

God's Inspired Little Book

The Song, Part 5

Psalm 19:7-9

Last year a research study was commissioned by the American Bible Society and conducted by Barna Research. It revealed some good news, and some really bad news.

First, here's the good news:

- 85% of households in this country own at least one Bible; in fact, the average household owns nearly five copies of the Bible.
- 69% of Americans believe the Bible provides answers and direction on how to live a meaningful life.

But here's the bad news:

- 26% of those same people either never read it or only read it once a year
- 79% of those surveyed believe they are knowledgeable about the Bible, but only about half of them could identify the first five Books of the Bible.

How are we doing in here – say them with me:

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Nehemiah

Just checking ☺

- Here's the most troubling news to me of this entire survey – 46% of these same people believe the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are nothing more than different expressions of the same spiritual truths.¹

Even though the Koran teaches:

- that Jesus is a mere prophet and by no means deity;
- that Jesus didn't die on a cross and He didn't atone for our sins;
- that salvation is not granted by faith in Him alone and when He returns to earth, He will rule for around 40 years as a faithful Muslim before He eventually dies and is buried next to Mohammed.
- That doesn't sound like the same spiritual truths does it?

Of course, the Book of Mormon teaches:

- that Jesus and Satan are among many sons of Elohim,
- and they are actually step-brothers, born of women whom God the Father slept with;
- Jesus isn't God in the Flesh but only a man who gained glory by His good works;
- But you got to believe in Him and if you do you get to go to heaven – although there are actually three heavens and only faithful Mormons get into the top heaven – the celestial heaven
- And that heaven includes Mormon men, who've become gods themselves, inheriting their own planets and along with their multiple wives bear children throughout eternity.

That doesn't sound like the Bible either.

Obviously somebody isn't really reading the Bible.

One author wrote, tongue in cheek that if all the Bibles in our country were dusted off at the same time, the dust cloud would eclipse the sun for at least a week.

In fact, this survey went on to say that when people were made aware of their ignorance of the Bible, most of them said the reason was they didn't really have enough time to read it.

More than half of the Books of the Bible are about the size of one newspaper article or blog; half of the Books of the Bible can be read in less than 20 minutes.

The issue isn't so much that we don't have the time; the issue is that we've lost sight of the treasure.

Frankly, that danger exists in any generation. And so David the Psalmist, on behalf of God, presents one of his most famous advertising campaigns in *Psalms 19*.

Turn back there . . . tonight there will be advertisements costing millions of dollars for 30 second slots, right? I've already scanned most of them online – they look like any other commercial although there is one really cute one with a puppy in it.

I'll say no more about which animals are cute and which animals really . . . well you know.

Here's David's advertising campaign for God's revelation. You remember, in the *first 6 verses* David caused us to wonder in amazement at the glory and creativity and grace and joy of God demonstrated through creation.

We called creation God's Big Book.ⁱⁱ

Now David focuses our attention on God's little book – the Bible.

Creation is a book of pictures; the Bible is a book of words.

And it fills in the blanks by the way. While you can come to the conclusion of a Creator by looking at the Big Book of creation; you need this little Book to discover who He is.

Creation tells you there's a creator; The Bible tells you the Creator's name.

Creation tells you there must be a Designer; The Bible tells you there must be a Redeemer.

In fact, David will change his reference to God here in *Psalms 19*. In the *first 6 verses* about creation, He calls God – *El* – not even Elohim. Simply *El* – it's the most generic of all names for God revealed in the Bible.ⁱⁱⁱ

But now throughout the rest of this Psalm, David refers to God as Yahweh – Jehovah/Lord.

This is the name of the personal, covenant making God who introduced Himself to Moses.

This is the personal, redeeming, revealing, communicating, Lord.

So, it's as if David says with excitement – "Look at what God made!" (*verses 1-6*); And now David says, "Just look at what God said!" in the *last 8 verses*.

And we're only going to get to *3 of them*, tonight.

Now, what I want to do is divide what David says about God's inspired special revelation, called the Bible, into two sections.

1. First, what the Bible is;
2. And secondly, what the Bible does.

Each section has six points.

What David begins to do here in verse 7, is describe for us, in 6 different ways, what the Bible is:

1. First, in *verse 7*, he tells us that *the law of the Lord is perfect*.

The law – the Torah – the Hebrew word announces – that is, in its broader sense, any instruction flowing from the revelation of God as the basis for life and action.^{iv}

And David says, "*it is perfect*." *tamim* – it is sound – literally, it is ethically and theologically sound.^v

Whatever instruction God delivers is sound.

Problem is, we're like that boy who came home from his first grade class . . . it had been a month and Mom was wondering how her son was enjoying being a seasoned elementary student, in Ms. Decker's class. She said, "Honey, are you enjoying first grade?" And he said, "I love First Grade – I just don't like it when Ms. Decker tries to teach us stuff."

I love that kid . . . can you remember back that far? What was your favorite part of 1st grade? (Mike Woods – you're the headmaster of a school – what was your favorite part of 1st grade?) **RECESS** – that's all I remember too – well that and a few **paddlings** . . . I didn't deserve.

Listen, whatever God tries to teach us – it's good theology – and that worth remembering too!

2. There's a second characteristic; David writes in the *middle part of verse 7*, *the testimony of the Lord is sure*.

This is legal language; whenever someone is called into court by the prosecution or defense, they get up give their testimony. They testify to what they know – what they’ve seen – what they’ve heard.

David writes in legal terminology – God is testifying . . . and whatever and whenever He does, David writes here, *The testimony of the Lord is sure . . . trustworthy.*

In other words, you can count on it. One author wrote, “You can throw your weight on God’s testimony and it will hold up.”^{vi}

3. There’s a third thing to note about this little book – notice *verse 8. The precepts of the Lord are right.*

Precepts are those things God has charged us to do – they are guiding principles; they are like signs along the highway.

They tell you where you are; where you’re going; how fast to travel, where the exits are; my two favorite signs are Citgo Gas station signs and the sign for the next Cracker Barrel. I try to pace myself.

It takes discipline. But I’m going to heed them – it’s good advice.

David says, whatever signs God has revealed in His word – whatever He tells you to do, it’s right. Heed them.

Spurgeon wrote on this text, “a [good] physician gives the right medicine; a [good] counsellor give the right advice; so also does this Book of God.”^{vii}

4. Notice the fourth characteristic of God’s inspired little Book – *verse 8, the middle part – the commandment of the Lord is pure.*

The commandment of the Lord is pure – that word pure means without contamination.

Like crystal clear water . . . it’s clean, pure water.

It isn’t muddy . . . it really isn’t complicated – it’s clear.

Trouble is, we don’t like being commanded – commandments are well, commanding.

Someone wrote, there are three ways to get something done:

1. Do it yourself
2. Hire someone to do it
3. Or 3, forbid your kids to do it

Enough said on that point!

5. David goes on, fifthly, to add to that a similar characteristic, further in *verse 9: the fear of the Lord is clean.*

You’ll notice David calls the revelation of God “*the fear of the Lord*” . . . why?

Well, for one thing, when God revealed Himself to Moses, it was with fire and smoke and thunder . . . it was fearfully awe inspiring.

Secondly, when God reveals Himself, the typical person in the Bible ends up making mention of their sinfulness.^{viii}

Isaiah saw the revelation of God in His holiness and responded by “*Woe is me . . . I’m undone . . . unclean!*” (*Isa. 6:5*)

So David effectively writes, “The revelation of the Lord is an awe-inspiring, even fearful encounter that reveals our sin, but – notice – the end product is *clean.*”

David isn’t saying that God’s commandments are easy to obey or fun to observe or simple to adjust to; he’s just saying they are good and uncontaminated and in the end, protective.

I read recently how over a recent 4th of July weekend, a large group of motorcyclists gathered in upper New York to ride in protest against the New York state law that requires motorcycle riders to wear a helmet. So they made this ride in protest. One of the men riding that afternoon lost control of his bike flew headfirst over the handlebars. His head struck the pavement and he was pronounced dead a few hours later. The medical examiner said later in an interview that had this man been wearing a helmet, he probably would have survived.

Imagine the irony of protesting a law that – if he had obeyed it – it would have saved his life.^{ix}

So also will this little inspired Book.

6. **Now here’s David’s final, sixth, characteristic of Divine revelation – *verse 9 – the rules of the Lord are true.***

The word translated “*rules*” can be understood as God’s judgments – or God’s decrees.

Here’s the bottom line – what God says is wrong is wrong and what God says is true is true.

His word is *the* authority on that which is right and wrong. Not you and me; not the church; not the government; the authority is the Word of God.

Sola scriptura – the scriptures alone.

So this is what David says the Bible is:
Go back to verse 7 –

1. **The law of the Lord is** theologically sound
2. (Skip a line) **The testimony of the Lord is** trustworthy
3. **The precepts of the Lord are** always good advice
4. **The commandment of the Lord is** uncontaminated
5. **The fear of the Lord is** without corruption
6. **And the rules of the Lord are the** authority on right and wrong.

Now David moves from telling us what the Bible is, to telling us what the Bible does.

Again, six results are described.

Go back to verse 7 again and now look at the alternating lines.

1. **The law of the Lord is perfect, notice, reviving the soul.**

This is the same word David used in *Psalms 23* for the Lord restoring his soul.

In other words, no matter how far you've gone; no matter how deep you've fallen – God has given you the map to return to fellowship with Him.

Listen, David is effectively saying, the Bible **brings you back.**^x

It brings you back to where you really ought to be.

2. **Secondly, the Bible makes you wise.**
Notice in *verse 7b, the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*

Now you might not like this description – the simple. David isn't referring to a simpleton – someone who refuses to learn.

He's referring to the simple – and in the Bible, this often describes someone who is open-minded and ready to learn.^{xi}

Over the years, a veteran missionary to Haiti, collected and kept interesting prayers she heard villagers pray in their mountain village Bible studies.

One prayed, "Father, we are all hungry baby birds today; our heart-mouths are gaping wide, waiting for you to fill us."

The Bible brings you back and makes you wise and gives you joy.

3. **Notice thirdly, the Bible rejoices the heart.**

And that follows, because there's no greater joy than walking wisely in fellowship with God.

4. **Fourthly, verse 8b. the commandment of the Lord is pure – and look what it does – enlightening the eyes.**

Here's the point: the Bible not only brings you back and makes you wise and gives you joy, but it helps you see.

In fact, the Hebrew construction implies that the revelation of God gives off light. Like a light bulb, or a candle or a flashlight – or the sun. It illumines the path.

The truth is, we might think we can see okay, until light is intensified.

That happened to me this week. My kids were out in the front yard making a snowman on Friday. I stepped out on the porch to take pictures. And the sun was reflecting off that snow into my eyes and it was really bright.

I took some pictures – you know you're getting older when someone else builds the snowman and you take pictures – and then when I stepped back inside my study at home, it was dark. I literally had to stand there for a few minutes for my eyes to adjust – everything had been just fine until I stepped into the presence of a greater light.

Listen, it's possible to think your life is alright – that you can see everything just fine – until the light of God's word shines and you realize you weren't nearly as illuminated as you thought.

Your path needed a brighter light.

The Bible helps you see.

5. **The fifth benefit of the word at work in your life – verse 9. The fear of the Lord is clean – enduring forever.**

#5 – The Bible lasts forever; the Bible is true forever.

The heavens and the earth will pass away, but my word will last forever. Jesus said in Matthew 24:35.

And here's the good news – if the truth of the Bible lasts forever; it'll be true for your entire

lifetime. When you're 50, 60, 70, 80 you're not going to find out that it isn't true anymore.

Listen, the Bible you carried when you were young will carry you when you grow old.^{xii}

The Bible lasts forever.

6. One more – verse 9. The rules of the Lord are true; and righteous altogether.

Here it is: #6 – The Bible will never lead you astray.

Spurgeon wrote, The word of God is founded in righteousness and thus it is always right.^{xiii}

It will always hit the mark of genuine godliness and true holiness and humble purity and right living.

It'll never lead you to miss the mark.

A crew from the TV show Myth Busters was staging an experiment in the town of Dublin, California. They were trying to fire a cannonball into some large water containers at a bomb disposal range. Unfortunately, the crew seriously underestimated the dangerous power of the cannon.

By the way, I'll tell you ahead of time, no one was physically hurt . . . don't worry.

According to a newspaper report, "The cantaloupe-sized cannonball missed the water containers, tore through a cinder-block wall, skipped off a hillside and flew some 700 yards east. That's 7

football fields long – I don't know why football is on my mind . . .

But that didn't end the damage. The cannonball bounced in front of home on a quiet street, ripped through the front door, raced up the stairs and blasted out through the bedroom wall leaving a perfectly round hole in the stucco, flew across a six-lane road, took out several tiles from the roof of a home on Bellevue Circle and finally slammed into Toyota minivan in a driveway on Springdale Road.

A spokesman for the local sheriff's department said, "Crazy, crazy, crazy, crazy . . ."^{xiv}

One stray cannonball!

Can you imagine the destructive power of one stray life?

Can you imagine the constructive power of one Bible enriched, Bible following, Bible saturated life.

Thank God for His inspired little Book:

Why?

- Because the Bible brings you back
- It makes you wise
- It gives you joy
- It helps you see
- It lasts forever
- And it will never lead you astray.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 2/2/2014 by Stephen Davey.

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i American Bible Society, *The State of the Bible, 2011* <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2012/may/1052112.html>

ii James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms: Volume 1* (Baker Books, 1994), p. 168

iii James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms: Volume 1* (Baker, 1994), p. 170

iv *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 5*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Zondervan, 1991), p. 184

v Donald Williams, *Mastering the Old Testament: Psalms 1-72* (Word Publishing, 1986), p. 153

vi Ibid

vii Ibid

viii Williams, p. 154

ix <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2011/july/1072511.html>

x John Phillips, *Exploring the Psalms: Volume One* (Loizeaux Brothers, 1988), p. 150

xi Williams, p. 153

xii Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations and Quotes* (Thomas Nelson, 2000), p. 62

xiii Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Volume 1* (Zondervan, 1977), p. 273

xiv Demian Bulwa & Henry K. Lee, "Mythbusters cannonball hits Dublin home, minivan," *SFGate.com* (12-7-11)