

Shaped by the Word in 2019

II Timothy 3:16, 17

Introduction

Some people like to make New Year's resolutions around the beginning of the New Year.

The idea behind the New Year's resolution is that most people feel that their lives could be improved if they would make certain changes or adjustments in their habits

A list of common resolutions generally include matters of diet – losing weight / exercise / financial discipline [put money in savings] / taking up a new hobby / overcoming a vice / read more / travel more / less screen time! / be more friendly to the environment!

A New Year's Quote:

"We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day."

2019 is an open book

What will the year hold for you?

Who will you be in the coming year?

Businessman Jeff Olson has written a book titled, 'The Slight Edge'

It is a book about personal growth / development

In his book he states a common principle that he calls the law of compounding

Jeff Olson: 'If you add a little to a little and do this often, soon the little will become great.'

You can apply that to exercise / saving money – or investing time in learning a skill

And – it also applies to habits and practices that take hold in your life over time [virtue or vice] – they often begin with a little here and a little there

He applied the principle to reading

Jeff Olson: 'Here's a slight edge guaranteed to change your life: read just ten pages of a good book, a book aimed at improving your life every day.' [p. 37]

I would suggest we adjust that principle just a little bit and apply it to Scripture reading – because the Scriptures encourage us in that way - - to be much in the Word / to be hungry for the Word / to let the Word richly dwell within us

*** One of the greatest things you can do to promote personal growth / improvement – is to read the Bible regularly – [a chapter a day / etc.]

Jonathan Edwards – made a list of 70 resolutions over the course of his life.

One of his resolutions had to do with Scripture

Jonathan Edwards: 'resolved to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive, myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.'

Of course – Edwards was a pastor / theologian - - - we would expect him to have a concern in growing in Scripture knowledge - - - but what about the average Christian?

Would it benefit you – if you were to read the Bible for 5 minutes a day? - - - What if you read one chapter of the Proverbs a day - - - or if you were to read thru the NT – over the next 12 months?

Would that make a difference in your life? / a positive difference?

The answer of Scripture is: 'absolutely' – if that reading is combined with faith

That is due to the nature of the Bible and the purpose for which God gave it

II Tim. 3:16-17 - 'All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.'

The word adequate [αρτιος] –refers to someone who is in fit shape or condition – to accomplish an objective

By the Word we become fit for every good work

If you and I want to be fit - - - this is the gym we need to visit often

If we are shaped by the Scriptures – they will lead us to faith in Jesus Christ - - - and on to a spiritually fit physique – where we are fit for every good work

I. The Word of God - v. 16

This is one of the classic texts in the Bible on the nature of Scripture - - - what is it we hold here in our hands - - - and what it accomplishes in our lives [its usefulness]

We have a treasure here – in that we have the very Word of God to us

Treasure can be overlooked – so we need to be reminded of what this is

A Nashville man found a copy of the Declaration of Independence in a thrift store in Nashville [2007] – which he paid \$2.48 for. It turned out to be a rare 1823 copy that had been commissioned by John Quincy Adams. [200 copies were made] The man later sold it on auction for \$477,000 - - - Nice!

Think of how many people walked past this item and saw it as relatively worthless

When we fail to open the pages of Scripture / let the dust accumulate on a neglected Word – we are bypassing treasure

Paul here tells us what we have in our hands

Scripture is ‘God-breathed’ - - - θεοπνευστος

Where did the Bible come from?

It came from God – it is divine revelation

He commissioned the human authors – directed them to communicate His message / while using their personalities and individual styles in the process

We see God claiming responsibility for the Words of Scripture all over the place – ‘Thus sayeth the Lord’

Isaiah 1:18 - Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.'

Martyn Lloyd-Jones: 'The Bible is God's book, it is a revelation of God, and our thinking must always start with God.'

II Peter 1:20-21

Nobody sat down and said – ‘I think I will write some Scripture today’ - - - but God initiated the act

Charles Ryrie: 'God carried men along so that they wrote His message in the Bible.'

The Bible as the Word of God tells us the truth about ourselves / about sin / our world / salvation / judgment

*** How we treat the Bible is a direct reflection upon how we treat God Himself

If we obey Scripture – we obey God
If we trust / believe Scripture – we are trusting and believing God
If we ignore / reject – spit upon Scripture - - - then we are treating God with contempt

All throughout Scripture – how people respond to God’s Word – is how they respond to Him

When Pharaoh refused to listen to God’s Word as it came thru Moses: ‘Let my people go’ - -
- He was refusing to listen to God - - - and would soon see the folly of such

When Jehoakim threw the scroll of Jeremiah into the fireplace – he was rejecting God
[Jeremiah 36]

When people hear the words: ‘repent and believe in Christ as Savior’ - - - they are hearing
from God

Because the Bible is the Word of God – God pronounces judgment upon those who dare to
add to it or take away from it

Rev. 22:18-19

What is this saying?

This is God saying, ‘Hey - These are my words – don’t you dare add to them or take away
from them’

We believe the canon of Scripture is closed [1st century] – because the church was built upon
the foundation of the apostles and the prophets [Eph. 2:20] - - Christ being the cornerstone

God is not adding to Scripture today – because the foundation has been laid – we do not have
apostles or prophets today

We have the writings of the apostles and the prophets - - - right here

Kevin DeYoung: ‘You do not need another special revelation from God outside
the Bible. You can listen to the voice of God every day. Christ still speaks,
because the Spirit has already spoken. If you want to hear from God, go to the
book that records only what he has said. Immerse yourself in the word of God.
You will not find anything more sure.’

God speaks to us right here – the Holy Spirit takes these words and illumines them / applies
them to our lives

I Thess. 2:13

We have the Word of God here in our Bibles

D.L. Moody: 'this book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of life, the doom of sinners, the happiness of believers. Read it to be wise. Believe it to be safe. Practice it to be holy. It gives light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the soldier's sword, the Christian's chart. Here paradise is restored: heaven is opened and the gates of Hell described. Christ is its theme, our good its design and the glory of God its end.'

'It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, a river of pleasure. It is given us in life, will be open in judgment, and remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and condemns all who trifle with it.'

That's what we have in our Bibles

It is worth every minute you invest in reading it
Some Christians come to the end of their days – have found that they read the Bible thru from cover to cover over 50 times – always to great profit

II. Getting into Shape - v. 16

Paul here lists 4 things the Word can do - - - ultimately with the objective of making us fit for every good work

The Word is profitable for:

1) Teaching / doctrine - διδασκαλιαν

The Scriptures teach us / instruct us

They teach us about who we are / what our problem is - - - what God's solution is

Man is a sinner – in need of a Savior – that Savior is Jesus – who shed His blood on Calvary

The Bible helps us get the gospel right in our thinking / it will lead us to an assurance of salvation - - - or will expose false assurance in the heart of the deceived

Do you want to know for sure that you know and have a personal relationship with God?
Best thing you can do is to read your Bible – and pray for the Holy Spirit to show you

The *Babylon Bee* is a Christian satire website

They once posted an article titled: 'Bible lacking Sinner's Prayer Returned for Full Refund.'

In the fictional article – the disgruntled customer makes his complaint: 'I searched this Bible through and through and couldn't find anything about a magic prayer I could lead people to say in order to instantly get them into the kingdom and have them be forevermore secure in their eternal salvation no matter what their life looks like afterward.'

He thought the problem must have been with the Bible – take it back!

The Bible dispels wrong notions about God and salvation / ourselves – replaces such with truth

It strikes down our false premises

It teaches that salvation is by grace thru faith in the person and work of Christ - - - it teaches us that where true faith resides there will be repentance from sin / regeneration - - - a new heart - - - transformed living - - - new inclinations to obey / to wrestle against sin

As John so aptly put it – 'By this we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments.' - [I John 2:3]

We need the Bible to be our teacher

Calvin: 'Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which as nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know, so nothing is taught but what is expedient to know.'

The bible teaches us ethics

What is right / moral behavior in this world? [What is wrong behavior?]

Current opinions are changing every day – on this or that issue

What about sex outside of marriage?

What about homosexuality?

What about abortion?

*** Theodore Roosevelt: 'There are those who believe that a new modernity demands a new morality. What they fail to consider is . . . that there is no such thing as a new morality. All else is immorality.'

Sodom and Gomorrah thought they had a new morality – it was just the old immorality

God's Word exposes the folly of new morality

Psalm 119:105 - 'Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.'

There is a danger of thinking – well if I just adopt a reading program and barrel my way thru the Scriptures – I will be blessed

Not necessarily

The Pharisees heard all kinds of teaching from Jesus – but it did them no good – because they rejected Jesus - - - were more interested in arguing with the truth

Satan tries to snatch away the word / blinds people to the truth

The better approach to Scripture is that of the Psalmist

Ps. 119:18 - 'Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from thy law.'

We come to God and confess our own weakness and limitations – we call upon Him to open our eyes and help us to see what is there

We come with humility asking God to teach us

Isaiah 66:2

2) The Word is profitable for **reproof**

The fool [in Proverbs] does not receive reproof

Prov. 12:15 - 'The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.'

There is no better counsel / no better counselor than Scripture

Let the Word reprove / rebuke

When the Word reproves us – it is telling us how to be more fit for good works / to glorify God

3) Correction – to restore to a right state
Scripture points us back to the right path – thru faith in Jesus

4) Training in righteousness

When an athlete skips his training for a while / lets his diet slide - - - what happens?

He is not as sharp in his sport / not as fit for the challenges

When we neglect regular intake of the Bible - - - we become flabby Christians / with wrong ideas about God / wrong notions about truth / morality / ethics

III. Fit for Good Works - v. 17

Paul says the outcome of Scripture properly utilized will be a person who becomes spiritually fit – for every good work

adequate – ἀρτιος = describes someone who is in fit shape or condition

It is the Word that makes us adequate / builds us up / equips us to live rightly to God's glory / causes us to grow in our relationship w/ God

When we come to see all these great truths about what the Bible does for us – We should want to read this book

We should have a desire to let this book be a guide to our lives

Many people grasp this on one level – they see how the Bible could bring positive change to their lives - - - but for some reason - - - their desire stalls out when it comes to action - - - like an abandoned New Year's diet in February

John Piper: 'Over the years in my pastoral ministry, many people have complained to me that they do not have motivation to read the Bible, they have a sense of duty that they should, but the desire is not there . . . when I ask them to describe to me what they are doing about it, they look at me as if I had misunderstood the problem.'

Piper: 'We think there is nothing we can do. "Oh well, today I have no desire to read. Maybe it will be there tomorrow . . . this is not the way the Psalmists thought or acted. It is not the way the great saints of church history have acted either. Life is war and the main battles are fought at the level of desires, not deeds.'

There are worldly interests and distractions that seek to choke the Word / keep us from it

We do not have to be passive or fatalistic about such things – but rather should call upon God for aid - - - to 'incline our hearts to His Word.' - - - this is war

Satan does not want you to read this book
And – he does not want you to be shaped by this book

Psalm 119:36 - 'Incline my heart to your testimonies . . .'

i.e. – pray: ‘God make me hungry for your Word!’ - - - I want the blessing that comes from such a hunger - - - fill my heart with a love for your word - - - I don’t want to miss out on the blessings you have for me here - - - I want to grow and be changed by your truth

Conclusion

The principle of compounding

“If you add a little to a little and do this often, soon the little becomes a lot.”

Reading the Bible – you might need to start with small amounts – start with one chapter – or a few verses

Pretty soon – you’ll be where Paul says:

Col. 3:16 - ‘Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you.’

***** Luke 11:27-28**

Oh – blessed be Mary

Jesus says, ‘no – blessed are those who hear the Word of God and observe it.’

Who will we listen to? [Jesus or some other voice]

2019 is an open book with blank pages on it

Would you like to write blessed on those pages?

You can – by hearing the Word of God / and observing it

Trust Jesus