

## The Bible - God's manual for life

**Bible trivia** – Did you know that around the world the Bible is still the top-seller, and that **100 million** copies are sold every year? This is an amazing fact in today's secular society; let's find out just what makes the Bible so popular, and what sets it apart from all other books.

### The bread of life

It is vital for us to realise that the Word of God is as essential to our spiritual life as bread (a dietary daily necessity in many cultures) is to our physical life. This means that we cannot grow as God desires us to, unless we take time to read the Bible!

In our lifetime we will probably read many books, but this Book is rightly called the **Holy Bible**. Holy simply means 'set apart from the ordinary' or 'special'. We don't approach reading the Bible in the same way as we would read any other book; we recognise that God desires to speak to us through His Word, so we should ask Him to do that and then read with an open heart and mind.

Read 2 Timothy 3 v.16-17. *What do these verses tell you about the Scriptures?*

*Why do we need to be equipped?*

Read James 1 v.22-25 - *Is hearing or reading the Word sufficient?*

What about those who are forbidden by their authorities to own Bibles? In some countries believers may own just a few pages of Scriptures or none at all. It's important to remember that the Bible is a living Word, made alive to us by the Holy Spirit, and even if we couldn't possess the written Word, God would communicate His truth directly to our hearts by His Spirit within us. Let's look at what Jesus had to say about God's Word:

**"He answered (satan) and said, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Matt. 4v4)**

We find that Jesus quoted the Hebrew Scriptures (O.T) many times during His ministry.

Jesus, the living Word of God (John 1 v.14) also referred to Himself in this way:

**"I am the Bread of life." (John 6 v.48)**

He is the 'real' heavenly Bread, the true life-sustaining power to all who will receive Him by faith, and in fact from Genesis to Revelation the Scriptures point to Jesus-His life, death, resurrection and everlasting Kingdom.

### Manna - bread from heaven

The verse which Jesus quoted to satan (above) is a direct quotation from **Deuteronomy 8v.3** where God is speaking through Moses to the children of Israel. He is reminding them of their testing in the wilderness and how He provided daily manna from heaven. It is interesting to see that they were instructed to gather all the manna they needed every morning, to fill them for the day.

*Do you think we can learn anything from God's instructions for gathering the manna?*

Many Christians find that the best time to read God's Word prayerfully is at the start of each new day, when our minds are uncluttered with the day's activities and refreshed after sleep.

Circumstances may not always allow this, and not all of us function best in the morning; if you are a 'night owl', you may prefer to do your Bible reading at the end rather than the beginning of the day. Whatever time you choose, try to make it as much a part of your daily life as eating!

## **A Book of books**

The Bible is actually a collection of books, 39 of which were originally written in Hebrew (which we call the Old Testament) and 27 in Greek (New Testament). There is complete harmony between the O.T. and the N.T., with many references found in the New Testament to the Hebrew Scriptures.

Jesus referred many times to the law and the prophets during His earthly ministry, and He kept the Biblical Feasts as commanded by God. We know this from reading **John 7 v.37** where Jesus preaches at the **Feast of Tabernacles**, and **Matt.26 v.18** which clearly indicates that He kept the Passover with His disciples. This Passover meal, of course, took on its fullest significance as Jesus, the Passover Lamb, instituted what we now call the Communion or the Lord's Supper.

It is very interesting to see that today, more and more groups of Christians are feeling drawn to celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection with a Passover meal, and as they do so, are finding a tremendous blessing and richness of understanding with regard to Jesus as the Passover Lamb.

This is what Jesus had to say about the books of the Law and the Prophets:

**"Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo but to complete them and fulfil them.**

**For truly I tell you, until the sky and earth pass away and perish, not one smallest letter nor one little hook (identifying certain Hebrew letters) will pass from the Law until all things (it foreshadows) are accomplished."**

**Matt. 5 v.17-18 (Amplified Bible)**

## **A book to die for**

Many persecuted Christians have been imprisoned, tortured and even killed for owning a Bible or even part of God's Word. Great men of God literally gave their lives in order to translate the Bible into English from Latin, Hebrew and Greek. In the 16<sup>th</sup>. century William Tyndale was burned at the stake for his 'crime ' of translating the Bible into English so that ordinary people could read it for themselves. Before this, it was inaccessible to any but the clergy since it was written in Latin. Many others suffered and died in Britain for their determination to preach the truth of God's Word, no matter what the cost.

Today, with so many easily obtained versions of the Bible, do you think that we fully appreciate the timeless value of God's Word? No doubt there are numerous Bibles lying neglected on bookshelves in our land today, a sad reflection on how many view this most precious of books.

As Christians we have a lot to learn from orthodox Jewish believers who treat the Torah (the law of God) with utmost respect as the eternal Word of God .

*How is your appetite for the 'bread of life'? Do you think that you would be willing to risk punishment for reading God's Word?*

If you feel that you are not giving priority to God's Word in your life, make this a prayer from your heart:

**Father God, I thank You that You have given me Your Word to help me grow more like Jesus. Please help me to be more hungry for Your bread of life; help me to read it, to hear You speak through it, and to walk in it, by the power of Your Holy Spirit. I ask this in Jesus' Name, Amen.**

**Read Psalm 119 this week.** This is a Psalm all about 'the excellencies of the Word of God'.

With 176 verses it may be a challenge, but stay with it and you will learn so much about the blessings of reading and living out the truth of God's Word.

