

The Word of God

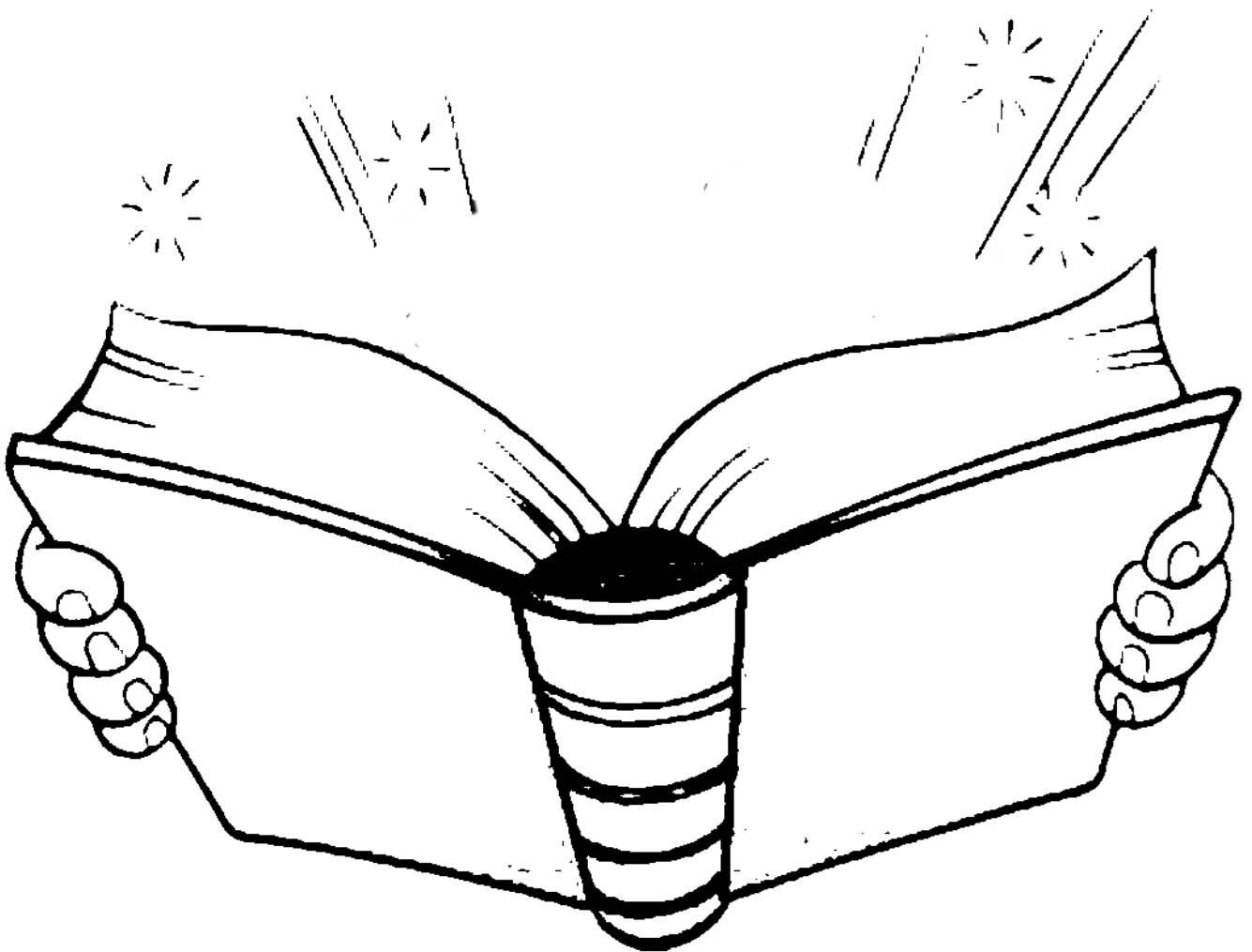


The Bible was given to man by God

The Bible is a collection of 66 books that are the written record of messages God gave to about 40 people whom He chose as His spokesmen. Although the Bible was recorded by men, it was written by God.

2 Timothy 3:16—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

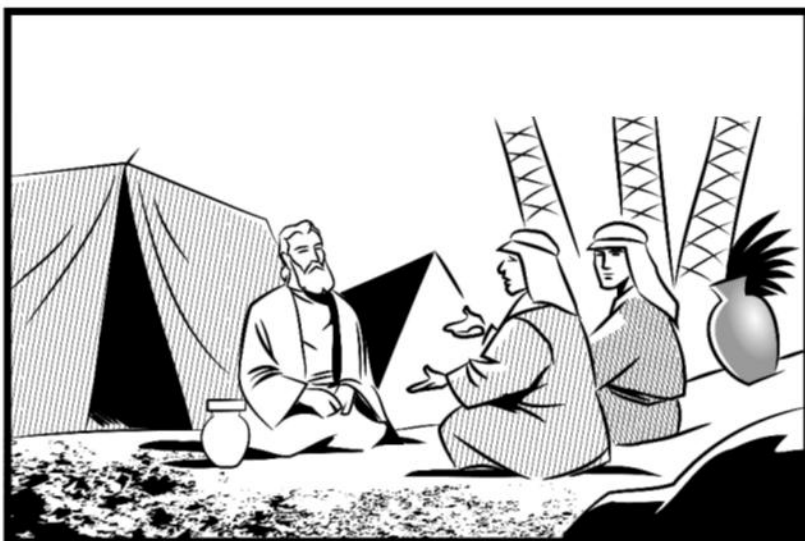
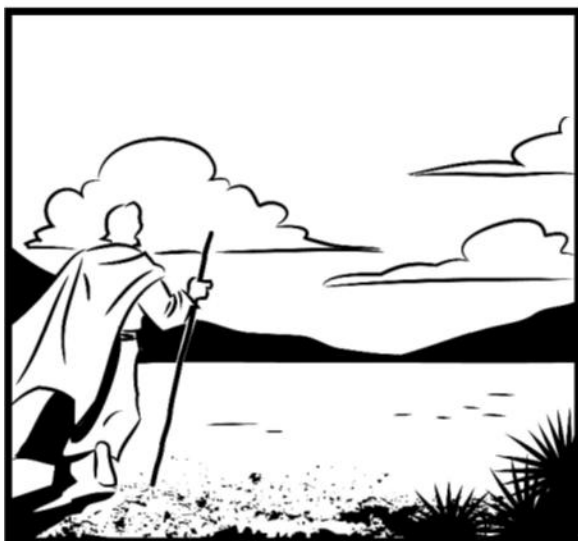
2 Peter 1:21—For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.



Archeological Finds Confirm the Veracity of the Bible

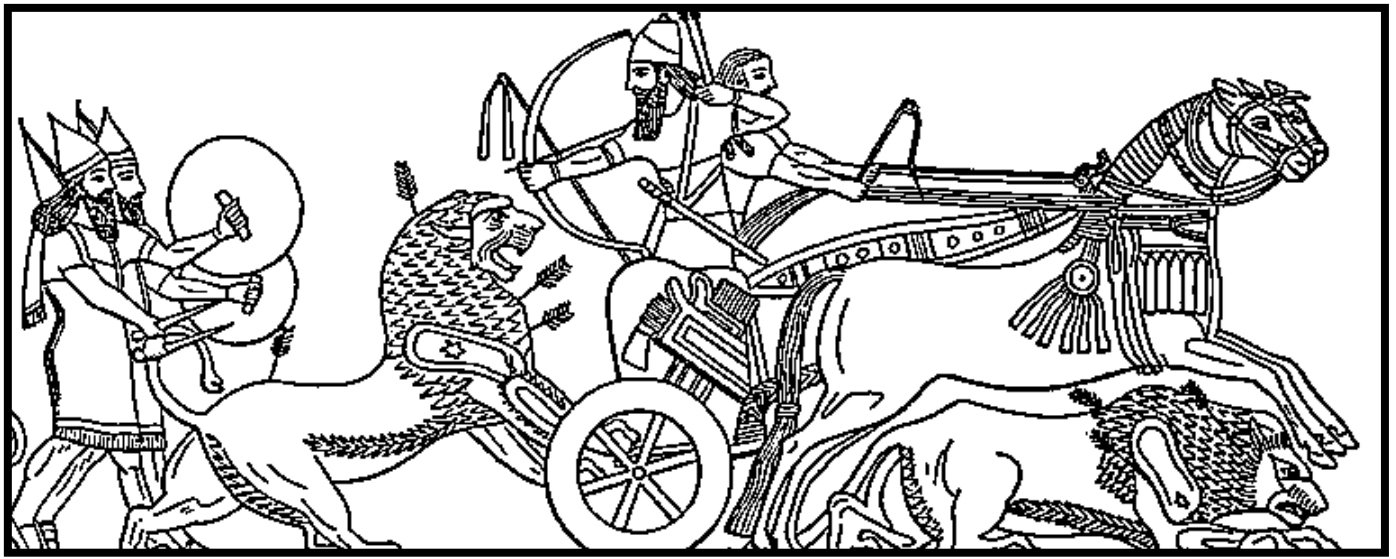
Despite popular dismissals of the Bible as little more than fables and fabrication, archaeology has provided remarkable evidence of its historical accuracy.

For example, the archive of the ancient city of Ebla in northern Syria was discovered in the 1970s. The documents it contained, written on clay tablets around 2300 BC, demonstrate that personal and place names in the accounts of the Hebrew patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are real.

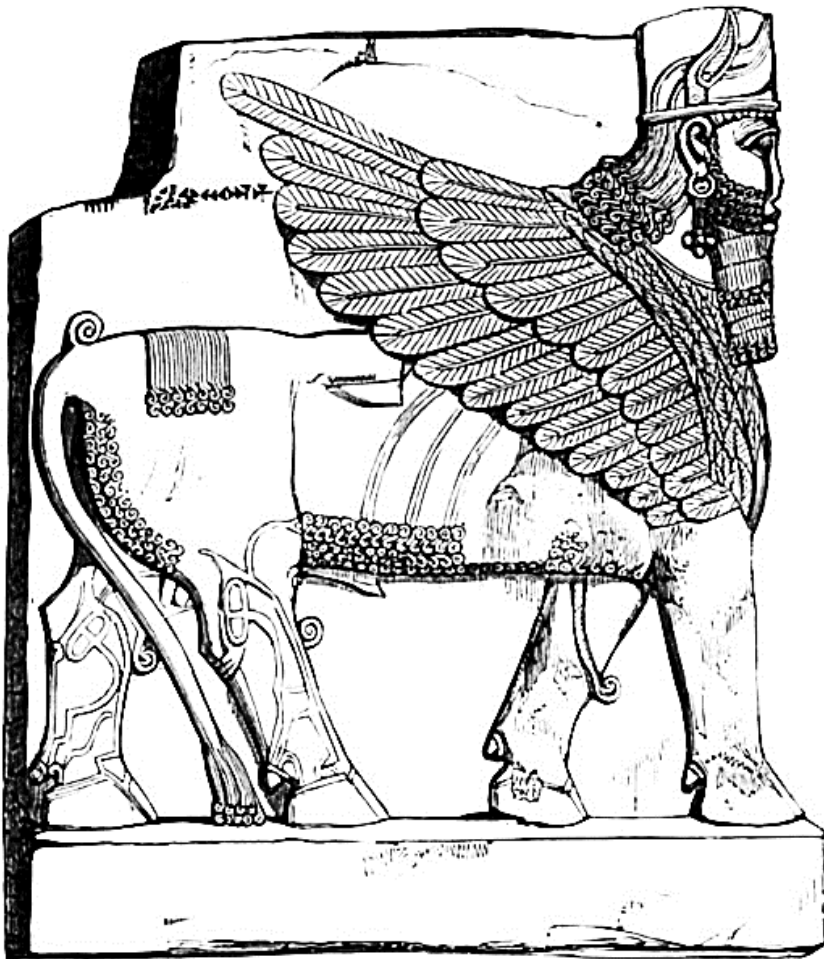


Ancient customs reflected in the stories of the patriarchs have also been found in clay tablets.

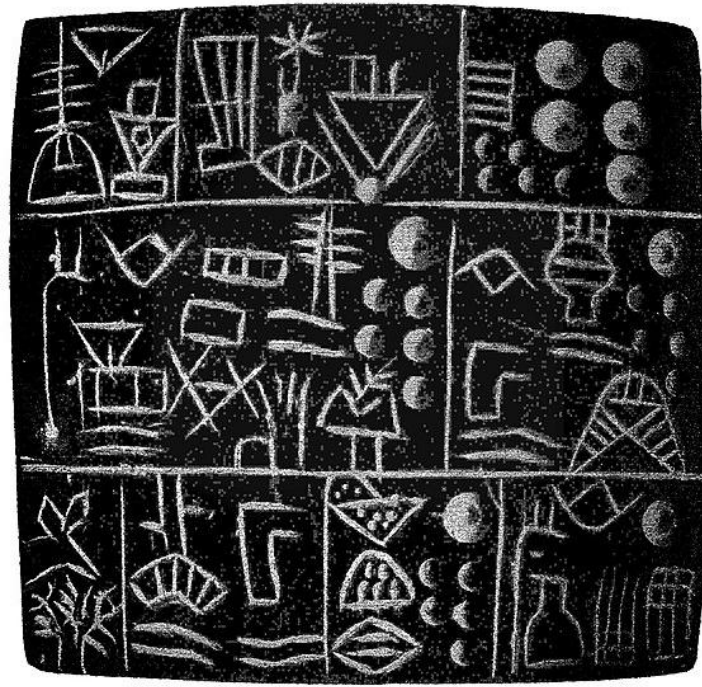




Another example concerns Sargon, king of Assyria, who is referred to in the book of Isaiah, but whose existence historians long disputed: "In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and fought against Ashdod and took it" (Isaiah 20:1).



We now know that Sargon II was indeed an Assyrian king who started his reign in 722 BC. Sargon's palace at Khorsabad, Iraq, was discovered by Paul-Émile Botta in 1843. Further excavation of the site some 90 years later found the very event mentioned in Isaiah—Assyria's conquest of Ashdod—recorded on the palace walls. Visitors to the British Museum in London can see the colossal winged bull taken from the palace.



A third example was discovered in the British Museum itself. In the summer of 2007, visiting professor Michael Jursa, an Assyriologist, was searching through the museum's collection of 130,000 Assyrian cuneiform tablets when he came across a name he half remembered—Nabu-sharrussu-ukin, described there in a hand 2,500 years old as "the chief eunuch" of Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon.

The small tablet on which the name appears is a bill of receipt acknowledging Nabu-sharrussu-ukin's payment of about 0.75 kg of gold to a temple in Babylon. Jursa checked the Old Testament and found the same name, rendered differently by the Bible's translators, in chapter 39 of the book of Jeremiah. Nebo-Sarsekim, according to Jeremiah, was "chief officer" to Nebuchadnezzar II and was with him at the siege of Jerusalem in 587 BC when the Babylonians overran the city.

Dr. Irving Finkel of the British Museum summed up the significance:

This is a fantastic discovery, a world-class find. A throwaway detail in the Old Testament turns out to be accurate and true. I think that it means that the whole of the narrative [of Jeremiah] takes on a new kind of power.



God's Word is true and never fails

Psalm 119:89—Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven.

Isaiah 40:8—The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.

Matthew 24:35—Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My Words will by no means pass away.

The Bible works!

A skeptic, talking about the Bible, said that it was quite impossible these days to believe in any book whose author was unknown. James, who believes in Jesus, asked him if the compiler of the multiplication table was known.

"No," he answered.

"Then, of course, you do not believe it?" asked James.

The skeptic replied, "Oh, yes, I believe in it because it works."

"So does the Bible!" responded James.



The Bible tells us that Jesus is the "Word made flesh."

John 1:1,14—In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (14) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Hebrews 11:3—By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

God has always spoken to people in many ways: through the beauty and wonder of His Creation, through His prophets and messengers, and through His written Word. But the clearest revelation of Himself—of His character, of His Love—is found in His Son, Jesus, Whom the Bible calls "the Word." Words are the means by which we express ourselves, by which we reveal our thoughts, our feelings, our character.—And Jesus is the means by which God expresses Himself to us. God's most outstanding means of communication with us, the way that He chose to communicate His Love to the World, was by His Own Son, Jesus.



The Bible was written for our benefit

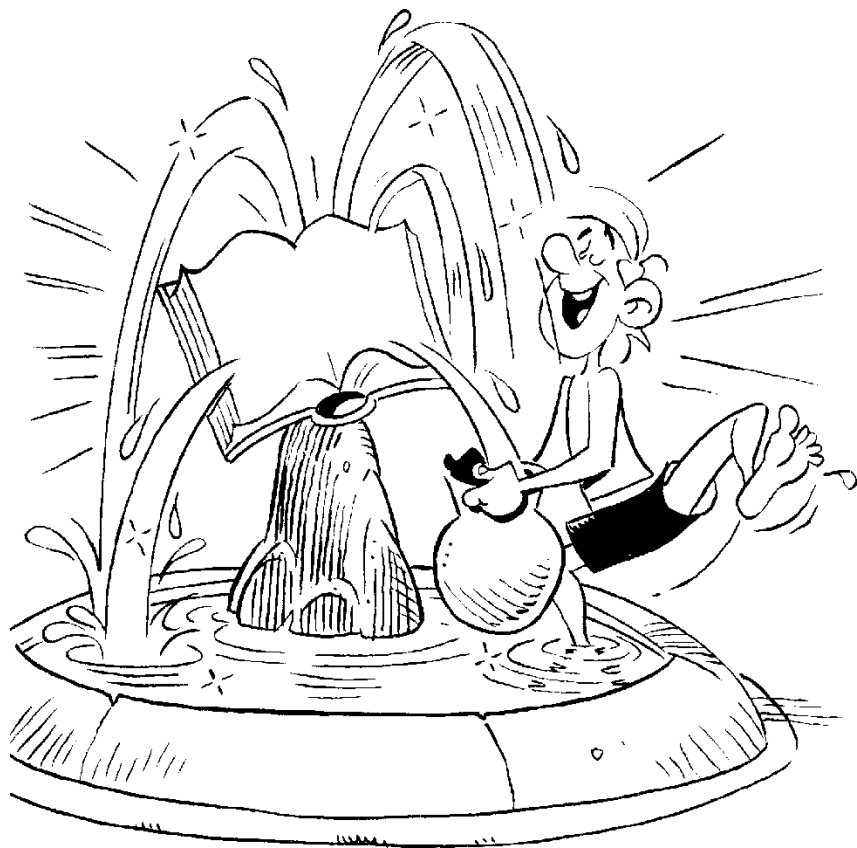
John 19:35—And he [John] who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.

1 Corinthians 10:11—Now all these things happened to them [Bible characters] as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.

John 4:13-14—Jesus answered and said to [the Samaritan woman], "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

The Water of Life

Water is the most valuable commodity on earth, outside of life itself, which is why God symbolizes the Word with water, calling it the Water of Life, along with the Word of Life, the Water of the Word!—Water being such an essential element of man's life, existence and survival, and without which all life dies!



It's important to keep the Word

Obedying and keeping the Word proves we know and love Jesus. As a result, we receive benefits!

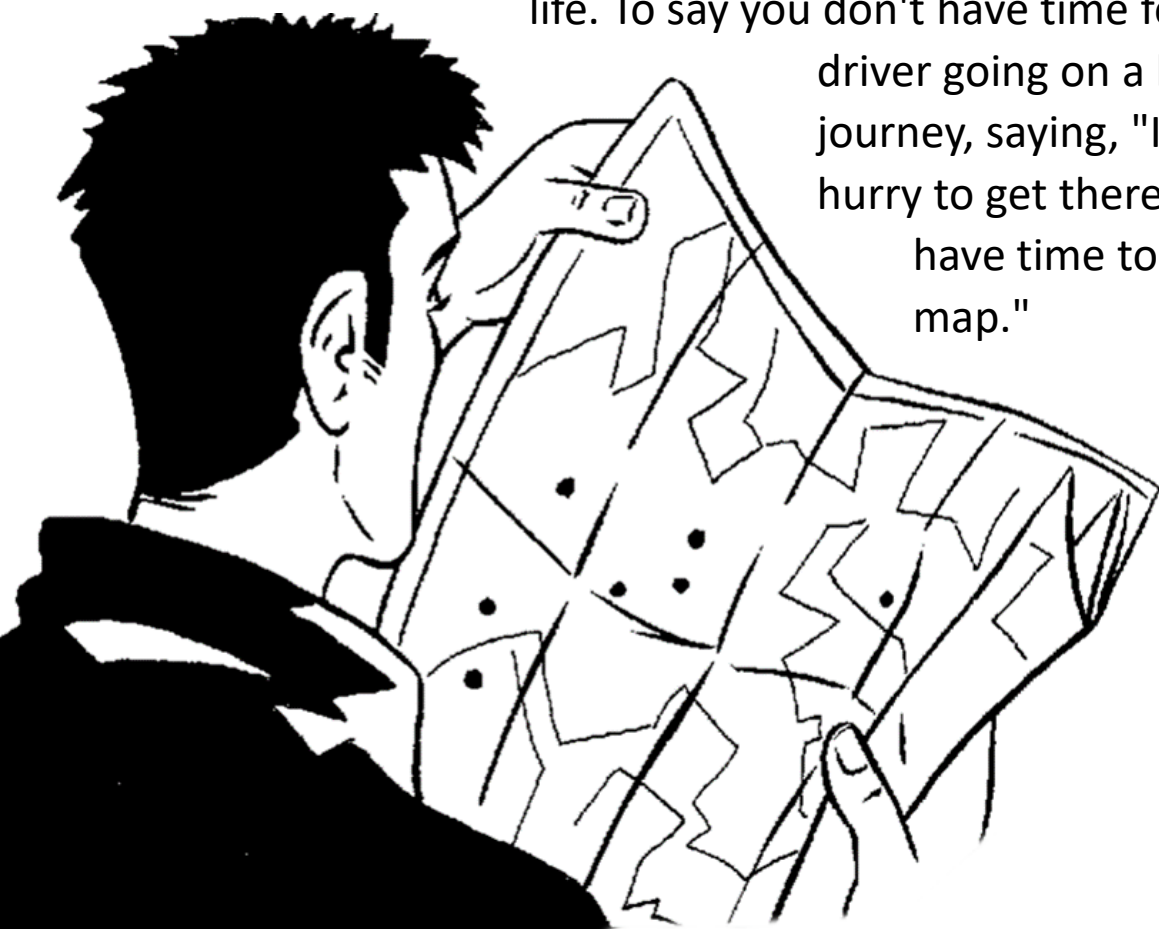
John 8:31-32—Jesus said, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. (32) And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Luke 11:28—More than that, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!

John 15:7—If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

John 14:15—If you love Me, keep My commandments.

The Bible is like a map to guide you through life. To say you don't have time for it is like a driver going on a long journey, saying, "I'm in such a hurry to get there I don't have time to look at the map."



Benefits of the Word

The Word gives us faith, truth, wisdom and strength!

Psalm 119:7—I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments.

Romans 10:17—Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Acts 20:32b—The Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance.

Meditating on the Word brings blessings and success:

Joshua 1:8—This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Psalm 119:130—The entrance of Your Words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

The Word cleanses us, heals us, makes us happy, gives us peace!

John 15:3—"You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you."

Psalm 107:20—He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

Psalm 119:165—Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.

Jeremiah 15:16a—Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.

We need to read the Word to receive the benefits

A certain wayward young man ran away from home and was not heard of for years. After he heard that his father had just died, he returned home and was kindly received by his mother. The day came for the reading of the will; the family members were all gathered together, and the lawyer began to read the document. To the surprise of all present, the will told in detail of the wayward career of the runaway son. The boy in anger arose, stomped out of the room, left the house, and was not heard from for three years. When eventually he was found, he was informed that the will, after telling of his waywardness, had gone on to bequeath him a large inheritance.

How much sorrow he would have saved himself and others, if he had only heard the reading through! Thus, many people only half read the Bible, and turn from it dissatisfied. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death," yes. But it says more. It says, "but the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23).



How to Read God's Word

When you sit down to read, the first thing you should do is pray and ask the Lord to bring the Word alive to you by His Holy Spirit. As David prayed,

Psalms 119:18—Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.

John 6:63—It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The Words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

And Paul told us:

2 Corinthians 3:6b—For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Unless we read the Word in a prayerful and receptive attitude, looking to the Lord and His Holy Spirit for guidance, it can be very difficult for us to understand some things. Ask the Lord to give you the spirit of wisdom:

Ephesians 1:17-18—...give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (18) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened...

You can read a Scripture maybe all your life without grasping its meaning, until the Holy Spirit speaks it to you and applies it to your situation and brings it to life! The "voice of His Word," as it's called, is when He speaks to you personally through the Word, or He gives it to you in an answer, He brings it to life, applies it to a situation, and it becomes alive suddenly! It's no longer just mere words any more, or words that just run through your head, but all of a sudden you get the point!

Don't just read—study, question, and apply

2 Timothy 2:15—Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

One of the main goals is to develop a personal connection with Jesus, so you are able to get spiritual nourishment from His Word. "Rightly dividing the Word of truth" means to know what the Word says and means.

Read the Word carefully, prayerfully, and thoughtfully.

If every time you sat down to eat a meal, you gobbled and gulped it down as fast as you possibly could, you wouldn't digest or absorb it nearly as well as if you had eaten it a little more slowly.— Nor would you enjoy it as much!



This same principle applies to your spiritual food as well. You can miss a lot of the meaning, the real depth of what the Lord's talking about, unless you stop to think about it and apply the Word to your personal situation, and ask, "How is that true and how does that apply to me?"—Not with a questioning or a doubtful attitude, but one full of faith, knowing that you can learn even more lessons if you search further and dig deeper.

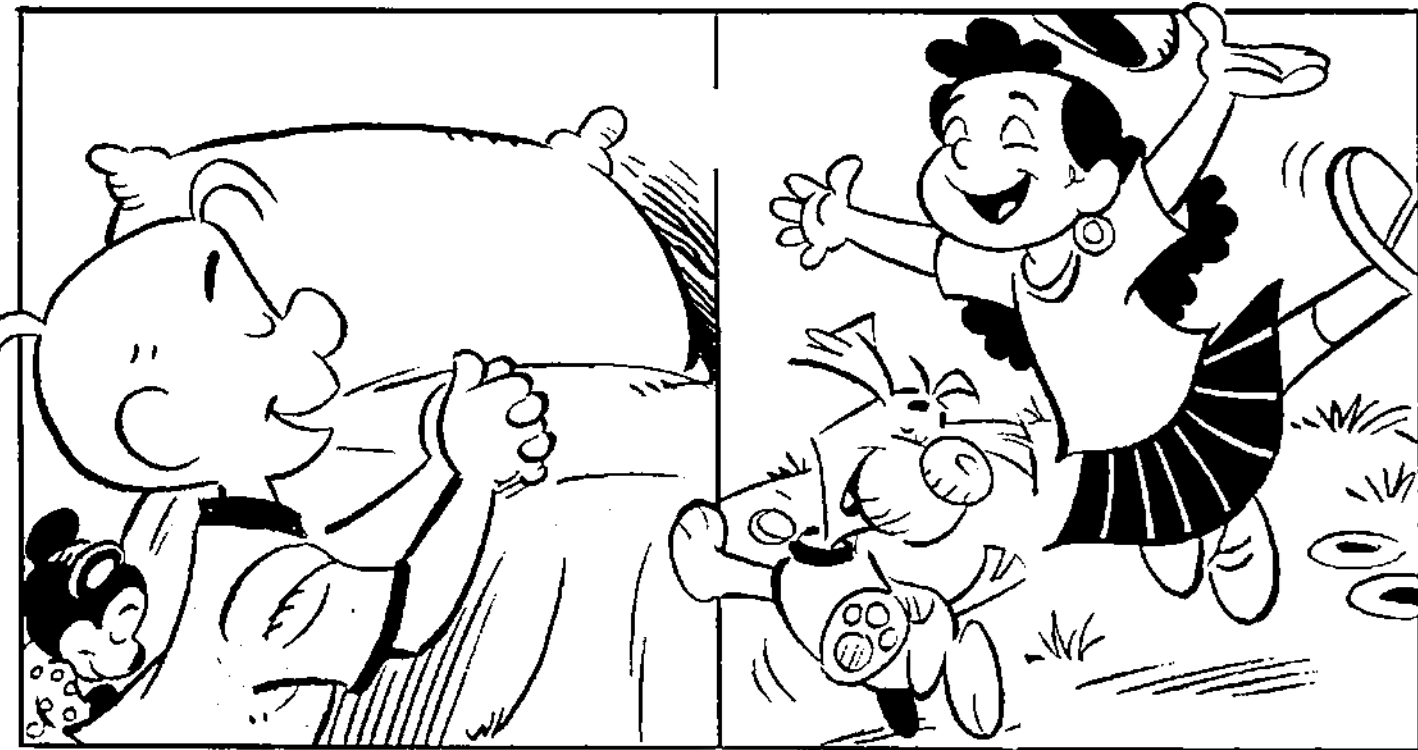
Doers of the Word

"The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives." —Dwight L. Moody

The Word of God has been given to change our character and bring it more into conformity with Jesus'. All of our efforts in Bible study are valueless if in the final analysis we do not change and become more like Jesus. We must not merely listen to the Word, but we are to do what it says.

James 1:22—But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

You can't really get to know the Word of God unless you apply it in your life. You can be a walking Bible encyclopedia, with your head crammed full of Biblical and theological knowledge, but it won't do you any good if you don't apply it practically in daily living.



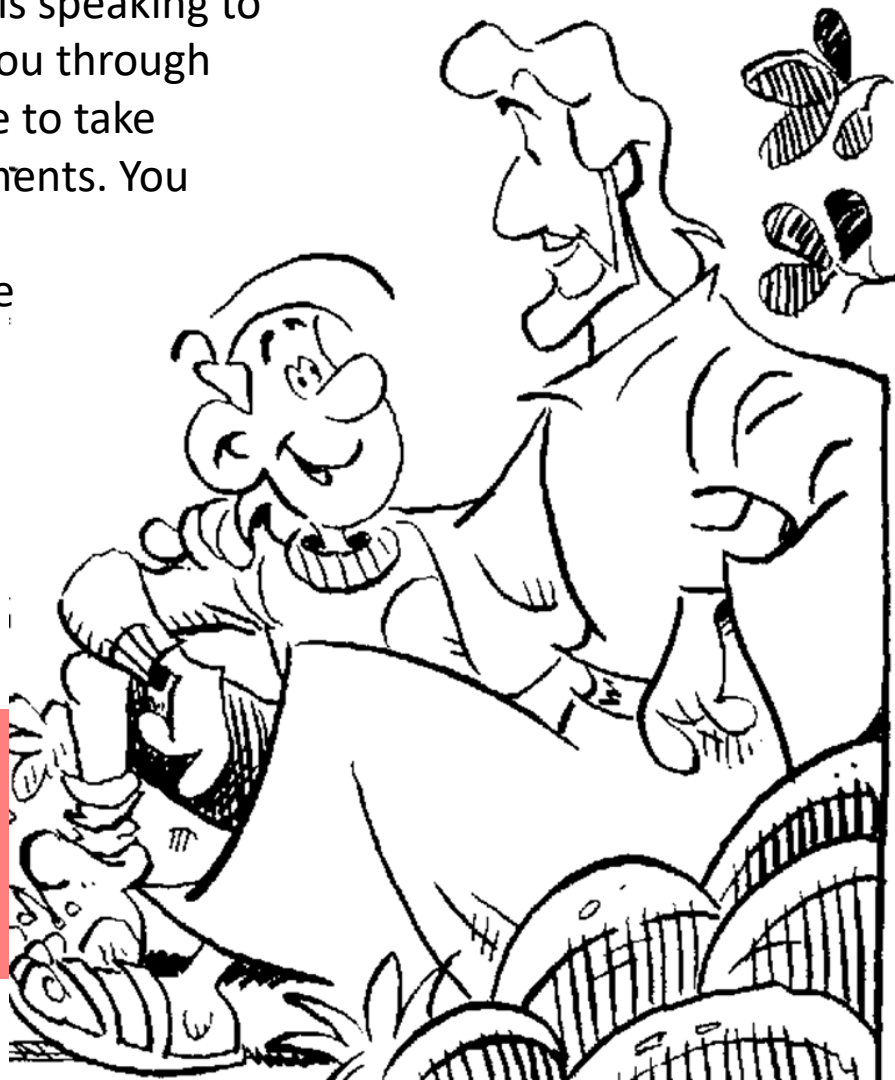
When you are reading the Word, pray and ask the Lord to help you apply what you are studying and show you specifically what He wants you to do. Ask the Lord to show you:

"How can I apply this Word in my life?"

"How can I use this knowledge to help others?"

When you read the Word and you feel the conviction of His Spirit, stop right then to think and pray and meditate on what that instruction means for you personally. Don't delay taking the time to apply it to your life, because if you delay, the conviction will wane, you will forget, and the Word you read will be of no effect in your life. When the Lord is speaking to your heart, challenging you through His Word, that is the time to take action, to make commitments. You need to think, meditate, consider how you can live the Word, and make a definite plan right then as to what you'll do. Don't wait. Later will probably be never!

John 13:17—If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.



Memorizing

Bible memorization has always been a strength to God's people, even as King David testified:

Psalm 119:11—Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!

Moses made mention of the same:

Deuteronomy 11:18—Therefore you shall lay up these Words of Mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets (decorative bands worn on the forehead) between your eyes.



The Scriptures we commit to memory will be a great blessing to us. In times of sickness and difficulty, verses are a tremendous comfort and strength. Knowing specific passages and Scriptures also helps us in our witness to others, as Peter advised,

1 Peter 3:15b—Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.

What to do when you don't understand something

When reading through the Bible, pray for the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you read, but don't worry if you don't understand everything the first time you read it; no one does. Keep at it. The more you read the Word, the more you will understand, and often when going back to reread a certain passage, you'll find new meanings and "treasures" that you hadn't noticed before.

We do not have to understand everything

St. Augustine was once walking by the seashore. He was greatly perplexed about a particular aspect of faith and doctrine. He observed a little boy with a seashell running to the water, filling it and then pouring it into a hole that he had made in the sand.

"What are you doing, my little man?" asked Augustine.

"Oh," said he, "I am trying to put the ocean in this hole!"

Augustine learned his lesson, and as he walked away, he said, "That is what I am trying to do. I see it now. Standing on the shores of time I am trying to get into this little finite mind of mine things which are infinite." Let us be content to let God know some things that we cannot know.

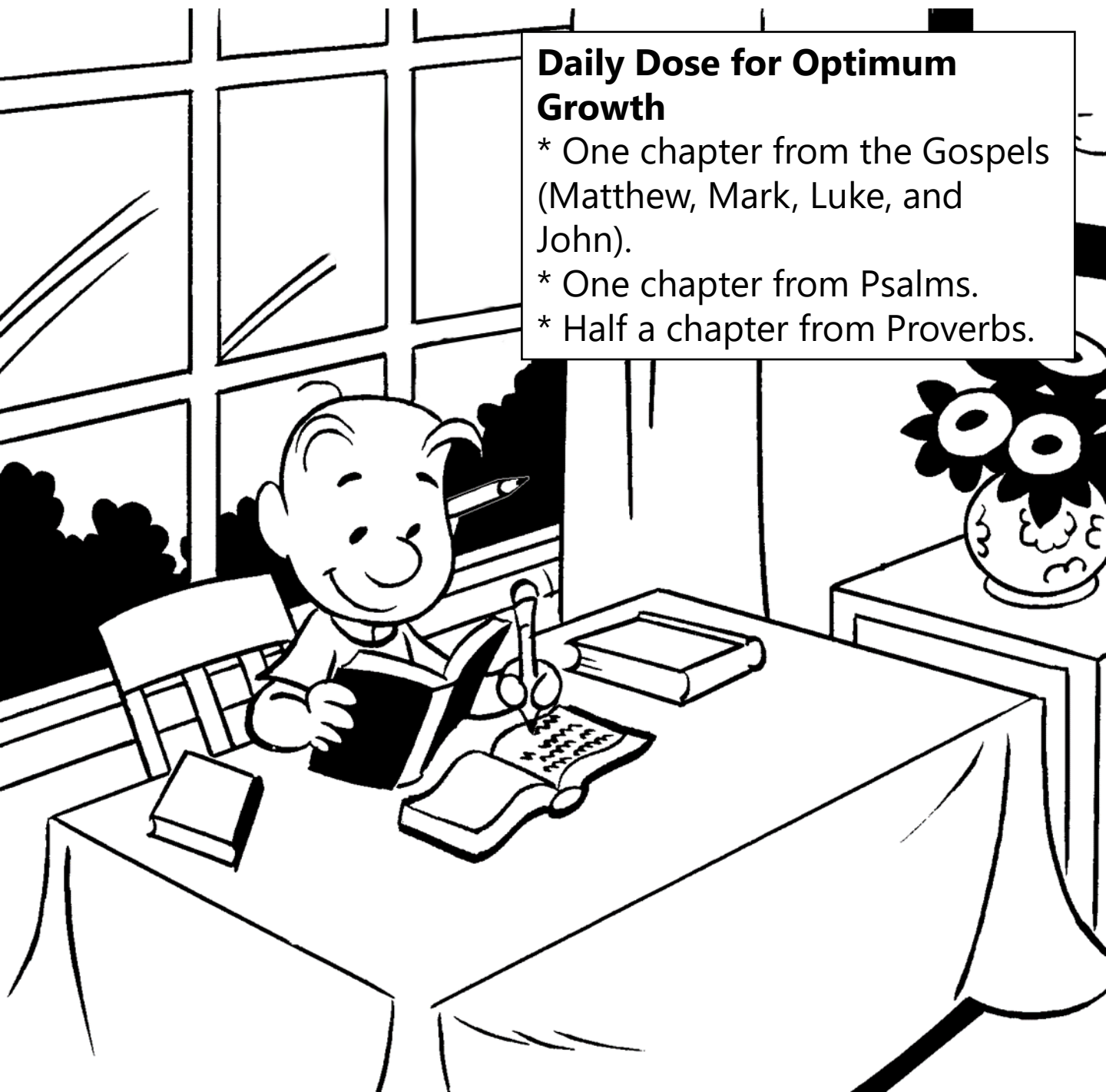


Now it's up to you to put this into action!

You can think of this as being like a cookery class. We've given you a recipe, but if you don't go home and pull out the ingredients and try to cook it, you'll never find out how delicious a meal you could enjoy!

Daily Dose for Optimum Growth

- * One chapter from the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
- * One chapter from Psalms.
- * Half a chapter from Proverbs.



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