

Decision making and Hearing the Voice of God
Session 5

The Word of God

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:105

"There is a prioritised sequence for the way he guides his saints, and it begins on the basis of holy scripture. The first step to gaining God's guidance is to read your Bible....The scriptures are given to us for our learning... (they) offer the believer lessons and instruction on life, so that he may develop skills, knowledge, and insight."
(Waltke p59)

1. Significant spiritual experiences

I want to use the life of Paul as a way of exploring the importance of the word of God, from the angle of the significant junctures/crossroads in his life.

- Conversion (Acts 9:1-9)
- Baptism (Acts 9:15-19)
- Arabia (Gal 1:1-18)
- Discipleship (Acts 9:26-27, 11:19-26)
- Commissioning (Acts 13:1-3)
- Revelation (2 Cor 12:1-10)

2. A lamp for my feet

The word of God functions as manna for us. It is our daily bread – we cannot accumulate it for tomorrow, we need to go out and collect every day. This should not be seen as only about reading the Bible as it could involve spoken words, pictures, counsel and experiences that God speaks through. The issue is whether we receive those things as God's word.

The word of God has more than one function:

- To keep us on the way

"I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you."
Psalm 119:11

- To guide us on the way

*"The Lord is my portion;
I promise to keep your words"*
Psalm 119:57

- His words are Spirit and life (John 6:63)
- His word teaches, rebukes, corrects and trains (2 Tim 3:17)

3. A light for my path

*"You are my hiding place and my shield;
I hope in your word."*
Psalm 119:113

The words that God speaks to us are meant to create a horizon in time. While every day can be much the same, and routine is the nature of our lives, we need a sense of hope to live meaningfully. People who lose hope tend to live carelessly or cannot see God in the events of their lives.

- God's word sustains/nourishes us (Ps 119:25, 28, 37)
- God's word gives meaning to the things we walk through (Ps 105:19)
- God's word creates the future (Ps 33:6)

4. "The word of the Lord came to me"

This is one of the most common phrases in the OT. The word of the Lord came to the prophets, to those who served the Lord, regularly. There is a sense that it was moment that was not organised, God just spoke.

- Just read it – so God can bring it to you by His Spirit
- Read it out loud
- Memorise scripture that is important to you
- The role of the prophetic
 - It is to encourage and build up (1 Cor 14:3)
 - It can reveal what is hidden (1 Cor 2:9-10)
 - It can confirm (Acts 13:1-3)
 - It must be weighed (1 Cor 14:29)

5. Learn how to interpret scripture

We cannot use the Bible as a magic book or as a problem solving guide. It is the word of God – but the Bible cannot be interpreted literally sometimes, it should not be interpreted metaphorically other times! Interpreting the Bible is an art not a science.

This is a major topic in itself. We will just explore a few key principles. There are two stages to Bible reading:

- Understanding what the scripture actually meant when it was written – what it meant 'then and there'. This is called exegesis.
- Understanding what this scripture now means for me – 'here and now'. This is called hermeneutics.

So we must face that the Bible was not written to us – it was written to others – but we can learn from the scriptures simply because it is God's word. But...

- The Bible was written in books not verses!
- A verse needs to be read in context
 - In the context of the paragraph
 - The context of the section
 - The context of the book
 - The context of the Bible
- The Law of first mention
- We need to read the OT through the NT (Jesus is the lens)
- The meaning of words (Greek and Hebrew)
- We need to understand the culture issues – and then think about how this applies to our culture
- Study is a good thing (jam with the giants)