

Unleashing the Transforming Power of God's Word into Your Life: Exemplified by Ezra

Ephesians 6:17 & 2 Timothy 3:16-17

God wants us to survive the active war zone we must live in.
He wants us to not be wounded, devoured, distracted, and neutralized.
What is His plan?
We Wear the Armor He gives to us.
The final piece is what we use to make it through life.
God said we all need a Word-protected life.

We All Need the Word-Protected Life

The final piece of armor is for us to take up, and use is the Word of God.
The Word of God as vital to our lives is the clearest doctrine presented in God's Word.

Faith only comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Salvation only comes by the implanted Word (James 1:21).

Spiritual Life is only sustained by the Word daily (Mt. 4:4).

Usefulness to God (sanctification) only comes through the Word (Jn. 17:17).

Protection only comes by the Sword of the Spirit the Word (Eph. 6:17).

The Four Purposes God's Word Was Given to Us

What does the Sword of the Spirit look like when used in the life of a believer?

The Scriptures give us many amazing examples to learn from. But we always must remind ourselves why the Scriptures were given to us by God. Remember what Paul told us in 2 Tim. 3:16-17?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV) All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable **for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

God's Words are Profitable for Us

Each person described in the Scriptures, has a life that is profitable for:

For doctrine (that's what God says is right),

For reproof (that's what God says is wrong),

For correction (that's what God says is how to get right with Him), and

For instruction in righteousness (that's how God says to stay right with Him).

Those four truths Paul says is the underlying purpose for God giving to us His Word.

Anywhere we look we can find doctrines, reproofs, corrections, and instructions in righteousness. So, here are some of those inspired examples that show us doctrines, reproofs, corrections, and instructions in righteousness!

God's Word Protected Joseph's: Stress-Filled Life

Psalm 105:17-19 He sent a man before them—Joseph—who was sold as a slave. 18 They hurt his feet with fetters, He was laid in irons. 19 Until the time that his word came to pass, **the word of the Lord tested him.**

Hated by his brothers; Abused, enslaved, sold, and deported for the financial gain of family members; Unjustly accused, and imprisoned by his own employer; Chained, and forgotten in jail; Vindicated, elevated, and used, because his life passed the test of God's Word.

God's Word Protected Joseph's: Stress-Filled Life!

Are you allowing the Sword of the Spirit, God's Word to protect you from the stresses of life?

God's Word Protected David's: Danger-Filled Life

Psalm 16:11 **You will show me** the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

David was in dangerous situation from his boyhood. He became a man of fierce hand-to-hand warfare, constantly surrounded both by dangers and by the presence of God.

David's life protected by God's Word made him into the man after God's own heart.

God's Word Protected David's: Danger-Filled Life!

Are you allowing the Sword of the Spirit, God's Word to protect you from the dangers and fears of life?

God's Word Protected Paul's: Affliction-Filled Life

Romans 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the **patience and comfort of the Scriptures** might have hope.

Paul was stoned, ship wrecked, and sleepless; hunted, and heckled; imprisoned, and beaten, but he never stopped hoping in God's Word.

God's Word Protected Paul's: Affliction-Filled Life!

Are you allowing the Sword of the Spirit, God's Word to protect you from the struggles, persecutions and afflictions of life?

God's Word Protected Jeremiah's: Tragedy-Filled Life

Jeremiah 15:16 **Your words were found, and I ate them,** And **Your word** was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.

Maybe one Biblical figure was the neediest. Known as the weeping prophet, partly for his compassion, and partly for his condition of sadness. Jeremiah's woes were unimaginable to our relatively peaceful lives.

He lived through the death throes of the final generation of the nation of Judah.

From an earthly perspective **Jeremiah's life was a failure.** During his lifetime **he watched the decay of God's chosen people,** He preached for 40 years and **saw no visible result** among those he served. He had **no one to find joy and comfort with** because **God never allowed him to marry.** He lived **under a constant threat of death.** He **lived with physical pain.** He **lived with emotional pain.** He was **consumed with sorrow.** His life **ended with no relief.**

Now look again at Jeremiah 15.16.

What is the only thing that kept Jeremiah going as he literally was thrown into the pits of life? The Word of God!

That was all he had, written on his heart, not carried around to casually look at now and then. In his most desperate moments the Word from God he had read, studied, memorized and mediated upon fed his soul and produced the joyful fruit of the Spirit of God.

Jeremiah 15:16 Your **words were found,** and **I ate them,** And **Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart;** For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.

God's Word Protected Jeremiah's: Tragedy-Filled Life!

Are you allowing the Sword of the Spirit, God's Word to protect you from the agonies, sorrows, tragedies, and unending painful struggles of life?

God's Word Protected Ezra's: Distraction-Surrounded Life

Our next example God has chosen for us comes from the pages of the life of Ezra.

Ezra was called to leave the glittering distractions and allurements of Babylon, and take the final 7,000 of the over 50,000 of God's people returning from Exile.

Ezra had been called by God to go and serve Him in the stark, difficult, un-glittering land of Israel; but he had to serve to people who had been immersed in 70 years of distractions in Babylon.

God was far from their hearts, minds, schedules, and life styles.

How do you reach people who live immersed in distractions?

How do you keep from also getting immersed with them in distractions?

How do you keep from losing your focus on God, when most others have?

That is the immense challenge that Ezra faced.

From Ezra's life we get perhaps the longest treatment on the power of the Word of God.

To learn about how God's Word protected Ezra, let's start in the book of Ezra.

Open with me to Ezra 7.10.

Ezra 7:10 (NKJV) For Ezra had **prepared his heart** to seek the Law of the Lord,

and to do *it*, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Ezra “prepared” His Heart to Hear God

Have you started doing that?

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had

prepared (to establish, set up, accomplish, make firm; to direct toward (moral sense; to arrange, order)

his heart to seek (to resort to, frequent (a place); to consult, to investigate, to ask for, require; to practice, study, follow) **the Law of the Lord,**

and to do it (to observe, celebrate, to acquire),

and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Ezra Wanted to Teach Others

Ezra chose to do these three things that made him so influential for God his life still touches most believers around the world today.

He prepared his heart to seek God through His Word.

He lived out God’s Truth.

He sought to lead, nurture, disciple and teach others to do the same.

Ezra’s choice to teach others is a reminder to us of the words of Paul who taught the early saints with this goal: “Follow me like I am following Christ!”

God created you and me for some great works for His Glory.

God wants to do something in you -- that only you AND HE can accomplish.

God wants to write Himself all across the pages of your life.

How is God doing at taking over our lives?

Usually any holdup is on our part isn’t it?

God’s Take Over Plan

God has designed a plan for the complete takeover of your heart and mind.

He wants us to ponder -- What are we here for?

If we lose sight of our purpose in life, we often compensate by increasing activity.

Yet it is often activity without purpose.

Daily time in the presence of God is not nice -- it is necessary.

God wants us to have a Passion to know the Word of God.

God wants us to have a Passion to spend time with the Lord.

Some believers can be saved for years and still cannot explain anything doctrinally.

Some believers can be saved for years and still cannot explain what their gifts are or why they are here.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says we were created to do good works for God.

We are here to do something.

We are here to do the works God prepared in advance for us to do.

There is a vast difference between your career and calling.

Career is what you are paid to do; but my calling is what I have been prepared to do.

We cannot communicate God's truth out of a vacuum.

We can only teach God's truth from what you have taken in.

Many Christians are like poor photographs they are over exposed and under developed.

Ezra wanted to study God's Word -- but also had an equal desire to practice God's Word.

Please turn onward to Psalm 119, as we do so it prompts the longstanding question: who wrote Psalm 119?

Who Wrote Psalm 119?

Who did God use to write this Psalm? We're not sure.

Many different men are considered possibilities: David, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Malachi, or Daniel because there is no mention of the temple.

But in Jewish history, there is the clear candidate, as there is one who stands out above the others in his life and work, and that is Ezra.

To the Jews only Moses eclipses Ezra in their Jewish history.

Why?

Ezra's life actually has touched every Jew and every Christian for the past 2500 years.

How?

Ezra launched the Jewish Synagogues.

Ezra wrote the reading schedule Jews follow to this day.

Ezra launched the Scribes of the New Testament era.

Ezra personally copied all the Scriptures into the Hebrew form that we have today.

The order, structure, and book layout of entire Old Testament is the product of his careful work!

The result? Psalm 119 is Ezra's testimony and also probably the content of his teaching and preaching to the 50,000+ exiles that had returned to seek the Lord in Jerusalem!

Ezra's Worldly Congregation

Ezra faced a worldly congregation, soaked in all the worldly ways of Babylon and Persia.

What was his plan to bring about lasting change in those he served?

He started with his own life.

He learned to point his heart frequently toward doing God's Will.

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in God's Word.

God is mentioned 176 times in these 176 verses.

God's Word is mentioned in 173 of these verses.

Prayer requests are given 70 times.

Suffering is mentioned 66 times.

Ezra refers to himself 325 times.

We can actually examine the heart of Ezra through his teaching, by the words of this his testimony to the result of feeding his soul with God's Word.

Ezra's Personal Resolves for Godly Living

First Ezra shares in Psalm 119 a list of his personal resolves to obey God.

Psalm 119:1-8 (NKJV) **℞ Aleph**

Blessed *are* the undefiled in **the way**, (*the path God wants us to follow*)

Who walk in the **law of the Lord!** (*the teachings of Divine teacher*)

² Blessed *are* those who keep His **testimonies**, (*God's witness about truth*)

Who seek Him with the whole heart!

³ They also do no iniquity; They walk in **His ways**. (*the path God wants us to follow*)

⁴ You have commanded *us*

To keep Your **precepts** diligently. (*God's directions for our lives*)

⁵ Oh, that my ways were directed

To keep Your **statutes!** (*God's plans for our lives*)

⁶ Then I would not be ashamed,

When I look into all Your **commandments**. (*God's absolutes for life*)

⁷ I will praise You with uprightness of heart,

When I learn Your righteous **judgments**. (*God's decisions, written in stone*)

⁸ I will keep Your **statutes**; (*God's plans for our lives*)

Oh, do not forsake me utterly!

Choices Ezra Made to Allow the Word to Transform His Life

Please turn onward to one last chapter of God's Word, Psalm 119.

He chooses to turn his life toward God.

Psalm 119:59 I thought about my ways, and turned my feet **to Your testimonies**.

Like a person who hears something, or sees something that draws them, and they turn to go in that direction. Ezra examines his life, looks at the Word and goes the way of the Lord.

Lot turned his tent in the direction of Sodom and lost everything.

Abraham faced God, looked for the Heavenly city, and inherited endless blessings.

Choose today to turn your life towards God.

He chooses to avoid evil in any form.

Psalm 119:101 **I have restrained** my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word.

What do you restrain yourself from?

Start today denying ungodliness and worldly lust.

That is what grace teaches us to do according to Titus 2:11-12

He chooses to lean God's Way by obedience.

Psalm 119:112 **I have inclined** my heart to perform Your statutes Forever, to the very end.
What do you lean towards?

He chooses to set his hopes in the Lord.

Psalm 119:114 You are my hiding place and my shield; **I hope in Your word.**

Just like Paul asked the Roman believers to do in Romans 15:13

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

What do you have your hopes set upon?

He chooses to cultivate spiritual appetites.

Psalm 119:131 **I opened my mouth** and panted, For **I longed for** Your commandments.

What do you pant for?

He chooses to cultivate spiritual disciplines.

Psalm 119:147 **I rise** before the dawning of the morning, And cry for help; **I hope** in Your word.

Ezra disciplined his time to make room for God in his schedule.

He chooses to live a life of praise.

Psalm 119:164 Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments.

Have you chosen to follow the example God has sent us in the life of Ezra?

We can, by choosing to:

Start Right Now

Lord, today I want to:
live a life of praise
cultivate spiritual disciplines
set my hopes in the Lord
lean God's Way by obedience
avoid evil in any form
turn his life toward God