

The Book of Books Week 2 - Message Outline

MAIN IDEA: The Bible is the story of God and His people that leads to Jesus and teaches us to live like Jesus.

TEACHING TEXT: ***12 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.*** Hebrews 4:12 NLT

WHAT DO WE WANT STUDENTS TO KNOW? The Bible is a special book. It's a collection of sixty-six books, written by dozens of authors, spanning hundreds of years, in multiple languages, inspired by the Spirit of God, that leads us to Jesus and shows us how to live like Jesus. It's true, and it's transformative.

WHAT DO WE WANT STUDENTS TO FEEL? Inspired by the way God worked through people to bring His Word into existence. Challenged to see the Bible as more than an ordinary book, but as an invitation to encounter God and be changed in the process.

WHAT DO WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO? Read God's Word more days than they don't with the goal of growing in your relationship with Jesus and becoming more like Jesus.

THE OUTLINE

TENSION: Right up front, I want you to know that the goal of this message, and ultimately this series is to inspire you to **Read the Bible more days than you don't.** this year. Why? Because the Bible is the best selling, most influential, and greatest book ever written, that nearly everyone on the planet can access for free, and, in spite of that, most of us never even take the time to read it, but if we did, it would change our lives more than any other habit, goal, or resolution ever could. Hebrews chapter 4:12 tells us...

12 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. Hebrews 4:12 NLT

Now, if you're not a Christian, and you don't read the Bible consistently, that makes sense, but, in my opinion, still unwise. Because even if you don't believe all the stuff about God and the supernatural, there is no denying how dramatically our world has been shaped by this book. **The historian Tom Holland (not Spiderman), who does not believe in God, wrote a book (PICTURE) about showing how the values of our modern world have been more shaped by the Bible than anything else.** If you are a Christian, then, not reading the Bible isn't just unwise, it's *selfish* and *foolish*. **When I was younger, every time I got a card from my grandma for Christmas or my birthday, you better believe all I cared about was whether or not there was money inside. I'd open that sucker up, grab the money, and close it without ever reading the note she wrote in it. Why? Because I was selfish and cared far more about what I could get out of it than the love and care she put into it. Can anyone relate?** Sadly, this is how a lot of us treat the Bible. All we care about is what we can get out of it, not actually recognizing that it is a gift from God, given to

us as an act of love so that we could know Him and grow in our relationship with Him. That's why, just to call it what it is, not reading it is *selfish*. And, it's *foolish*. Because reading the Bible more days than you don't will change your life more than any other habit ever will. Don't just take my word for it though, the CBE, after studying the lives of more than 100,000 people discovered what they call the **The Power of Four**. When someone only reads the Bible 1, 2, or 3 days a week, there is no change in their lives. But, once someone starts reading it 4 or more days a week, more days than they don't, the changes become noticeable and measurable.

- 228% more likely to share their faith. 407% more likely to memorize Scripture. 59% less likely to watch porn. 30% less likely to struggle with loneliness.
- Reduces temptations to: overeat, have sex outside of marriage, neglect your family, lie, lash out in anger, drink excessively, gossip, overspend, etc. (*More want, less not want.*)
- *"Engaging the Bible four or more days a week is the single most powerful predictor of spiritual growth (becoming more like Jesus in our thoughts, words, and deeds)." - CBE*

All of that is why, whether you're a Christian or not, one of the wisest things you can do this year is: **Read the Bible more days than you don't**. 2 Timothy 3 tells us this...

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. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NLT **Pray**

TRUTH: We are in a message series called *The Book of Books*, where we are diving deep into what the Bible is, how to read it, what it's about, and why we can trust it. So, between this week and next week, we're going to answer four big questions to help us better read, understand, and be transformed by God's Word. This week: 1. **What is it?** 2. **How do we read it?** Next week: 3. **What's it about?** 4. **Can we trust it?**

Starting with the first question, What is the Bible? Because if you don't know what something is, chances are really good you won't know how it's meant to be used... **When I was younger, I loved the TMNT (PICTURE 1)**. And there was a character in that show who often helped the turtles named **Casey Jones (PICTURE 2)**. Well, one day, I found this bin full of my dad's old martial arts gear and was stoked out of my mind because in it was a pair of **nunchucks (PICTURE 3)** and this other thing that looked just like **Casey's mask (PICTURE 4)**! Now, if you know what that is, you know that it is not a mask and should not go anywhere near anyone's face... But, because I didn't know what it was, you better believe I started running around the house swinging my dad's nunchucks and holding that thing right up to my face pretending it was a mask.... **Why do I tell you that story?** Because if you don't know what something is, you're not going to know how it's meant to be used. And this right here is why, for many of us, we have such a hard time with the Bible. We don't know what it is and we don't know how to use it.

The Bible is the story of God and His people that leads to Jesus and teaches us to live like Jesus. The Bible is not just a book of rules, or a textbook with the answers to all of our questions, or a list of quotes meant to make us feel better. It does some of all those things, but it

is so much more than any of those things. The Bible is a collection of sixty-six books, written by dozens of authors, over the course of hundreds of years, all inspired by the Spirit of God to tell one unified story that leads to Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Why does this matter? Because if you don't know what the Bible really is, you're going to read it wrong.

2. How do we read it? Remember two things: **Jesus is king and context is everything.** All of it leads to Jesus and teaches us to live like Jesus. The context gives meaning to what we're reading and resolves every contradiction. Let me show you what I mean. In Genesis 22, we find the story of Abraham being asked by God to sacrifice his son Isaac. If you don't know what the Bible is or how it's meant to be read then this can seem like a story about child abuse, religious fanaticism, and a bloodthirsty god. Let's take a look to see what's really going on.

1 Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. (At this point, Abraham had been walking with God for ten chapters and an estimated 50 years. So, Abraham should be more than ready for this test) "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am." 2 "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you." Genesis 22:1-2 NLT

Let's start with some context. Back then, sacrificing children to gods was normal. So, when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, this would not have been all that shocking. Especially considering Isaac was only born because God miraculously allowed Abraham and his wife to get pregnant in their old age, long after they would have been able to naturally. But, that's not all. One chapter earlier, God made a promise to Abraham: **God told Abraham, "... Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted."** Genesis 21:12 NLT

Abraham wasn't dumb. By this point, He knew that God was different from other gods. And so, when asked to do the unthinkable, he pressed on in faith. Trusting that God would keep his promise, one way or another. If we jump forward, we get even more context: **Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again...** Hebrews 11:19 NLT

So, how does the story go? Abraham gets up early, saddles up his donkey, and sets out with two of his servants and his son, Isaac. And then, *on the third day of their journey*, we're told...

9 When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. 10 And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. 11 At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!" 12 "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son." 13 Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. 14 Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "**the Lord will provide**"). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: "**On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.**" Genesis 22:9-14 NLT

Can you see it? The purpose of this story, of this test, was to give us a picture of God's character as a promise-keeping provider. But, instead of just saying that, God showed it in a dramatic way that Abraham, that Isaac, that all who came after them would never forget. And, this story is a preview of what God would provide, nearly 2000 years after this, in the same place, when He provided His own son as the perfect sacrifice on the cross, and then, *on the third day*, He would come back to life again! That's what this story is all about! A God who is better, wiser, and so much more loving than any other God, and how we, as His people, can trust that He will keep His promises.

But, that's not all, because, it's in this story that the word love first shows up in the Bible: ² **"Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."** Genesis 22:2 NLT Now, check this out, because the first time love shows up in the NT, is in Matthew 3, where God says this about Jesus... ¹⁷ **And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love..."** Matthew 3:17 NIV But, that's not all! Because the first time John uses the word love in his account of Jesus' life is in John 3:16, one of the most famous verses in all of Scripture: ¹⁶ **"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."** John 3:16 NLT

Do you see it? The story of Abraham and Isaac has always been a picture of God's character as a promise-keeping provider, and it's a preview of His love for us that would be revealed through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross for our sins!

CONCLUSION: The only way I was able to learn any of that, is because a long time ago, I decided to **Read the Bible more days than you don't**. And, I never stopped. Now, I don't want to pretend any of this is easy because it is not. The Bible is not an easy book to read, but it's absolutely worth it. Because when you commit to read God's Word consistently, He will show you more and more of who He is and, and He will shape you more and more into who you're meant to be.

That's why, if you want to take God's Word seriously, then, in addition to just reading it, some great things you can do to help you get the most out of it are to read it with a *guide and a group*. Because, unlike most books, the Bible was never meant to be read in isolation. We're meant to read it with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, faithful pastors and teachers, and in community with other believers. And, the good news is that every week when you show up to Switch, you will have a guide to help you understand the truth of God's Word and a group of people to talk about how you can apply it to your lives. In addition to that, we wrote a series of Bible Plans, called **Fully Devoted**, (QR Code to Fully Devoted Bible Plans) that will take you through the big story of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, so that you can learn the context and see how all of it points to Jesus and teaches us to live more like Jesus.

So, if you want to grow in your faith, become more like Jesus, and encounter the love of God like never before, then commit to read the Bible more days than you don't. Because the Bible is the story of God and His people that leads to Jesus and teaches us to live like Jesus. Let's pray.