

Reasons to Believe Your Bible - Personal Reasons

Sign Title: Personal Reasons to Believe Your Bible

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If you are new, I would like to welcome you in the name of Christ. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. This morning, we are in the seventh week of an eight week series called *Reasons to Believe Your Bible*. In this series, we are learning rational reasons we can trust the Bible is the Word of God. This morning, we are applying what we learned from this series as we look at *Personal* reasons to trust this book.

Imagine you are on vacation with your family. Late at night, with your wife and children asleep in the car, your GPS is leading you through a bad neighborhood of Detroit. The windows are broken out of homes. Graffiti and gang symbols are spray painted on the walls of building. The streets, like everything else in the city, are in disrepair. Because of the darkness, you didn't see the deep pothole as you turned the corner. Your car lurches back and forth as your wheel sinks into it, which is followed by a popping sound, as your tire goes flat.

A feeling of terror sets in as you pull over to the side of the road and lock your doors. Your eyes try to pierce the darkness as you wonder what will happen next. As you contemplate your next move, a dozen young men spill out of a nearby building and begin strutting toward you. You can already see yourself and your family being dragged from the car, robbed, beaten or maybe even killed.

What difference would it make if you discovered these men were on their way home from a Bible study? Even if you are an atheist, wouldn't it make you feel better? In the final analysis, the reason why we believe the Bible is the Word of God, is because it is how God changes lives.

The Bible is God's chosen instrument to transform us. This morning, we are learning how God uses the Bible to change us. We are developing our thoughts under three headings. 1) God uses the Bible to wound us. 2) God uses the Bible to heal us. 3) How can I be transformed by the Bible?

God uses the Bible to wound us.

This doesn't sound like good news. Nobody likes to be wounded. Nobody likes pain. But pain isn't always a bad thing. Pain is often a saving thing. When we put our hand on a hot stove, it hurts, but the pain is a saving thing. God uses the Bible like a nerve system for our spirit to show us how sin is killing us.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:12–13 (ESV)

Comparing the Word of God to a sword is an apt description. The Roman sword had two edges; it cut both ways. While the Roman sword was intended to destroy, the wounding of God's Word is not intended to destroy us, but it is like a surgeon's knife, that cuts deeply in order to heal us. Let me show you what I mean as we analyze this verse in more detail.

The Word of God is living and active - This book is not just words on a page, but, it is literally alive. How is this book alive? The Bible comes with the authority

of God because, as we learned earlier in the series, it is Words spoken by God. Just as God's Words spoken in Genesis were powerful enough to fashion physical creation, the words of God in the Bible are the way God fashions a new creation in the human heart.

If you are here this morning and you know you need to start over. You are in the grip of sin, addictions, hatred and unforgiveness. You wish you had peace, comfort and joy in spite of circumstances, a marriage that is a blessing not a burden. The transformation you need can only take place in your heart when the Spirit of God uses the the Word of God to transform your heart and your mind. God's Word is alive and it is God's chosen method to make a new creation in our lives.

so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:11 (ESV)

God's Word will accomplish its purpose. That is a promise of God we can bank on.

since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 1 Peter 1:23 (ESV)

Here the apostle Peter is saying the same thing. The living Word of God is the way we are born again. This is the book God uses to transform our lives.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17 (ESV)

It is not just the reading of the Bible privately that God uses to change us but it is hearing the preaching and teaching of the Bible publicly that God uses to create spiritual life inside of us. Sometimes people tell me that it isn't important

to go to church. Yes, it is! Sitting under the preaching and teaching of the Word of God is the way God transforms our lives.

The Word of God is sharper than a sword - Today, if we are thinking of something sharp, we think of a razor. In that day, one of the sharpest blades was the double-edged Roman sword. It was sharpened to such a fine edge that soldiers could effortlessly cut through flesh, muscle, sinews and even pierce bone. After all, soldiers in a battle can't afford to strike ineffective lethal blows, their swords were honed to create damage. The word used for *sharp* in the Greek is a special word, it means the capacity to cut efficiently. It is the word they used to describe the blades used in ancient dissection, a scalpel.

The Word of God pierces - The Bible doesn't just cut like a sword, but it pierces like one too. The word for *piercing* here in the Greek literally means *to go through something*. Notice the Word of God does not divide the soul from the spirit; nor does it teach that it separates joints from marrow, since they are not anatomically joined anyway; rather, it teaches that the Word of God penetrates both the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow. In other words, God's Word effortlessly goes right to the heart of who we are. Nothing can stop the Word of God from penetrating to the core of a person. There is no armor they can wear, no shield they can hold, no wall they can hide behind that the power of the Word of God can not penetrate. What does the word do once it pierces our defenses.

The Bible judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart - The Word of God sits in judgment on all activities of our soul.

It judges our *thoughts*. That is, the things we ponder, what we think about when we drive down the road, what we dream about when we lie in bed, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Thousands of thoughts go through our heads every day, but the word of God sits in judgment on them, flagging what is evil and affirming what is good.

Not only does it judge our thoughts, but it even judges our *intentions*. This refers to the origins of our thoughts. Our motives, why we do what we do, are also known and sifted in our hearts by the Word of God.

Here is the issue. We are all basically dishonest. We have carefully crafted defense systems that keep us from seeing ourselves as we really are. We project an image to others that we want them to believe and sometimes we even believe it about ourselves.

But when the Word of God comes into our lives, it overcomes all of our defense mechanisms. When we read the Word or hear the Word preached, it shows us who we really are before God. (James 1:23-24)

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." Romans 7:7 (ESV)

So apart from God's Word, we can not see how evil we are. God's Word wounds us. It cuts past our defenses, and lets us see ourselves in God's eyes.

God's Word Heals Us.

Our natural reaction is to run from something that shows us our sin. The good news is the Bible not only shows us our sin, but it introduces us to Jesus who loves us in spite of our sin. Who died in our place, to bring us to God.

(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God (Jesus Christ)...Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:19 + 25 (ESV)

It doesn't matter how dark our sin is, when we come to God and ask him to forgive us through Jesus Christ's death on the cross in our place for our sin, he will.

Even if you understand this, and it is old news to you, here is the problem most Christians have. Most of us don't spend enough time in God's Word so we understand the depth and darkness of our sin, plus we don't spend enough time discovering the completeness of our forgiveness and the fullness of God's love for us through Christ.

In preparation for this message, I read a story about Alan Redpath, former pastor of Moody Church in Chicago. When he was pastor at Moody, he often chided the congregation to be more holy, to be more devoted, to be better in life, to try harder; as most pastors do.

Years later, Dr. Redpath had a stroke. During the recovery, sins he thought were no longer part of his life reared their ugly heads again. Sinful desires, evil daydreams and filthy language dominated his life in those days. He was so shocked at the darkness of his heart that he asked God to die and go to heaven. He says that it seemed God spoke to him in those moments and said, *"The only good thing about Alan Redpath is Jesus."*

Long after his recovery, he returned to Moody church to preach. He apologized to the congregation for preaching sermons he could not live up to, and neither could they. Because, truth be told, the only good thing about Alan

Redpath is Jesus. The only good thing about Kurt Trucksess is Jesus. The only good thing about any one of us is Jesus. How does the apostle Paul say it?

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh... Romans 7:18 (ESV)

So the Christian life is a life of wounding by the Word as we see our sin and healing by Jesus as we run to him, wanting to know him more because he is the only good thing that lives within us.

How can the Bible transform my life?

I want to get very practical with this last point. Everything we have done so far was to get you to this critical stage where we are moving from knowledge to action. Let's talk about how to let God's Word change our lives.

Pick It Up!

If you want to benefit from the Bible, you have to pick it up. It's not doing any good on your desk, it's not doing any good on the shelf. It doesn't matter if you have a Bible on your coffee table. To benefit from the Bible, we have to pick it up.

I know most of us say we don't have time to pick up the Bible. Let's talk turkey. How many times this week have we read a newspaper? How many times have we read a magazine or surfed the net? How many times did we aim the remote control from the couch? How many times did we pick up the book God wrote? This book that is alive and will transform our life. Remember, the newspaper is filled with the dead words of men, only the Bible is filled with the life transforming words of God. This is so exciting that I want to pause and ask you if you have a Bible.

Not your grandmother's Bible, but a Bible you really like. If not, I would recommend you get one and I would recommend a particular translation, the English Standard Version. It is essentially literal, but it is quite readable and it is the translation we use around the church. In fact, in preparation for beginning our next series in the book of James, we are replacing all the pew Bibles with ESV Bibles. To make it even better, in the next few weeks ,we are going to offer ESV slimline leather Bibles for purchase at the new information center in the foyer. They are usually \$30 online but we have a deal where we can buy and sell them to you at cost. Just \$6. I don't think you can get them any cheaper. We want everyone to have a Bible they can read, love and understand. That is the first step to having the Bible transform our life.

Eat it up!

Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart,... Jeremiah 15:16 (ESV)

What food is to our bodies, the Bible is to our souls. Let me provide you with a practical plan to eat up the Bible.

Read It

How much should I read? It is not a book you will finish in one sitting. Picture the Bible like your favorite dessert where you want to take a bite or two and then stop to savor it. If you take it one bite at a time, you will finish it. If you take just 12 minutes per day, you will have no problem finishing the Bible in a year.

Where should I start? I recommend you begin with the gospel of John, which is the fourth book of the New Testament. It is about the life of Jesus.

Don't be afraid of marking in your Bible. As you read the Gospel of John, underline the word *believe* every time you see it. Ask yourself, believe what? Believe whom? When you finish the Gospel of John, read through 1, 2 and 3 John, then read another gospel. That should keep you busy for a while.

What should I do before I read? Before you read the Bible, have a brief word of prayer asking God to open your mind and heart to his truth and then believe he will. Also, I don't recommend you lie on the bed or the couch. Remember, it is not a magazine, it is God's Word that God will use to change your life and shape your heart. I recommend sitting in a comfortable chair at a table and reading through two or three chapters at a time.

Question It.

When I was a kid, I didn't do well on a standardized reading test in junior high so they sent me to a reading teacher. She taught me that to get more out of what I was reading, I needed to ask the book questions. Here are some questions to ask the Bible.

What portion of my reading stands out to me? Chances are, God's Holy Spirit will draw you to a portion of what you read. Probably you will have underlined it. Go back to that portion and ask the following questions.

Why does this part have my attention?

Is there an example for me to follow? Many times God simply says to me, "Kurt, there is an example for you to follow, that is what a Godly man looks like." I ask God to help me be that way.

Is there an error to avoid? It is very comforting to know that if we have stepped in the wrong direction, God's Holy Spirit will take God's Word and use a portion of it to show us the sin in our life. It is easy to see the mistakes of others, but it is harder to see our own mistakes. This is where the Holy Spirit uses God's Word to show us what we are really like.

Is there a duty to perform? Is there something I am neglecting in my work or my home life that God speaks to me about. I often find God speaking to me through his Word not just about how I have strayed and done wrong but what I am neglecting in my life and failing to do right.

Is there a promise to claim? There are hundreds of promises in the Bible that God makes to us. For instance, God says, *"I will never leave you or forsake you."* So even when we feel God is not there, thankfully, we know he has promised not to leave.

Is there a sin for me to confess? I suppose this is obvious, but it happens all the time as we read God's Word, he will show us our sin. Thankfully there is a promise that goes with this.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (ESV)

Plan and Journal It!

Of course, each of us needs a plan of action for when to read the Bible, but we also need a plan of action for how to apply the Bible. Along with your Bible, have a notebook. When God speaks to you about something, put the date on the top of the page and write down what God is laying on your heart. Write notes in your Bible and write notes in your notebook. If God convicts you about

sin, write down a strategy to deal with the sin. Too many people are convicted by the Word of God but they never follow the prompting of God's Spirit to do anything about it. Journaling and making a response plan will be used by God to transform your life.

Pray It!

I know many here are young Christians and you aren't sure how to pray or how to pray for more than 30 seconds. That is OK. Here is a great way to pray. Pray God's Word right back to him at the end of your Bible reading time. When you pray God's Word back to him, it is incredibly powerful because it bring focus to your prayer and God will work to transform your heart while you pray.

Share It!

When you learn something from God's Word, take the time to share it with somebody else. If you are married, take the time to talk with your spouse about what you wrote down in your notebook from the Bible that day. I know some of you are saying you don't have time to talk with your spouse. You are the guys with boring marriages. Your wife desperately wants you to be the spiritual leader in your home, men.. shut off the television and sit down with her over a cup of tea and talk about your day and God's Word. Trust me, you will thank me six months from now.

If you have kids, dad's, be leaders and get the kids around the table at 9:00 P.M. and read a little of the Bible together; preferably something you studied earlier in the day. If your children are old enough, they should share what they

learned in God's Word. When you share God's Word with others, there is a huge amount of joy and spiritual vitality God puts into our lives.

Conclusion

This morning, is God calling you to be transformed by the power of His Word? When we read the Word we will be wounded because we will see ourself as God sees us. But with the wounding, will come the healing as we see how complete is God's love and forgiveness through Jesus.

The real challenge is now that we know we can really trust the Bible, and we know how the Bible will transform us, will we become people of the book? Will we pick it up, eat it up and be changed by it. This week, fathers, go home and be leaders of the Bible in your home. Each one of us, seek God through the Bible and we will find ourselves transformed.



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