

“HOW TO READ THE BIBLE”

Tie-In: The overall focus of Part 2 is how to understand to use the Bible to guide your life, and how to use the Bible as a sword.

Takeaway: In this session, we learn that we can use the Word to guide our life by letting it be a light to show us the right path through the darkness. However, to do this, we have to treat the Word as one unit. We cannot discard half of it, e.g. the Old Testament, because otherwise it is like dimming the light it can offer us by half. Though the Bible is a complex text, the best way to read it is to read it with humility, relying on God’s Spirit to light our way through it.

1 PS. FERDY: LAMP FOR MY FEET

PSALMS 119:105 (NIV)

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”

PSALMS 119:105 (MSG)

“By your words I can see where I’m going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path.”

1 INTRODUCTION

- From the first month, we learned that we have to meditate and focus on the Word of God if we want it to guide our lives, otherwise it’s like trying to listening to God speak while wearing headphones with music blasting.
- This month, we want to learn how to use the Word of God to guide our lives.
- The psalmist tells us that God’s Word is a lamp and light for us, something we can see by. But what does this mean?

2 ILLUSTRATION: JENGA-IN-THE-DARK

- **For an audio-visual experience, follow this link:** <http://gbitoronto.com/wp-content/uploads/illustration-jenga-in-the-dark.mp4>

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING YOUR SWORD // SESS. 1/5

JUNE 2ND // SPEAKER: PS. FERDY, PS. NANDA & JEHUDA

- Imagine your life like a Jenga tower, stacked high full of many pieces. Each piece could represent your education, your career, your relationships. You have to make sure all the pieces fit together or the tower will fall.
- When the psalmist tells us that God's Word is a lamp and light for us, the claim is: **Without God's Word, with only ourselves to guide us, it is like doing Jenga in the dark.**
 - We think we can see how to build our life by ourselves, but actually we are lost in total darkness. Like trying to figure out how everything fits together when you cannot even see a few steps ahead of you.
 - This is life without the light of God's Word.
 - Even the advice people give you is really just guessing in the dark. How can they as a human being see any better than you in the dark?
- But if the Word of God is a light, you can actually start seeing what's around you, and start seeing how the pieces of your life fit together, and start putting your life together.
- The question is: **How do you use God's Word as a light to guide your life?**

2 PS. NANDA: THE BIBLE IS ONE UNIT

- The purpose of the SWORD program is to learn how to use your sword so that you don't hurt someone with the sword of the Word.
- If you just read the Bible, it'll be boring, you want to get something out of it. So learn to read it!

3 OLD AND NEW

- The Bible is made up of two parts: the "Old Testament" and "New Testament."
 - The Old Testament is the Hebrew Bible.
 - The New Testament is the writing which were accepted by consensus by the early Church.
- There is a problem with these names.
 - **The name "Old" Testament makes you think it's old and not relevant as part of your sword.**

4 MISCONCEPTION

- We think of the story of the Bible as the "New Testament" vs. the "Old Testament"
 - As if the Bible is divided against itself.
- I. To us, the Old Testament God is angry and vengeful as opposed to the good and kind New Testament God.

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING YOUR SWORD // SESS. 1/5
JUNE 2ND // SPEAKER: PS. FERDY, PS. NANDA & JEHUDA

EXODUS 34:6-7 (NIV)

6 “The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out, “Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.

7 I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations.”

- The truth: God in the Old Testament is still compassionate, merciful, slow to anger, and full of love and forgiveness.

JONAH 3:10 (NIV)

“When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.”

- When God forgives the sinful city of Nineveh after they repent, Jonah actually gets upset with God because he knew that God was too forgiving of a God.
2. To us, the Jewish Law of the Old Testament is made obsolete by the New Testament. We are now saved by grace and do not need to concern ourselves with works or the Law any longer.
- The truth: In reality, Jesus tells us that we are actually held to a higher standard than even Jewish Law. We are not done with the law.

MATTHEW 5:20 (NLT)

“But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!”

5 THE TRUTH

- The Bible is one unit.
- God is the same, then, now, and forever.
- Yes, the Bible is altogether written by many authors, but they are all inspired by the same Holy Spirit.
- The Old Testament is more than half the Bible, so it is more than half of our sword.
 - **What good is a sword if you’re only using half of it?**
 - The Bible can only become your sword when you use all of it.
 - When Jesus was in the desert and was tempted by the enemy, He used the Hebrew scriptures as a sword.
 - If the Old Testament is good enough for Jesus, it’s good for us to use.

LUKE 24:27 (NLT)

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING YOUR SWORD // SESS. 1/5

JUNE 2ND // SPEAKER: PS. FERDY, PS. NANDA & JEHUDA

“Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

- On the road to Emmaus, Jesus got his followers to understand how the Old Testament was actually a story about Jesus. People can encounter Jesus just by reading the Old Testament.
- The New Testament points to Jesus, but so does the Old Testament. Jesus is throughout the whole Bible. We better understand Jesus by understanding the story that He is finishing.
- **Do you want to know Jesus? Or do you want to only know half of Jesus?**

3 JEHUDA: THREE THINGS THE BIBLE “OBVIOUSLY” IS

- The following are three things the Bible is, and from those three things are derived three principles that will help you read the Bible.

6 THE BIBLE IS A LIBRARY

- The Bible isn't really one book. It's a library of sixty-six books.
- There are three main genres in the library, divided into subgenres.
 - Narrative
 - Poetry
 - Prose-discourse
- All of the books have different genres, which mean they have different purposes, different literary conventions, and you should have different expectations for each.
 - **If you read poetry like a self-help book, you'll be in a world of trouble.**
- Like someone's personal library: the books are different, but they belong together because they point to the type of person the owner of the library is.
 - There are sixty-six books, but they all belong in the Bible because they point to the story of God, humanity, and Messiah.
- **Principle 1: Read it with humility. Read unity in diversity.**
 - What does knowing that the Bible is a library mean for how you read the Bible?
 - From its unity, it means that the reason the Bible was put together was to point to Messiah. **Its organizing principle is not primarily about you.** The Bible is for you, but not about you. Read it with humility.
 - From its diversity, it means that the Bible is not meant to be convenient. You have to put in some work to learn how to read sixty-six different books from different genres written over a thousand years.

7 THE BIBLE IS TO BE USED

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 (NIV)

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

- It is not just enough to have the Word, but we must correctly handle the Word.
- If we incorrectly handle God’s Word, we can misuse it to really hurt someone else or ourselves.

HEBREWS 4:12-13 (NLT)

*“For the word of God is alive and powerful. **It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.**”*

- This is one of the passages used to develop the SWORD program.
- We tend to use the Bible as a sword against other people, giving them verses in the hope that they would feel convicted, or using verses to show people where they’re going wrong.
- But in this passage, we notice two things:
 - **The Bible is a double-edged sword.** This means that the Bible is such that one edge is sharp enough to attack with, but the other edge is sharp enough to hurt us.
 - The Bible cuts open **our** innermost thoughts and desires. The sword of the Bible is supposed to cut us open, not other people.
- Never read a Bible verse and have your first thought be: “Oh this is really relevant for person x.”
 - Reading it this way ensures that the Bible is not being used as it is meant to be used, as a sword to expose **ourselves**.
 - Before thinking about how a verse could convict someone else, think about how it could convict you!
- But if one edge is a mirror for us to convict ourselves with, who is the other edge for?

EPHESIANS 6:17 (NIV)

*“For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against **evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.**” “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING YOUR SWORD // SESS. 1/5

JUNE 2ND // SPEAKER: PS. FERDY, PS. NANDA & JEHUDA

- Who are we fighting? It is not supposed to be against flesh and blood human beings, but we often use the Word to attack and condemn each other. We attack our brothers and our sisters.
 - **The other edge of the sword is meant for the powers of darkness.**
 - Meanwhile our real enemy will let us fight among each other and wait until we destroy ourselves.
- If you are using the Bible to fight against other human beings, you are misusing the Bible.
 - They are not your enemy.
- **Principle 2: Read it with humility. Read it for us and against the evil one.**
 - If the Bible is to be used as a sword, then know who the sword is for.
 - If the first principle of reading the Bible is reading it with humility, so is the second principle.
 - If you come across scripture, use one edge of the sword of the Bible to convict yourself, to cut open your own mind and see if you measure up, and the other edge to resist the power of the enemy. Other humans come into the picture second.
 - There is authority in God's words when they are put to work correctly.

8 THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED BY GOD

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 (NLT)

16 "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."

- We often say that the Bible is divinely inspired or inspired by God. We also say the Bible is true. **But what does it mean for the Bible to be inspired and true?**

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 (NIV)

"so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

- This is what it means for the word of God to be inspired: God has breathed into (the literal meaning of "inspired") the text of the Bible so that it shall fulfill His purpose.
- **The Bible is inspired by God because it fulfills the purpose of God in our lives.**
- In other words, it is not the text by itself which makes it inspired by God. Divine inspiration is functional, it is about purpose.

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING YOUR SWORD // SESS. 1/5

JUNE 2ND // SPEAKER: PS. FERDY, PS. NANDA & JEHUDA

- Any text which fulfills God's purpose in a person's life, e.g. Hillsong's *Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)*, can be said to be inspired in a similar way
- But how do we go about determining what God's purpose in the text of the Bible is?

JOB 28:12-13, 21, 23 (NLT)

12 "But do people know where to find wisdom? Where can they find understanding?

13 No one knows where to find it,"

21 It is hidden from the eyes of all humanity."

23 "God alone understands the way to wisdom; he knows where it can be found,"

- If finding the wisdom contained in the Bible is as simple as reading the Bible, then why does the author of the book of Job write as if we cannot find wisdom ourselves?

PROVERB 2:3-5 (NLT)

3 "indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,

4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,

5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

- We are told that we will only understand the knowledge of God if we call out, cry aloud, and search for understanding like hidden treasure.
 - 1. Call out and cry aloud**
 - When we seek understanding, we cannot seek it alone. We have to "call out" and "cry aloud," which implies the presence of another person we call out and cry aloud to. Who is this other person?
 - 2. Search for it as for hidden treasure**
 - If learning how to use the Bible to guide our life was easy, then why does the author of the book of Proverbs write as if the treasure is hidden? Isn't it just a matter of reading the Bible?

JOHN 14:26 (NLT)

"But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you."

- Here is our answer: The Holy Spirit is the one who teaches us everything.
 - From Job, we learn that we as humans cannot find wisdom ourselves. From Proverbs, we learn that wisdom is like hidden treasure. We learn that we must

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING YOUR SWORD // SESS. 1/5

JUNE 2ND // SPEAKER: PS. FERDY, PS. NANDA & JEHUDA

call out and cry aloud to someone. From Job, we learn that only God understands the way to wisdom.

- Without the Holy Spirit, we understand nothing about the Bible. We think we can understand the purpose God breathed into it, but we are mistaken.
- **Principle 3: Read it with humility. Read it as if God breathes.**
 - If the Bible is inspired, then know what that means.
 - Discerning wisdom, the truth, and the purpose of the scriptures is not meant to be convenient. **God wants you to rely on His Spirit to guide you.**
 - The truth is not *in* the text for you to mine out. **The truth is in what the Spirit is revealing to His people.**
 - **It is when we think we know what the truth of the Bible is that we are most dangerous to ourselves and to other people.** Read it as if you can't know anything about it without His help. Read it with humility.

9 CONCLUSION

- In the art of fencing, there are three swords: the épée, the foil, and the sabre. Each sword has a different form, a different target area on your opponent you are meant to hit, and a different style of use against your opponent.
- In fencing, there are eight defensive positions, three moves, and four types of attacks.
- **Using a real sword is something you have to learn. The same goes for using the Bible to guide your life.**
 - If we have the humility to understand that because using a sword is complex, we will hurt someone if we use one without understanding, then we should strive to have the humility to understand that we also need to put in the work to understanding our Bible.

