

# 6

# GOD'S WORD IS TRUTH



*What is the strangest fact you have found to be true?*

**QUESTION #1**

#BSFLspoken

*I can fully rely on what the Bible teaches.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

You know how long an inch is, right? You can probably hold out your finger and thumb and say, “An inch is about this big.” You might even be close.

Interestingly, the length of an inch used to be determined by the “rule of thumb.” Meaning, an inch was measured as the width of your thumb. But when one carpenter’s thumb happened to be chubbier than another, it created problems. Whose thumb should be the standard?

Today, the international standard for an inch is exactly 25.4 millimeters long. Then again, that is .0000017 of an inch *longer* than the imperial inch, what is used in British countries. And it’s .000002 of an inch *shorter* than the U.S. inch. So, the standard for the inch is still not perfectly precise.

When it comes to the important matters of life, we need a standard that is absolutely perfect and completely reliable. Psalm 119 shows us that such a standard exists in God’s Word.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## *Psalm 119:153-155*

<sup>153</sup> **Look on my suffering and deliver me, for I have not forgotten your law.** <sup>154</sup> **Defend my cause and redeem me; preserve my life according to your promise.** <sup>155</sup> **Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek out your decrees.**

As he neared the end of his epic psalm, the psalmist made two requests of God:

- ▶ **“Look on my suffering.”** The psalmist wasn’t simply asking God to notice what he was going through. He was asking God to look on his situation with compassion and then move to do something about it. We know this is true because of his second request.
- ▶ **“Deliver me.”** Only God could change the psalmist’s situation. The psalmist trusted the promises given by God in His Word; therefore, he trusted God to rescue him.

The psalmist knew God was the only One who could keep him secure, so he prayed, “Defend my cause and redeem me.” He spoke as if he were in a court of law, accused of wrongdoing, and in need of a defense attorney to plead his case. He called on the Lord, even as another psalmist had done: “Vindicate me, my God, and plead my cause against an unfaithful nation. Rescue me from those who are deceitful and wicked” (Ps. 43:1).

The God who pleads our case is the same God who redeems us. This is the hope we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Also using imagery from a courtroom, the apostle John wrote, “But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One” (1 John 2:1). Jesus our Advocate is also the One who made it possible for us to have free access to the divine throne. We see this truth in Hebrews: “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

***What do these verses teach us about the psalmist’s relationship with God?***

**QUESTION #2**

Verse 155 teaches us two things about the nature of salvation:

- 1. Salvation is far from the wicked.** We cannot experience God's salvation as long as we hold on to our sin and wickedness.
- 2. Salvation is found in God's Word.** The psalmist gave a specific reason why salvation is far from the wicked: "for they do not seek out your decrees." The truth is that God doesn't save us against our will; people will not be in heaven that do not want to be there. Scripture points us to Jesus Christ—the ultimate Word—and how we have life and salvation in Him. If we fail to heed that Word, we are left in our wickedness.

## ***Psalm 119:156-159***

**<sup>156</sup> Your compassion, LORD, is great; preserve my life according to your laws. <sup>157</sup> Many are the foes who persecute me, but I have not turned from your statutes. <sup>158</sup> I look on the faithless with loathing, for they do not obey your word. <sup>159</sup> See how I love your precepts; preserve my life, LORD, in accordance with your love.**

The Bible not only points us to salvation in Christ, but also tells us why He offers us salvation. "Your compassion, LORD, is great." God is a God of mercy. In fact, He is rich in mercy (see Eph. 2:4)!

God is loving and kind to us, not because we are good, but because He is good. In His good mercy, He gives us life. And in His love, He gave us His Word to restore and strengthen us. The psalmist wrote: "Preserve my life according to your laws." The circumstances of life may knock us down, but the Word of God will put us on our feet again.

*When have you experienced God's love and mercy in a meaningful way?*

**QUESTION #3**



The psalmist needed the great mercy of God because he had a great many adversaries. He felt like an army of enemies had risen against him. Even so, he was determined that his enemies would not deter him from obeying the word of God: “I have not turned from your statutes.”

The psalmist spoke a hard word against the wicked in verse 158: “loathing.” He called them “faithless,” for they had broken the covenant relationship with God. He was not only saddened by such betrayal, but felt contempt and revulsion because of their willful disobedience to the Word of God.

We likewise should feel “loathing” when we see sin and disobedience in others—but never with a sense of pride. As we look upon the faithless, we must remember that it’s only by the grace of God we aren’t in the same spiritual condition.

In verse 153, the psalmist prayed that God would consider his affliction. In verse 159, he asked God to “see how I love your precepts.” Love for Scripture is an expression of devotion to God. We can obey the Word of God without loving it, but we cannot love His Word without being fully committed to learning and living it.

All of Psalm 119 celebrates the sufficiency of Scripture—for everything in life. We need the Word of God. More importantly, we need the God of the Word. The Bible is not a math book with formulas we must figure out to master life. It is a love story in which God is the Lover and we are the beloved. Only those who learn the story experience the life-transforming power of God’s Word.

***How can we uphold the truth of God’s Word while offering friendship to those who don’t?***

#### **QUESTION #4**

## ***Psalm 119:160***

**<sup>160</sup> All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.**

The closing verse of this stanza affirms the truthfulness of God's Word. In order to truly rely on the Bible, however, we must actively trust it, as the psalmist did.

- ▶ **Trust that the Word of God is true.** Scripture doesn't merely contain truth. Even a supermarket tabloid can contain some truth. The whole of Scripture—in its totality and without exception—is absolutely and perfectly true. The Bible doesn't contain a speck of untruth. Every principle, every prophecy, every promise is true. The sum and entirety of God's Word is true. As the apostle Paul wrote: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- ▶ **Trust that the Word of God is eternal.** The prophet Isaiah also affirmed psalmist's words: "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever" (Isa. 40:8). Scripture doesn't have to be updated to catch up with the times; the Bible is the book of the ages. Truth doesn't change, and the truth of God's Word is still as relevant and powerful today as it was when it was first penned—and it will continue to be so. Consequently, we can trust God's eternal truth to work powerfully in our lives. "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:10-11).

The Bible is a powerful, transformational, and miraculous message written by God Himself. Therefore, you can rely on everything it says for every moment of your life.

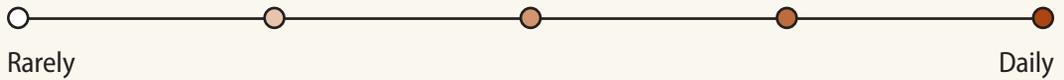
***What are the consequences of believing that God's Word is true?***

**QUESTION #5**

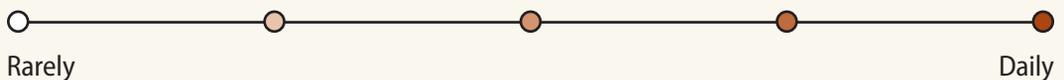
# PERSONAL ASSESSMENT: TRUST

*How deeply do you trust the Bible? Use the following questions to evaluate your current connection with God's Word.*

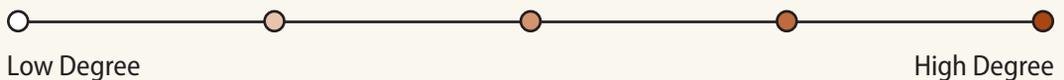
How often do you practice the discipline of reading and studying the Bible?



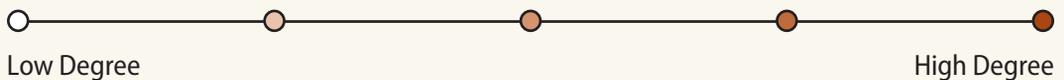
How often does the Bible factor into your everyday decisions?



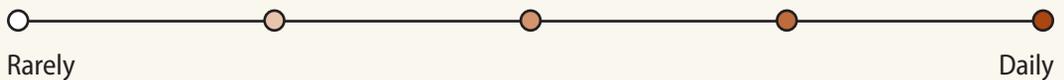
To what degree do you consult the Scriptures during the process of making important decisions?



To what degree do you use the Scriptures to evaluate the advice or instructions of other people?



How often do you intentionally obey a command or principle you encounter in God's Word?



## LIVE IT OUT

The Word of God is true. How will this truth affect your actions and attitudes this week? Consider the following suggestions:

- ▶ **Truth to rely on.** As you read God's Word in the coming weeks, write down each truth you encounter. Build a journal of truths you can rely on each day.
- ▶ **Truth to study.** Commit to becoming a life-long student of God's Word. This week, choose to focus on a book of the Bible that you've never studied before. Consider using a commentary on that book as you dig into the text.
- ▶ **Truth to share.** Consider expanding the impact of your current Bible study group (and your church) by branching out to start something new. Reach out to people in your neighborhood or to a specific demographic in your congregation, then help new members dive into God's Word.

Don't be tempted to follow a "rule of thumb" for your life—a standard that changes from person to person. Instead, use the perfect standard of God's Word to measure each moment of your life.

My thoughts



Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLspoken**



# HEARING GOD IN YOUR QUIET TIME

BY ROBBY GALLATY

When I was a new believer, I used the O.P.R.A. technique for reading the Bible: I would randomly Open the Bible, Point to a passage, Read the verse, and try to figure out a way to Apply it to my life. Thankfully, I didn't land on the Scripture that says, "He [speaking of Judas Iscariot] went and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:5, HCSB). Reading random Scriptures will not provide solid biblical growth any more than eating random foods out of your pantry will provide solid physical growth. An effective reading plan is needed.

My wife, Kandi, and I, along with the help of our Replicate Ministries team, developed a reading plan called *Foundations: A 260-Day Bible Reading Plan for Busy Believers*. This devotional book is a 260-day reading plan that highlights the foundational passages of Scripture every disciple should know. In order to digest more of the Word, the plan encourages believers to read less and to keep a H.E.A.R. journal.

The H.E.A.R. journaling method promotes reading the Bible with a life-transforming purpose. No longer will your focus be on checking off the boxes on your daily reading schedule; your purpose will, instead, be to read in order to understand and respond to God's Word.

The acronym H.E.A.R. stands for Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond. Each of these four steps contributes to creating an atmosphere to hear God speak. After settling on a reading plan and establishing a time for studying God's Word, you will be ready to H.E.A.R. from God.

Before reading the text, pause to sincerely ask God to speak to you as David prayed: "Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wonderful things from Your instruction" (Ps. 119:18, HCSB).

## **Highlight**

Open your journal and write the letter H. This will remind you to read with a purpose. In the course of your reading, one or two verses will usually stand out and speak to you. Highlight each verse that speaks to you by copying the following information under the letter H:

- The name of the book.
- The passage of Scripture.
- The chapter and verse numbers that especially speak to you.
- A title to describe the passage.

## **Explain**

Write the letter E under the previous entry. With the help of God's Spirit, you will explain what the text means by asking some simple questions:

- Why was this written?
- To whom was it originally written?
- How does it fit with the verses before and after it?
- Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?
- What is He communicating through this text?

## Apply

Next, write the letter A. The application is the heart of the process. Answer a series of questions to uncover the personal significance these verses hold for you. These questions bridge the gap between the ancient world and your world today. Let God speak to you as you write two to five sentences about how the text applies to your life.

- How can this help me?
- What does this mean today?
- What would the application of this verse look like in my life?
- What does this mean to me?
- What is God saying to me?

***“Reading random Scriptures will not provide solid biblical growth any more than eating random foods out of your pantry will provide solid physical growth.”***

## Respond

Finally, write R. Your response to the passage may take on many forms. You may write a call to action. You may describe how you will be different because of what God has said to you through His Word. You may write a prayer to God, for example, asking Him to help you be more loving or to create in you a desire to be more generous. Keep in mind that this is your response to what you have just read.

Notice all of the words in the H.E.A.R. formula are action words. God does not want us to sit back and wait for Him to drop some truth into our laps; He desires that we actively pursue Him. Jesus said, “Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you” (Matt. 7:7, HCSB).



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