most out of life. The Bible is profitable not as an ornament of a bookshelf, not as a good luck charm or something to prop up a table with a gammy leg.

The Bible tells us that as the inspired word of God, it's useful in four areas, each of which is profitable for us and enriches our lives. First, the word of God is profitable for teaching.

[13:11] Teaching. Human beings, we're called Homo sapien, the man who knows, but how little we really know. We scarce know ourselves, let alone anything about God.

In our social media dominated world, what we know about others is limited to what they choose to show us about themselves. It's always the good bits by the way, never the bad. How ignorant we are of ourselves, the self others see in us, the self God sees.

We think we're basically okay people. When was the last time we saw ourselves the way God sees us? When was the last time we submitted ourselves to a spiritual x-ray examination?

creation? If we did, we'd recognize that none of us are basically okay. From the least to the greatest, we're all sinful men and women who have fallen short of the glory of God.

The Bible is like a mirror showing us our true selves. But if we're ignorant of ourselves, how much more ignorant are we of God? If we think of him at all, we cast him in our own image.

[14:20] An old man with a grey beard, of no relevance to our lives. Without the Bible, you know, we'd be scrabbling about in the darkness making gods out of bits of wood and out of bits of stone and worshipping them as though they meant anything at all.

But in the Bible, God teaches us about himself. He reveals himself to us and what he supremely reveals to us is that he's the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's in Jesus that we're taught who God is and what God is like. Jesus says of the Bible, these are the scriptures that testify and bear witness to me.

The Bible tells us his story, reveals his character. And what a character that is. Jesus, the greatest person to ever live. But more than that, Jesus, our Savior from sin and guilt, the Bible tells us that Jesus loved us and gave himself for us.

The Bible tells us that he was the sacrifice for our sin. He bore the punishment our sin deserves so that through faith in him we can be saved. The Apostle Paul says that in the previous verse, 2 Timothy 3.15.

[15:31] You have been acquainted with the sacred writings, that is the Old Testament, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. There are certain things we can be taught which are useless.

There are other things which can change the world for us. And this is the greatest thing of all. We have a Savior Jesus Christ and he died for us that we might no longer live for ourselves but for him. Second way in which the Bible enriches our lives and is profitable is for reproof. Reproof. Nobody likes being reproofed because to be reproofed means to be told that you're wrong.

Unless we're told we're doing something wrong, we'll never be able to do what's right. The Bible tells us that it's like a mirror. A mirror shows us those bits of our appearance that don't look right. So I try to shave in a mirror to avoid missing bits on my face. In the same way, the Bible shows us those areas of our lives where we're falling short of the standard of Christ-likeness.

[16:47] You see, it's all too easy to take our standards of thought and behavior from the world around us. Our society tells us it's okay to do anything we want just as long as it makes us happy, as long as we're not hurting anybody.

It's okay. But what of our thoughts and actions are grieving God? And what of our thoughts and actions are hurting ourselves?

us. The Holy Spirit uses the Bible to reprove us, to convict us. And one of the ways he does that is to show us the wrong ways in which we think about God.

That's probably the most important ways he does it. The harsh views we have of God, or the over liberal views we have of God.

If we don't know what we're doing wrong, how will we ever know how to do right? The third way in which the Bible enriches our lives and is profitable is for correction.

[17:49] If reproof is showing us what we're thinking and doing wrong, correction is showing us how to do what's right. It's one thing to be told that what we're doing is wrong, it's another thing to be told how to do the right thing.

That's what the Bible does. Most often through the commands and examples of Christ, the Bible shows us how to do right things. For example, just as Evan pointed this morning, to us.

Paul tells us in another place, forgive one another just as God and Christ has forgiven you. The Bible doesn't just tell us off.

The Bible gives us a Christ-centered example of how to forgive. Christ's forgiveness of us was costly and self-sacrificial. He forgave us when we didn't deserve to be forgiven.

And in the same way, we need to learn to forgive one another. how many conflicts in the world would end like that if people could learn to forgive one another? If we want to learn to live in a way that pleases God, we need the Bible.

[18:52] And then fourthly, the Bible's profitable and enriches our lives by training us in righteousness. Training us in righteousness.

It goes without saying that every Christian begins at the beginning. Just like no child is born mature, no Christian is born mature, he or she must grow in her faith and life in Christ.

When a baby's born, that baby needs milk. And as the baby grows, that baby begins to eat solid food. If the baby eats the wrong things as a child, her long-term health will be damaged.

In the same way, as the Christian grows, she needs to be fed on the right things, not the views of the world around her on Facebook, whatever, but on the milk and on the solid meat of the word of God.

the only way to ensure a well-grounded, mature and faithful Christian life is from the earliest age to feed upon the Bible.

[19:55] In the same way a child going to primary school must learn the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic, without them she'll not be able to master the more advanced subjects.

If a Christian wants to be like Jesus in the way she thinks and the way she acts, she needs to be trained in the basics and then she can move forward into the more advanced areas of life. The Bible is the Christian's mother, nourishing her in the best of milk. The Christian's teacher, the Christian's guide, the righteous Christian has the word of God informing her mind and strengthening her spirit.

So the Bible is profitable, it's a book like no other, it's alive and active in the life of the Christian. Without the Bible the Christian has no life. Without the Bible the Christian is incapable of doing anything profitable for God.

She's forever a baby and an unhealthy one at that rather than maturing into full Christian adulthood. Well lastly and very briefly, what's the Bible for?

[21:06] What's the Bible for? the Apostle completes his tribute to Scripture by telling us that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. The man of God.

Now this is a very technical term because Paul was a Jew and for a Jew the title man of God was a throwback to the Old Testament. Prophets like Samuel and Elijah and Isaiah.

At that time these prophets were called the man of God. when people were unsure of what to do in their lives they would consult a man of God, a prophet who would tell them what God's will was for their lives.

Or when a nation was being unfaithful to God, the man of God, the prophet would meet with the king to confront him with God's demand for repentance and faithfulness. And Paul is telling us if you want to be a modern day Elijah or a modern day Isaiah, you need to be taught, reproved, corrected and trained by the word of God.

If you want to know what to do in difficult situations, if you want to know how to live a godly life, you need the word, God expired word of God. To be a New Testament prophet in the correct sense of the term requires us not to dream up vague statements but to read the Bible so that very far from being vague we are certain what God's will is for us.

[22:26] We often say that we need a new generation of Christians who are willing to speak as prophets into the life of our churches and our nation. This will only happen as the church returns to the Bible.

Many of our charismatic brethren talk about spirit inspired prophecy and whilst not wishing to be overcritical because we should never be overcritical of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The best place to find spirit inspired prophecy isn't in the hysteria of a loud service of worship but in the focused study of the Bible where God the Holy Spirit speaks to us in the word breathed out by God.

That's what will make us complete. That's what will fully equip us for every good work. When trouble strikes God's word will equip us not just to cope with what we're facing but by grace to overcome what we're facing.

When persecution hits God's word will equip us not just to hold our ground but to take every thought captive to Christ. Christ. It will make us complete Christians. Is that not our nation's greatest need for the church to be the voice of God in these days?

[23:37] It doesn't need another social institution as much as it needs a hope that transcends this life. It doesn't need another political pressure group as much as it needs to hear of the forgiveness of sin.

It doesn't need another community group as much as it needs to hear about Jesus and his cross. Well the Bible may still be the best selling book in the world but does that reflect how important it is to you as an individual?

Bill Dunlop said something in prayer in one of the sermons recently which really stuck in my mind. He said, Lord as we come to you, Lord as we come to your word, we come to you.

Lord as we come to your word, we come to you. We just can't separate God from his word. So the question becomes then, how important is Jesus to me?

How important is Jesus to me? If Jesus is the center of your life, his word must be at the center of your life also. Tonight we're going to help you to learn how to get the most out of your Bible but the fundamental question remains for every one of us here this morning, how important is Jesus for me?

[24:58] Because if he is, his word will be important for us also. as if he is