

Applying Scripture to Life's Difficulties

Topic 1 – Introduction and the Scriptures

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Introduction

How do believers “do life”? Believers are connected to the transcendent Creator who knows each of us intimately through His Son. We have been reborn, freed from the penalty and power of sin, and empowered to live in a way that glorifies God. We do this by relying on Him and His powerful, heart-changing revelation, the Bible. Believers “do life” by applying Scripture to life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are many people who are hurting. That should not be surprising since the Scriptures tell us that diverse people in diverse life situations with diverse life experiences will undergo trouble in their lives. Indeed, “man is born for trouble, As sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). The common human condition is that there are inevitable varieties of hardships that will fall upon each of us unexpectedly (James 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-9).

²Consider it all joy, my brethren, **when you encounter various trials**, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

Some people are hurting in the purely physical realm from things like the external difficulties of life (i.e., poverty, hunger, etc.) or physical maladies of disease or age which are ultimately the result of the Fall. Others are hurting in ways that affect their behavior, emotions, or thinking. Others are hurting because of the sins of other people. Still others have made choices to sin or have lived unwisely and are reaping the consequences.

The purpose of this series is to equip each of us so that through the sufficiency of Christ and the Scriptures we can mature and grow in our ability to apply the Scriptures to our own difficult life issues and sin.

Additionally, there are some believers who are very good at extending judgment to people who are struggling with difficult behavioral, emotional, and cognitive issues. Instead, it is important that we become very good at extending compassion, grace, and care to those dear souls. So, the additional purpose of this series is to equip us to bring Biblical care to our brethren when the inevitable opportunities to extend ourselves in love are presented.

God gives believers the resources necessary to address every life issue in a way that honors Him (2 Peter 1:2-4); and to bring lasting, God-honoring care to hurting people. This is NOT an activity reserved for an elite group of professionals (“experts”) or those who have received special training or certification. In recent times, this care is termed “Biblical Counseling”. In the times of the Apostles, it was called disciple making.

The class plan will begin by laying a foundation of practical/applicable theology and the implications for addressing difficult life issues and sin. Then we will address specific areas where ourselves or others may struggle.

Disclaimer

Over the weeks of this study, we are going to talk about mental illness. We may also talk about psychotropic drugs that doctors prescribe for mental illness diagnoses. No one should independently change the course of medical treatment based on what is shared during the class. No one should start taking unprescribed medication, stop taking prescribed medication, or alter the dosage of prescribed medication based on what is shared during the class. You should always talk to the prescribing doctor before changing any course of treatment.

Mental Illness

The world calls behavioral, emotional, and cognitive issues mental illness. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) calls mental illness "...medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others, and daily functioning." (from namica.org). The key phrase is "medical condition".

The prevailing thought in the medical community is that people struggling with behavioral, emotional, or cognitive difficulties are sick. This is based on a medical model of these struggles. The problem with this medical model is that cellular level abnormalities as the cause of many psychological disorders do not exist. Viewing these difficulties in a purely medical way is one end of the spectrum.

The other end of the spectrum can be found with believers who reject any medical causes for behavioral, emotional, or cognitive struggles. They believe that the cause for any of these struggles is always sin. There is a balance to be understood.

When there is psychosis, a break with reality, then the brain is not working correctly, and the person may need medical treatment. Additionally, when there has been an injury to the brain, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive struggles can be traced to that injury. Also, there are times when the body responds badly to medicine prescribed for physiological issues (e.g., blood pressure medicine). There are also negative impacts on thinking and mood by treating the body badly. In those situations, God and His word still has much to say about how to honor Him in the difficulty. The Scriptures bring hope to the believer.

The determiner for the believer is the word of God. Believers must be careful to never call anything a disease that the Bible calls sin and to never call anything sin that the Bible does not clearly identify as sin. Labeling sin as disease influences God's children to avoid responsibility for their sin. This offers no hope. Examples include anxiety/worry, substance abuse, normal sadness, anger, obsessiveness, excessive grief, immorality, etc.

Do you strive to see the world through the lens of Scripture?

Differing Help

It is important to understand the difference between what the "world" says and what God says if we are to address our own life issues and bring lasting change to help others.

When we speak of “world” we mean the current world system that belongs to Satan. It is a system of deception and wickedness that leaves God out and is opposed to Him. The world system puts forwards lies, pandering to people’s depravity, to the evil of people’s heart. Satan’s aim is to make the values of this godless system seem attractive, appealing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life to entice people to live independent of their creator; to sin. (James 1:13-14; 2 Cor 11:3; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor 4:4; John 16:11; 1 John 2:15-17; James 3:15)

How do you describe the world?

So, we should not be surprised that what the “world” thinks of help for hurting people and what God thinks are different. There are three questions that shed light on the differences. The world seeks to answer these questions with theories that address symptoms and not the root cause. The truth is found in the Scriptures. Believers seek these answers in the Bible.

Who are people?

World – People are evolved animals born morally neutral or good, governed by instincts.

Bible – People are created in the image of God for the purpose of glorifying Him.

What is wrong with people?

World – Environmental factors (family, religion, trauma, etc.) have influenced people to cause psychological problems. People are not at fault; they are not responsible.

Bible – People are sinners by nature and choice; they are responsible for their sin and responses to circumstances and experiences.

How do you fix people?

World – People are fixed by medication that moderates behavior and/or re-education and changing of emotions and thinking by pursuing self-actualization (striving for one’s fullest potential), improving self-worth, eliminating self-defeating outlooks on life, etc.

Bible – People require freedom from the penalty and power of sin through salvation in Christ; then growth (progressive sanctification) through the Holy Spirit and word of God.

How do you answer these questions? What is the result of the two paths?

Capable and Competent to Disciple

Americans, indeed, many cultures, have developed a method of belief and action that relies on recognized authorities on the subject at hand. People who are doctors (MDs or PhDs), or certified in a particular field, or accomplished in a field, etc. are viewed as more believable than those without those qualifications. They are viewed as enlightened on that topic.

Unfortunately, many Christians have developed this authority-based method of belief and action when it comes to ministry. This has resulted in things like “evangelism” by inviting people to church so the pastor can talk to them, church leaders referring people to mental health “professionals” to care for hurting brethren, or churches only allowing certified or formally trained individuals to care for hurting people. The result is that many congregants feel inadequate to live out the one-another’s and bring needed care to hurting people.

Unfortunately, the title “Biblical Counseling” makes it sound like secular counseling or therapy which only adds to the authority-based mentality when it comes to who can disciple. Here are some points to ponder.

Are you authority-based in your thinking?

1. Making disciples is the responsibility of every believer.

¹⁹Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:19-20)

This “Great Commission” is the Lord’s last command to His disciples (i.e., each of us). The only imperative in this passage is “make disciples”. “Go”, “baptizing”, and “teaching” characterize disciple making; they are the “how” of disciple making.

Of special note for our purpose today is teaching. “Teaching” is not just giving knowledge but teaching a lifestyle – “to obey all that the Lord commanded”. Those that surrender to Christ for salvation, identifying themselves with Him in baptism, must be trained to observe all that He commanded. This process continues until each believer is presented “complete in Christ” (Col 1:28).

Is your life characterized by a commitment to making disciples?

2. Every Spirit-filled believer is capable and commanded to disciple one another.
 - a. The result of Spirit-filling is teaching and admonishing other believers.

¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, **but be filled with the Spirit**, ¹⁹**speaking to one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (Eph 5:18-19)

¹⁶**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another** with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Col 3:16)

We will talk in more detail about the filling of the Spirit in a later lesson. For now, it is sufficient to say that Spirit-filling results in teaching and admonishing one another.

“Teaching” means to provide instruction, impart truth formally or informally. The intent is to influence understanding with the aim of shaping the will of the one taught.

“Admonish” conveys the ideas of encouraging, advising, and warning people of the consequences of their behavior. It is encouraging counsel with a warning involved. The word implies a definite exhortation, correction, and warning. When it is used, there is always the implication of a problem. It presupposes an obstacle that must be removed or changed. This is the Greek word “noutheteō” from which we get “nouthetic counseling” or what is commonly called “Biblical counseling”.

From these passages we see that the only requirement to be able to “admonish” is to be Spirit-filled (allowing the words of Christ to richly dwell within you).

Are you consistently walking in the Spirit?

- b. Spirit-filled believers are “able to admonish” other believers.

¹³Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁴And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and **able also to admonish one another**. (Rom 15:13-14)

Paul is speaking to the “brethren,” the entire congregation at the church in Rome. “Able” conveys the sense of having the inherent ability to do something or accomplish some end. Its usage here means that you continuously have the inherent ability to admonish one another. “Admonish” is the same word used in Colossians 3:16.

Are you admonishing the brethren as you walk in the Spirit?

- c. Spirit-filled believers are called to restore sinning believers.

¹Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, **you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness**; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ²**Bear one another’s burdens**, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal 6:1-2)

“Spiritual” believers are those who are filled with the Spirit and so are manifesting the fruit of the Spirit (see the context in Galatians 5). They are to restore those caught in any trespass (sin). This has nothing to do with one’s maturity or spiritual growth. This has to do with walking in the Spirit.

Spiritual believers are to bear the burdens of trespassing believers. “Bear” has the thought of carrying with endurance, sustain, uphold, or support. “Burdens” refers to heavy loads that are difficult to lift and carry, representing personal difficulty. Love demands that we support believers who are struggling with difficulties or sin.

Do you love enough to strive to restore sinning brethren?

d. All believers are to minister to other believers.

¹⁴We **urge** you, **brethren**, **admonish the unruly**, **encourage the fainthearted**, **help the weak**, be patient with everyone. (1 Thess 5:14)

Paul is urging each of us to care for each of us. “Urge” is translated variously as “implore”, “entreat”, “plead”, “appeal”, “beseech”, “exhort”, “encourage”, or “beg”. Paul isn’t talking to elders or deacons or ministry leaders or people with certification or qualifications. He is talking to all of us, the brethren.

Additionally, what we see from this passage is that one method of care does not fit every situation. Three different types of struggling people are addressed with three different verbs of care specified. So, wisdom and discernment are required to bring care to the brethren.

Are you in deep relationships with the brethren?

e. Believers do not need to experience the same difficulty as others to provide care.

Many people, even believers, think that it is impossible to care for someone to whom you cannot personally relate. The thought is, “You have to walk a mile in my shoes before you can help me.” The Bible holds to a vastly different paradigm for providing care. The reason is because we are not giving personal ideas derived from experience. We are giving truth from the word of God.

³Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴**who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction** with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Cor 1:3-4)

Because you have received the Lord’s comfort in your specific affliction, you can comfort others with truth in their specific affliction. Because you are a believer, by definition, you have received the Lord’s comfort for the purpose of comforting others.

Are you comforting the brethren?

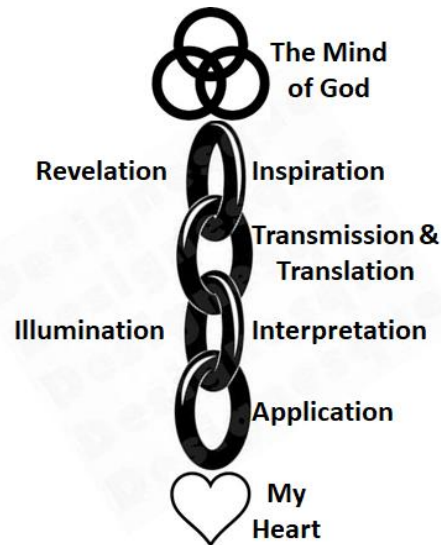
The Scriptures are clear that all believers are able and commanded to use the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit to address their own and others’ life issues and sin. This is not an activity for those who are professionals or those with organizational certifications.

Are you striving to care for hurting brethren with the Scriptures?

Since the means of care isn’t your own wisdom or good ideas, but the Scriptures, let’s take some time to look at the Scriptures.

The Scriptures

The graphic below illustrates the communication process from God's mind to your heart.



Revelation

God has revealed Himself to people in general revelation through creation and in specific revelation in the Bible. General revelation is where God communicates His attributes, eternal power, and divine nature through what has been made (Rom 1:18-20; Psa 19:1-6). General revelation is sufficient for *condemnation* (i.e., no one has an excuse, Rom 1:20).

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Rom 1:18-20)

Specific revelation is the Bible (and only the Bible) which is God's complete moral will for all people. Specific revelation is God disclosing His mind to His creatures. Specific revelation is sufficient for *salvation* and *sanctification* (2 Pet 1:3).

³seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, **through the true knowledge of Him** who called us by His own glory and excellence. (2 Pet 1:3)

Inspiration

“Inspiration” explains the means and extent of the Bible being the word of God and refers to God breathing out Scripture (2 Tim 3:16).

¹⁶**All Scripture is inspired (breathed out – ESV) by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

It is the Scripture that is inspired and not the human authors. The Scripture was inspired as the authors were “moved by the Holy Spirit” (“carried along by the Holy Spirit” – ESV, NET, NIV) so that, using their own personalities and styles, they wrote without error in the original manuscripts the very words of God (2 Pet 1:21-22; Acts 1:16).

²⁰But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation, ²¹for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but **men moved (carried along – ESV) by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.** (2 Pet 1:20-21)

¹⁶“Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which **the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David** concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. (Acts 1:16)

God is the source of Scripture (it is breathed out by Him), so it takes on His qualities of inerrancy (without error) and infallibility (trustworthy).

¹Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, ²in the hope of eternal life, which **God, who cannot lie**, promised long ages ago, ³but at the proper time manifested, *even* His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, (Titus 1:1-3)

The inspiration is verbal (extending to the very words) and plenary (including all the words). This is shown by the Lord Jesus’ and Apostle Paul’s statements, usage, and arguments (Matt 5:18; 22:31-32; Gal 3:16).

¹⁸For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (Matt 5:18)

³¹But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: ³²“**I am** the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? **He is not the God of the dead but of the living.**” (Matt 22:31-32)

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| What is the impact of inspiration on salvation and sanctification? |
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The Bible contains historical narrative, poetry, prophecy, and letters to people and churches. When it speaks historically, it always speaks truth about people, places, and times. The only time historical narrative is not giving history is when someone in the narrative is, themselves, telling a story (e.g., when Jesus is telling parables). Even then, those stories are true to life (e.g., Matthew 13’s kingdom parables and Luke 16:19-31’s rich man and Lazarus).

Jesus called the Old Testament the Scriptures (John 10:35). Paul and the writer of Hebrews declared that the Scriptures are the word of God (Rom 9:6; Heb 4:12). Peter viewed Paul’s epistles as Scripture (2 Pet 3:15-16).

What the Bible says, God says (e.g., Gen 1:27, 2:24 and Matt 19:4-5; Psa 95:7 and Heb 3:7; Psa 2:1 and Acts 4:24-25; Psa 2:7 and Heb 1:5; Psa 97:7 and Heb 1:6; Psa 104:4 and Heb 1:7; Isa 55:3 and Acts 13:34; Psa 16:10 and Acts 13:35). And what God says, the Bible says (e.g., Gen 12:3 and Gal 3:8; Ex 19:6 and Rom 9:17).

The Bible is literally true because God communicates with clarity. The Bible is the inspired, infallible, authoritative revelation of God to people.

Do you believe that the Bible is inspired, infallible, and authoritative?

Transmission and Translation

Transmission is the process by which the original, inspired Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts (and their copies) were copied by scribes and sovereignly preserved by God for successive generations of believers.

Translation provides the word of God in the languages of the peoples to whom the great commission is being fulfilled (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Only the original manuscripts are inspired, not translations. Translation involves seeking the most accurate or most readable and understandable rendering of the original language manuscripts into other languages.

Illumination and Interpretation

An accurate understanding of the Bible depends on the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit and also the interpreting work of the reader.

Illumination refers to the Holy Spirit's ministry as He works in the believer to bring spiritual understanding, enabling you to perceive spiritual truth and heart application of Scripture (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Cor 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). This is coming to the word, walking in the Spirit, and asking for His help in understanding the His word.

¹⁸Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law. (Psa 119:18)

Because of illumination, any believer, by depending on the Holy Spirit and using consistent rules of interpretation, can study the Scriptures for their own growth and edification, and lead others to salvation and sanctification in Christ.

When you come to the Scriptures do you first prepare your heart?

Interpretation refers to how we understand the Scriptures by applying hermeneutics – the art and science of Biblical interpretation. There are two general types of hermeneutical systems: allegorical and literal.

Allegorical hermeneutics assigns symbolic senses to words which results in a different understanding of the text than what the author intended. With allegory, each interpreter can determine their own understanding of the text.

Literal (or plain or normal) hermeneutics takes the plain literal sense of the text while understanding the historical, immediate, and wider contexts; type of literature; and the uses of figures of speech. This is also called the plain, literal, grammatical, historical method of interpretation. This is the only consistent hermeneutic and the consistent application of this hermeneutic to all of Scripture is required to come to a correct understanding of Scripture.

What areas of life are most impacted by one's hermeneutics?

Understanding the context is critical in coming to a correct understanding of Scripture. In fact, a principle of defining words is, "context determines meaning."

But big picture-wise, the New Testament places the context on the Old Testament in that the New Testament believer is free from the entire law of Moses (Rom 10:4; Rom 7:1-6). See the VBC position paper "The Christian's Obligation to the Law of Moses". That means that what we see in the Old Testament is written for our encouragement and instruction (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11), but not as commands and promises for those under the New Covenant. We understand that "all Scripture is for us, but not all Scripture is to us."

In Scripture, there are precepts, principles, and promises.

Precepts are God's clear commands. This is the moral will of God.

Principles are general guidelines that require discernment and wisdom to apply (e.g., Prov 22:7 – it is wise to not go into debt because the borrower becomes the lender's slave; Gal 6:7-8 – whatever a person sows, this he will also reap; etc.).

Promises are what God says will come to pass because He is faithful to do what He says (e.g., Phil 1:6 – God promises to finish the work He started in your sanctification; Rom 8:28-29 – God works all things together for your sanctifying good; etc.).

The believer strives to obey God's commands, apply His principles, and believe His promises out of gratitude because we love Him and desire to be pleasing to him.

¹⁵"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (John 14:15; see also 1 John 5:3)

²⁸Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, **let us show gratitude**, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire. (Heb 12:28-29)

⁹Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, **to be pleasing to Him**. (2 Cor 5:9)

How is your gratitude for all your blessings in Christ demonstrated?

The New Testament commands seem to be grouped into three categories.

1. Specific (or absolute) commands. These commands specify the manner of implementation or application. There is no freedom with these commands; it is simply “do” or “don’t do”.

Examples of these commands are do not commit adultery (Matt 19:9), do not murder (1 John 3:15), do not steal (Eph 4:28), do not deceive (Eph 5:6), abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thess 4:2), etc.

2. Specific commands with exceptions. These commands specify the manner of implementation, but there are also biblically permitted exceptions to the command.

Examples of these commands are do not divorce (Luke 16:18) except for the case of adultery (Matt 5:32; 19:9) or abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor 7:15), be subject to authorities like citizens to government (Rom 13:1; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13-17), wife to husband (Eph 5:22-25; Col 3:18), child to parent (Eph 6:1), slaves to master (or employee to employer) (Eph 6:5; Col 3:22; Tit 2:9-10), and congregation to elders (Heb 13:17) unless they direct you to sin (Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29), etc.

3. General commands. These are where the implementation or application of the command is an area of freedom for the believer according to their understanding of Biblical principles, spiritual maturity, spiritual giftedness, wisdom and judgment, personality, talents, etc.

Examples of these commands are make disciples (Matt 28:19-20), the one-another’s (i.e., love one another, serve one another, etc.), love your neighbor (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14), modesty (1 Tim 2:9), shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet 5:2), etc.

Only about 20% of commands are specific commands leaving the rest as generic commands. With generic commands, we need to be careful of ourselves that our opinion does not become as authoritative as Scripture in our own lives nor in the lives of those we are striving to care for. For one believer to tell another that they must apply a general command a specific way is *legalism*. For one believer to look down on another for how they apply a general command is *judgmentalism*.

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| <p>What opinions have you elevated to the level of Biblical commands? How do you judge others for their application of general commands?</p> |
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It is the individual believer’s task to strive to be faithful and diligent to understand and apply the Scriptures to their life.

¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:15)

Application

The last link in the chain is application. This is bringing truth to bear on your heart resulting in transformation. Unfortunately, this step is often left out. When it is, the chain is broken, and the communication process is short-circuited.

The Scriptures are authoritative and constitute the believer's only source of faith and conduct. Only Scripture is able to meet all the spiritual needs of God's people. It is fully adequate for all matters of faith and conduct. It is all-sufficient regarding the soul's deepest needs, in our relationship to God, and in our relationship to others (2 Pet 1:3; Matt 4:4, 7, 10; Heb 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 1 Pet 2:2; Psa 19:7-13; 119:9, 11; 119:24).

In every difficult time, in every temptation to sin, for overcoming every idolatrous master, Scripture has the answer. God's word is powerful and able to accomplish His purpose in the lives of people for which He sends it forth. The words of Scripture work their intended result because the author, the Holy Spirit, is at work in the lives of the readers.

⁸“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. ⁹“For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it. (Isa 55:8-11)

¹³For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, **which also performs its work in you who believe.** (1 Thess 2:13)

¹²For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and **able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.** (Heb 4:12)

⁹How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word.

¹⁰With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. ¹¹Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. (Psa 119:9-11)

Do you believe that God can still transform you or have you lost hope?

The Bible is authoritative, sufficient, and powerful, so you need to be taking it in voraciously. God's will for you is found in God's word. His love letter to you must be your delight.

¹⁴I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. ¹⁵I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways. ¹⁶**I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.** (Psa 119:14-16)

²⁴Your **testimonies also are my delight**; *They are* my counselors. (Psa 119:24)

⁴⁷I shall delight in Your commandments, Which I love. (Psa 119:47)

⁹²**If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction.**

⁹³I will never forget Your precepts, For by them You have revived me. (Psa 119:92-93)

¹⁴⁰Your word is very pure, Therefore **Your servant loves it.** ¹⁴¹I am small and despised, *Yet* I do not forget Your precepts. ¹⁴²Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth. ¹⁴³**Trouble and anguish have come upon me, Yet Your commandments are my delight.** ¹⁴⁴Your testimonies are righteous forever; Give me understanding that I may live. (Psa 119:140-144)

¹⁶Your words were found and I ate them, **And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart**; For I have been called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts. (Jer 15:16)

⁹⁷**O how I love Your law!** It is my meditation all the day. (Psa 119:97)

Are the Scriptures your delight? How is that demonstrated in your life?

Summary

The very words of God have been given to you for your instruction, encouragement, edification, and transformation. The Scriptures have the only words of eternal life.

⁶⁷So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. (John 6:67-68)

The Scriptures bring life to you; it is your food.

³And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” ⁴But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘**Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.**’” (Matt 4:3-4)

It is your lamp in this dark world and your own dark heart.

²⁸For You light my lamp; The Lord my God illumines my darkness. (Psa 18:28)

¹⁰⁵Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. (Psa 119:105)

Do you live as if the Scriptures are indispensable for life?

Additional Study

Read Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-16; and Psalm 119:9-11 and answer these questions.

1. Are you treasuring God's word in your heart?

2. What can God's word do powerfully in your heart?

3. What does/would treasuring God's word look like?

4. What differences would be evident in your life if you were treasuring God's word in your heart (specific thoughts and deeds)?

Pray and prepare your heart asking to be shown wonderful things from the word, then read Colossians 3 and note answers to these questions (you might do this each day for a week).

1. How does this passage describe God?

2. How does this passage describe me?

3. Does the passage give me any commands? What kind of commands are they – specific, specific with exception, or general?

4. Does the passage convict me of sin? If so, confess and repent.

5. How might I live out the passage in a way that best glorifies God?