

Benefits of the Book

Psalm 19:7-14

Have you ever read a book that has significantly impacted your life in some way? Is there a book that once you got done, you said to yourself “that’s a book I have to read again”?

Books have for centuries been an avenue of entertainment and learning. For some people, they form a means of escaping into a world of make believe. Others are caught up in the real-life stories of people throughout history either through a biographer or from the words of the person themselves.

Books provide us with knowledge. They inspire us. They create a thirst for adventure or discovery. They influence our thinking and can even shape our lives and sometimes even create change for a society.

As my college literature professor drilled into us *“Literature is a repetitively selective series of concretions revealing a value scale.”*

Simply put, whether fictional or factual, literature has a way of revealing the values of its author. As much as some people may like to think or even believe that what they read is purely for entertainment, even that will in some way affect their values.

Because I was curious I went to the internet to see what books throughout history and across various genres have had the most significant impact on people and culture be it academic, scientific, political, religious or fictional. Mind you, the list is subjective based on the opinion or opinions of those who did the research, but they came up with a list of 50 most influential books of all time that have changed the world. They cover politics and government, literature, society, science, math and geography, and religion. Here are some on the list.

The Republic by Plato.

The Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer.

The Rights of Man and *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine.

Divine Comedy by Dante.

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare.

Moby Dick by Herman Melville.

1984 by George Orwell.

The Illiad and The Odyssey by Homer.

War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy.

The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkein.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank.

Walden by Henry David Thoreau.

The Jungle by Upton Sinclair

The Meaning of Relativity by Albert Einstein.

On the Origin of the Species by Charles Darwin.

The Interpretation of Dreams by Sigmund Freud.

The Qur’an.

The Torah.

The Analects of Confucius.

And of course – *the Bible.*

The Qur’an has sold an estimated 200 million copies.

The Book of Mormon has sold some 190 million.

The best novel is the Tale of Two Cities with 200 million copies sold.

But the Bible is estimated to have sold 5 billion copies to date.

It has had the most influence of any book in all of history and we will see from our passage today some of the reason why that is so as we look at some of the benefits of the Word of God. With your copy of the best-selling and most influential book of all time, let’s turn to **Psalm 19**.

This psalm speaks about two ways God is revealed.

They are general revelation and special revelation.

General revelation is what we see in **verses 1-6**.

David presents this psalm to the choir director and begins with a broad-brush stroke that God has revealed Himself to mankind through all of nature.

“The heavens declare the glory of God and pour out knowledge.” And as **Romans 1:19-20** says

“What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being

understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

Both David and Paul say the same thing. Even though God can't be seen, He has made Himself known by what He has made in creation. David also says that creation has its own unique language that speaks into every other language revealing God. Paul adds that those who refuse to see what is so clear from creation about God have become futile in their thinking and their darkened hearts have become foolish.

In other words, David and Paul are saying that the evidence of God in a general sense is as plain as the nose on your face and if you can't see it, you're as blind as a bat.

Beginning in **verse 7** and through the end of the chapter we have what is called the special revelation of God in which David also tells us the benefits of that revelation. In this case special revelation is referring to how God has revealed Himself supernaturally in His Word given to us by divine inspiration through the Holy Spirit. In David's day, that was the Pentateuch or first five books of the Bible or what we also refer to as the Law. Today it includes the entire canon of the Bible comprised of The Old and New Testaments with their 66 books.

In both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, Smeagol whose name is later changed to Gollum plays a significant role in the ring of power which was found by Bilbo and then was to be destroyed by Frodo. Over time, as the power of the ring consumed Gollum, he referred to the ring as "My precious."

Let's take that term and apply it to God's Word with the intent as we read it and apply it that it is "my precious" as we come to see in **verses 7-10** that God's Word must be precious to us.

I. GOD'S WORD MUST BE PRECIOUS TO US – vv. 7-10

The word precious means something of great value, highly esteemed or cherished. **How much worth do you put on God's Word?** Keep in mind as you think about that that there are brothers and sisters in other countries around the world who are willing to give their lives to own a copy or to try and smuggle it into restricted nations. It is of inestimable value.

This morning, I want us to consider how much value we place on God's Word. I suppose we could in effect say that its value to us may be measured in just how much time we spend in it. Some may value it no more than a daily newspaper scanning it for articles that may be of particular interest. Or scrolling through Facebook or other social media outlets to see if there is anything worth our time to either read or respond to.

What we pause to consider, whether the newspaper or social media, may in large part be determined by our interests. If it's sport, we'll stop and read how the Lions, Tigers, or Red Wings are doing.

If it's politics, we may be interested in reading about how our candidate is doing or what the latest polls are saying.

If it's entertainment, we may be interested in knowing about what is happening to some celebrity or what may be coming out in the movies.

The weather may be of interest if we're planning a trip or need to know about rain for the garden.

On social media, we may want to know what's happening with friends.

We scan or scroll to get to what is important to us.

Some read the Bible that way. Skipping over the genealogies or scanning past the laws that may not be relevant to us so we can get to the good stuff. The truth is that all of God's Word should be precious to us and David gives us three reasons why. First, God's Word challenges us.

A. God's Word Challenges Us – v. 7

I wanted to see what others had to say about the Bible and I could give you pages of statements by anonymous authors, Presidents, and statesmen – both national and international, Bible scholars, song writers, poets, and the like.

Read the Bible, free gift inside.

I have read many books, but the Bible reads me.

One who uses his Bible as his guide never loses his sense of direction.

Augustine – “Faith will totter if the authority of the Holy Scriptures loses its hold on men. We must surrender ourselves to the authority of Holy Scripture, for it can neither mislead nor be misled.”

Thomas Watson – “Leave not off reading the Bible till you find your hearts warmed. Let it not only inform you, but inflame you.”

Paul Hovey commented that “Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them.”

Mark Twain once remarked that “it ain’t those parts of the Bible that I can’t understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.”

We may be able to challenge the logic of other literature and refute some of its claims. New evidence may surface through additional research that can alter a previously held belief. But the psalmist indicates in **verse 7** that what is written in Scripture is flawless and trustworthy. In other words it is perfect and can’t be improved upon.

Romans 15:4 “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encourage of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

The Bible was written not just for our knowledge but for our instruction and application. By reading it and then applying it, we are encouraged to stand strong in our faith. By applying its truths to our lives we not only live godly but we point people to God and the salvation He offers through Jesus Christ.

It's one thing to just read the Bible, it's another thing all together to do something with what we read. In that sense you can understand the rationale behind the statements by Mark Twain and Paul Hovey that one of the reasons why people don't want to read the Bible is because it challenges their thinking and convicts them of their actions. If they were really honest with themselves, they would then have to do something about what they read because it challenges them to live differently. The challenge is to **“be doers of the Word and not just hearers only.”**

When David says that the Word of God is perfect, he's saying that it's complete or whole, that it lacks nothing. In other words, there isn't anything else that needs to be added to it. It's perfect because its author is perfect.

Tony Evans concludes that **“everything you need to know to be what God expects you to be has been revealed in His Word. It can renew you and provide you with abundant life.”**

It is a treasure map that helps you reach the treasure. There is no missing corner that leaves out details to figure out. God's Word never needs revision or improvement. There are no lost books of the Bible like the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Thomas, the epistles of Ignatius to the Romans, the Philippians, the Ephesians, Paul's epistle to the Laodiceans or the gospel of Mary Magdelon.

What we have in the Scriptures is all we need and David says in **verse 7** that it restores, which is also what he says in **Psalm 23:3** about the Shepherd who restores our soul. The word of God challenges in a way that through it, we are revived and given new life through obeying what it says.

In the KJV it uses the word **“convert”** where the NIV uses the term **“revive”**, which literally means to bring back. When a person has a cardiac arrest, CPR or other medical interventions are used to revive or bring back the person. God's Word is like that as it brings us back to where we need to be spiritually speaking. The word can also mean to repent and obey. So because God's Word is flawless and therefore trustworthy, when we read and obey it, the idea being willful obedience, it will restore us, revive us. Read it to be challenged.

Verse 8 then tells us that God's Word cheers us.

B. God's Word Cheers Us – v. 8

I don't think I'm alone in this, I'm guessing you have felt the same way.

You have a meeting with your boss and he hasn't told you what it's about so there is some apprehension, maybe even a bit of fear.

Or you had a recent doctor visit where they ran some tests and she wants you to give her a call to review the results.

Or you take a test in school and you're not sure how well you did. As the papers are being passed out, you're quite nervous to turn the page over and look at the grade.

The truth is, it could be any number of things that cause us to be on edge because we just don't know what the news is going to be. But then we hear from the boss that we're getting a raise or promotion. The doctor tells us we're healthy as a horse. We got an A on the test with a nice comment from the teacher. Such news cheers us up.

David says that the precepts of Scripture bring joy to our heart and radiance to our eyes because it has good news for the person who reads and obeys.

A precept is a general rule that is designed to regulate behavior and thoughts. When we think right and act right, there is a overwhelming sense of joy in our lives. When we let Scripture guard our steps and guide our paths, we will generally be more joyful because we know we are doing right.

Imagine the joy the blind man had when he heard the words Jesus spoke to him to make him see. Imagine the joy the leper had when he heard the words of Jesus that his faith had made him well. Imagine the joy the man had whose servant had died when Jesus told him he was alive.

Does the Word of God cheer you up?

Does it bring joy to your heart?

After reading it, do you find yourself filled with a sense of peace and calmness?

Does it excite you?

Even though its commands are authoritative, do you still find that in obeying it there is delight and pleasure?

Psalm 40:8 "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart."

Job 23:11-12 "My feet have closely followed His steps; I have kept to His way without turning aside. I have not departed from the commands of

His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread."

Jeremiah 15:16 "When Your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear Your name, O Lord God Almighty."

Psalm 1:2 tells us that the person who is happy has found his delight in the Law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night.

I hope you find that God's Word cheers you up.

Is it precious to you?

In **verses 9-10** we see David telling us that God's Word changes us.

C. God's Word Changes Us – vv. 9-10

When David speaks of the fear of the Lord here, he's in effect talking about the sum of what is required by the law, that there should be a reverence to both God and His Word that affects how we live – in willful and loving obedience. That the fear of the Lord is pure means that our reverence toward God is unmixed, unadulterated. It can also mean reverential trust.

When we read God's Word, there isn't anything in it that we would have to question because we know that it is holy coming from a holy God and that it will always lead us to do the right thing. We never have to question it and so when it is obeyed, it will always change our lives for the better as it shapes our character to be like that of its author. It will never make us worse than we are.

In that respect it is considered by the psalmist to be the most valuable thing that we own. It's more valuable than gold or the most valuable thing in the world.

It is more pleasurable than the best tasting food one could imagine. So for the person who does not live by the commands given in God's Word where there should be delight in obeying it, there is despair; where there should be peace by obeying God's Word, there is punishment instead when it is disobeyed.

If you are willing to be doers of God's Word there

will be a change in your life, and that change is always for the better.

As part of my daily devotions this year, I am reading from a daily devotional book written by Alistair Begg. This past week the passage was from **James 1:23-24** “**For if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.**”

In introducing this passage, he writes “**It’s possible to be charmed by God’s word without being changed by it.**”

We cannot read the Bible as we would a news article and not be changed by it. Think for a moment about those in Scripture who heard God’s Word but did not allow its truth to change them. Cain didn’t listen to God telling him to deal with the sin in his heart and he killed his brother. Hophni and Phineas, the sons of Eli, didn’t listen to God and they died by the hands of the Philistines. Prophets spoke the word of God to the Israelites to get them to turn from their sinful practices and they were disciplined by God and taken into captivity. The rich man didn’t listen to the words of Jesus, and he went away sad and unless he repented of his sin, died without Christ. Peter didn’t listen to Jesus about denying the Lord.

But yet Scripture is filled with the examples of people whose lives were forever changed when they listened to and obeyed God’s Word.

David
Zacchaeus
Paul
Lydia
The Philippian jailer
The Ethiopian eunuch

Throughout history there have been millions of people whose lives have forever been changed, who found His Word to be more valuable than anything they could accumulate here on earth, people like John Newton, Charles Colson, Daryl Strawberry, you and me.

If we take an honest look into the mirror of God’s Word, it will change us if we let it.

Hebrews 4:12 “**For the Word of God is living and powerful (active). Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.**”

It will have an effectual change in our life if we let it, if we obey it, if we let God’s Spirit make the necessary surgical removal of what is bad and make it good.

Unfortunately, too many people dismiss God’s Word with a cursory glance or an ineffectual sidestep and say it doesn’t apply to them or that it’s antiquated teachings aren’t relevant for today. Some even say they’ve read and it didn’t do anything for them. Unless the Spirit of God is in us, the Word of God will not mean anything to us. Jesus tells us it is through the Holy Spirit who teaches us as we ask God to reveal His truth and let it change us.

Alistair Begg refers to that as a *superficial glance*, looking at it as in a mirror and then forgetting what it had to say believing it to be unimportant. He says “**casual observance does not lead to careful obedience, and lasting change cannot occur when we fool ourselves into thinking otherwise.**”

But he continues by saying that there is also *purposeful forgetting*, meaning that we either deny its truth or distract ourselves with other things from believing that truth and then applying what we just read. It is an intentional disregard for what we know to be true but would rather ignore it. He concludes by stating that “**the more we sit under the instruction of the Bible without being changed by it, the less likely the possibility of such change becomes. We grow hardened to the truth and more and more impervious to its transforming power.**”

If God’s Word is precious to us, it will challenge us, cheer us and change us. If that’s the case, then we realize that God’s Word must be powerful in us.

II. GOD’S WORD MUST BE POWERFUL IN US – vv. 11-14

From **verse 11**, we see that God’s Word convicts us.

A. God's Word Convicts Us – v. 11

David says God's word warns us. Consider it the hazard signs along the highway of life that keep us from getting into trouble, going the wrong way, avoiding danger. From **Proverbs 1** we learn the wisdom of the Word will help us keep from being enticed by those bent on nothing but evil.

Growing up I was given plenty of warning by mom and dad that if I didn't obey something they said, there would be repercussions where the board of education would be applied to the seat of knowledge. But in the obedience, there was reward and that's what David says. God's Word gives us lots of warnings that bring conviction before we do something wrong or after we have done it. We read in **II Timothy 3:16** that God's Word rebukes us. It shows what we've done wrong. The righteous standard given in God's Word convicts us. There is plenty of warning in God's Word. **Hebrews 11** tells us that there is a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before attesting that the path of following God in faith is the way to go, but there are also plenty of examples in Scripture where people didn't heed the warnings given and what happened to them that serve as a testimony of what happens when we disobey.

Someone rightly said that **"this book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book."** There is a reason why some people don't want to read the Bible and it's because they don't like the conviction that comes from the reading. But that's one of the benefits of reading it, letting it convict us when we have sinned so that we can be forgiven because God's Word not only convicts, it cleanses us.

B. God's Word Cleanses Us – v. 12

Psalms 119:9, 11 (Wherewithal shall a young man)

John 15:3 "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." As we abide in Christ as a branch abides in the vine, His Word cleanses us.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth." God's Word helps us not only become right with God, but it also helps us become like God in character as we let His Spirit make us

new from the inside out. When we heed God's Word, it cleanses us. One way is to memorize and then meditate on it which I strongly encourage.

I like the Topical Memory system by the Navigators. It has 60 themed verses on important topics. Find some method and then start memorizing. You will find that it can cleanse you.

When we let the power of God's Word convict us and cleanse us, we will see that it corrects us.

C. God's Word Corrects us – vv. 13-14

Second Timothy 3:16 says that God's Word helps us get back on the right track when we have gotten off track. Where **verse 12** says that God's Word can help us when we commit secret sins, sins known only to God, **verse 13** says that God's Word can help us keep from committing willful or intentional sins. When we yield to the transforming power of God's Word in our life, it will mature us as believers.

God's Word is all sufficient, guarding what we say, what we think, and what we do to be pleasing to God. By seeking to obey God's Word we can avoid great sin. If God's Word is to be powerful in us, then God's Word must be present in us.

III. GOD'S WORD MUST BE PRESENT IN US – Colossians 3:16-17

God's Word is to be abundant in us.
It is to be used to advise and admonish.
It is to be adored through our praises.
It is to be actively lived out in the name of the Lord.
It can't do those things if it's not present in us.

Is it precious to you?

Is it powerful in you?

Is it present in you?

Someone rightly said that the Bible is meant to be bread for daily use, not cake for special occasions, because the Christian who is careless in Bible reading, will care less about Christian living. Let the words of Warren Wiersbe challenge us **"The Word in the hand is fine; the Word in the head is better; but the Word in the heart is what transforms us and matures us in Christ."**