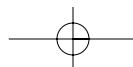
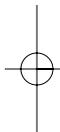
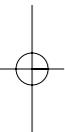


“THE ORACLES OF GOD”

The Bible





Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.

HEBREWS 1:1-2

29

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

No prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

2 PETER 1:21



The Bible is where Christians turn for wisdom, direction, encouragement, and blessing. It's a timeless source of truth that shelters us in the times of storm and that leads us when we can't find our way. The Bible speaks with assurance to our worries, comfort to our cares,

WISDOM FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY

calm to our sorrows, cleansing to our guilt, praise to our successes, and forgiveness to our failures. It provides the foundation of our spiritual life. Jesus said, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).



Bread enables people to keep living, but the Word of God enables them to have a life worth living.

Roderick K. Durst



30

The Bible claims for itself that it is inspired of God, that holy men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and those who have read the Bible and lived by it have not found this hard to believe.

James W. Cox



If you really want to discover the truth and authority of the Bible, you must study it prayerfully, read it carefully, listen to it, be open to it, create the context in which God can speak his word to you through its pages, and then somehow the same Holy Spirit under whose inspiration it was written will convince you of its authority, its liberating power, and its glorious truth.

Douglas W. Oldenburg



THE BIBLE

More than fifty-five years ago my father told me: “The Bible does not belong on the shelf but in your hand, under your eye, and in your heart.”

Martin Niemoller



God speaks to us in the Bible but only if we are humble enough to listen. We don't come to the Scriptures in order to sit in judgment on what is said; we come to let the Scriptures sit in judgment on us—examining our hearts, exposing our motives, elevating our spirits, and enlightening our minds.



The greatest adventure anyone can have with the Bible is when the Spirit of God makes a verse, a passage, or a whole book come alive, and we are confronted with the claims of the living God and nourished by the deepest truths of the gospel.

David H. C. Read



Knowing the entire Bible by heart, and understanding it so well that you can explain every single verse, is of little use to you, unless the biblical Word penetrates your innermost being, as the rain penetrates the tiniest roots of a tree in order to rise and to fill the whole tree and to bring forth leaves and fruit.

Emil Brunner



WISDOM FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY

What the Christian needs is a teachable spirit. When we have a teachable spirit it means that we are humble enough to learn, that we are able to face the truth without anger even when the truth hurts and condemns, that we can willingly accept the discipline of learning. Many people feel that just going to church is adequate. However, what one hears in church must be lived.

Jerry M. Stubblefield



The Bible is something like a mirror. If an ass peers in, you can't expect an apostle to peer out.

32

William Sloan Coffin

❖ REFLECTION ❖

What passages from the Bible do you turn to most often when storms rage in your life? Write one or two of those passages on note cards and determine to commit them to memory. If you are not sure which verses to choose, begin with one of these promises of God's love—Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:31; Matthew 11:29–30.



A tree's resilience in a storm depends upon the depth of its roots. The power of God's Word in us depends on the depth of its roots in our hearts.

Emil Brunner



THE BIBLE

The Bible will always be full of things you cannot understand, as long as you will not live according to those things you can understand.

Billy Sunday



The Bible itself is not only a book of faith, it is also a book of skepticism. The Bible is too honest to cover up the weaknesses and faults even of its best men and women. Though the heroes of the Bible scaled great heights of courage and daring and demonstrated amazing faith in God, these same heroes sometimes fell into chilling depths of doubt and hopelessness.

33

James W. Cox, Surprised by God



Every generation must face its share of those who attack the Bible and dismiss it as the pious fabrication of misguided religious zealots. But long after the critics are dead and their arguments are forgotten, the Bible continues to sustain the spiritual life and passion of millions of people in every culture and on every continent.



Voltaire, the French philosopher, dared to predict that within a hundred years the Bible would be a forgotten book. These are his words: "One hundred years from my day there will not

WISDOM FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY

be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker." Before the century was up, however, Voltaire's home was owned and used by the Geneva Bible Society, from which millions of Bibles have gone around the world. "Heaven and earth will pass away," Jesus said, "but my words will never pass away."

Frank Pollard



34

A young girl once said to me, "I'd read the Bible more if it were as interesting as the *Reader's Digest*." Of course, she had not lived very long—or deeply. When she faces what someone has called "the triple tragedy of sin, suffering, and death," she will need more than the gleanings of a monthly magazine from which to draw comfort and strength. She will need the assurance of the prophet: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). She will need the faith of the psalmist: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). She will need the comforting words of the Master: "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1).

Clarence W. Carnford

❖ PRAYER ❖

Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by pa-

THE BIBLE

tience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Book of Common Prayer

❖ THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM ❖

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:

For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

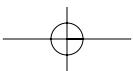
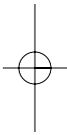
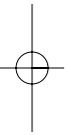
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

King James Version



“YOUR LIFE IS HIDDEN WITH CHRIST”
salvation



So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:17-18

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16

You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior.

ISAIAH 43:10-11



The heart of the Christian message is that Jesus came to seek and rescue lost people. The Gospel is an announcement of good news! While we were going our own rebellious way, God provided all that

WISDOM FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY

was necessary for our restoration to his friendship. We were the ones in the wrong, but God was the one who took all the initiative to put things in the right. He was willing to pay the debt we owed. Jesus reconciled us to God before we had any interest in being reconciled. We had carefully constructed a wall that separated us from God, and God shattered that wall with one powerful blast of his love.



38

The good news of the Christian faith is that our success, our salvation, our wholeness, our redemption, our citizenship in the Kingdom of God's people, our goal in life, is not based on what we do. Our salvation, our wholeness, our welcome into the people of God is grounded in what God has done in Jesus Christ already. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

Rick Brand



The cross is central to Christianity because, as Paul said, it is "the power of God and the wisdom of God." There is power in the cross of Christ, magnetic power that draws people to God when all else fails. We could resist a God who roars at us and frightens us and simply punishes us for our sins. But how can we resist a gracious God who suffers for our sins and allows them to nail him to a cross? The cross draws us to God because it is the supreme demonstration of his stubborn love for us.

Leonard Griffith



SALVATION

❖ REFLECTION ❖

The only appropriate response to grace is gratitude. How have you expressed your gratitude to Jesus for forgiving you?

How do the people around you each day know that you are a forgiven person?



Grace is God doing for mankind what they cannot do for themselves. Grace is God meeting his own demands himself.

Eric C. Rust

39



What is wrong at the heart of mankind? The Bible says every person is a sinner. What can we do about this problem? Take a person to a psychiatrist, and he will become an adjusted sinner. Take a person to a physician and he will become a healthy sinner. Give a person a million dollars, and he will become an affluent sinner. Get a person to turn over a new leaf, and he will become a reformed sinner. But he will still be a sinner.

Let a person, any person, go in sincere repentance and faith to the foot of the cross and what will he become? A new creature in Christ Jesus, forgiven, reconciled to God, with meaning and purpose in life, on the way to marvelous fulfillment in God's will. Only Jesus can make a person over into a new creature.

Brian L. Harbour



WISDOM FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY

To “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” is to leave your soul with him and to completely trust him for your salvation. He is able, anxious, and willing to save the person who will trust him. It takes nothing more, nothing less, or nothing else. It requires simple faith in Jesus Christ.

Delbert D. Rose



Christians are compelled by their love for Jesus to share the message of God's grace with others. We don't find it necessary to threaten people or intimidate them into some superficial religious commitment. We simply do what Jesus did. We graciously invite our friends to believe in the Savior—the one person who can change their lives forever.

40



Jesus was constantly inviting people, for this is what the gospel is, an invitation to come and see.

M. Vernon Davis



Make no mistake about it, Jesus wants to free us from all that oppresses us. He wants to forgive our sins and heal our brokenness. He will act to deliver those who suffer innocently at the hands of others. We are all invited to share in God's bless-

SALVATION

ings. That is easy for us to accept and believe. The hard part is Jesus' insistence that our enemies are also included in God's liberating grace. The difficult, if not offensive, part of Jesus' message is that God intends to embrace those people we find repugnant. The truly odious aspect of Jesus' declaration is the radical notion that God may work harder to save those outside our circle of respectability than he does to save those within it. Mass murderers can be forgiven and set free. Impossible! Child molesters can be redeemed and restored. No way! Those who are twisted with hate and guile can be reconciled to God. Impractical! If God is in that business, we are not sure we want any part of it.

Jim Holladay

41



Remember, we don't take Jesus to people. Jesus takes us to people. We never go to where God has never been. We go only to where God is already at work. Effective disciples are ever alert to what God is already doing in the lives of the lost.

Rodrick K. Durst



Once we have come to believe in Jesus we are so drawn to his love and grace that our desire is to follow him. We don't live obediently because God threatens us with punishment if we step out of

WISDOM FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY

line. We follow Christ because we want to do what pleases him. His love is the magnet that pulls our thirsty souls to his refreshment.



We do not buy our salvation with good works, for our salvation has been bought already with the redeeming blood of Christ. Rather, a life of good works is the outgrowth of the saving work of God in the life of a Christian.

James W. Cox



42

The cross shows us what God is really like. It reveals his very heart, and we see it to be a heart of infinite love.

Owen E. Evans in The Expository Times



Jesus Christ will see to the certain salvation of the least little Christian as well as the greatest, because he does the saving. The weakest saint in his kingdom will be as certainly saved as the strongest, because the salvation of both is by grace.

George W. Truett, We Should See Jesus



SALVATION

❖ PRAYER ❖

Lord Jesus, we stand in awe, in broken humility, before you. If we were lovely people, whole and prosperous and talented, we might understand why you would love us. But we are so unlovely, so filled with fear and scarred by failure—and yet, incredibly, wonderfully, fully, and eternally you have cleansed us and made us your own dear children. Eternity will not be long enough to express the gratitude in our hearts for your infinite love. Amen.

Douglas Connelly



“FOLLOW ME!”

Devotion
to christ



Then [Jesus] said to them all, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?”

LUKE 9:23-25

45

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

JESUS IN MATTHEW 11:28-30



The Christian life begins with an act of faith but it emerges into a lifestyle of following. Jesus does not call us to membership in a club or even involvement in a cause. Jesus calls us to a whole-hearted commitment to a person. Our allegiance is to our one true King—Jesus himself.

WISDOM FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY

Some Christians want to reduce Christian discipleship to a list of rules—usually the “thou shalt not” kind of rules. Jesus, however, had a much different approach. He said, “Take up your cross and follow me.” The apostle Paul used the imagery of becoming a slave to Christ. Neither of those images sounds very appealing to liberated, independent people in the twenty-first century. They don’t sound appealing until you realize that in the process of laying down your life you find real life, and in slavery to Christ you are truly set free. A contradiction? No—just the way things are in Christ’s Kingdom.



46

I am convinced that some of us will never really know the Christ of the New Testament until we follow him from the safety of the sanctuary into the dangers of daily discipleship, where faith is costly and external rewards are few or nonexistent. We *will* know him, however, if we follow him, go where he goes, and do what he wills.

James W. Cox



Jesus had a strange way of winning followers. He was not at all like us in that regard. To his would-be followers, Jesus of Nazareth said: “Deny yourself.” Jesus did not call us to a way of softness, but to a way that is heroic. It’s stunning when you think about it!

Alton E. McEachern



DEVOTION TO CHRIST

Christianity cannot be purchased on a trip through a flea market and yard sale. Christians must pay full price. Discipleship is costly.

Walter P. Jackson



We learn what devotion to Christ is by watching how the men and women of great faith live. They may be well-known or unknown; they may have lived long ago or sit next to us in church. They push us out of our comfort zones into new depths of sacrifice and commitment.



It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to.

C. S. Lewis



Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the costs; to fight for you and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not to ask for any reward, except the knowledge that we do your will.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola



If you follow Jesus, there will come a day, somewhere, sometime, when Jesus will call you to do something that will require

WISDOM FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY

setting aside something really meaningful and very dear. That's the first rule of the road with Jesus. The other is that unless you give that thing away, you will never know what it really is to live. Jesus' rule is absolute: unless you lay your life down, you lose it; but if you lay it down, then you get it back again, renewed and resurrected.

Are you prepared to lighten your load? When Jesus calls you and says, "Follow me here," are you prepared to lay down all the stuff you're trying to carry, all the stuff you've crammed into your suitcases and closets and garages, all the stuff you've tucked away inside your soul, all the things about your life that you think define you—are you prepared to lay them down to follow Jesus?

48

Keep a light touch on your things, even on your life.

Richard B. Vinson

❖ REFLECTION ❖

What person among your friends displays a growing, deepening commitment to Jesus? How can you strengthen your relationship with that person so he or she becomes a mentor to you in the walk of faith?



People who have accepted Christ's call to discipleship become leaven who can change the dough of the world, salt to flavor the stew of society, and light to drive the darkness of sin out of every corner of the world.

Raymond W. Gibson Jr.



DEVOTION TO CHRIST

Christ still walks our roads today. He may interrupt us in our busyness, in our toiling, and in our emptiness and speak to our hearts his great and gracious invitation, "Follow me." And you will never have a better offer than that.

Henry Gariepy



We would just as soon skip Suffering 101 and move on to Advanced Glory 999. The Son of man humbled himself for us, and we would seek honors. The Son of man took the form of a servant, and we seek to rule. The Son of man became poor for our sakes, and we run after riches. But the Son of man came to give his life as a ransom and expects his disciples to give their lives in service. He does not promise glory or comfort or ease in this life. For some, it will cost everything they have. For some, it may cost even their lives.

49

David E. Garland

❖ PRAYER ❖

Dear Lord, the great healer, I kneel before you. Since every good and perfect gift must come from you, give skill to my hand, clear vision to my mind, kindness and sympathy to my heart. Give me singleness of purpose, strength to lift at least a part of the burden of my suffering fellowman, and a true realization of the privilege that is mine. Take from my heart all guile and worldliness that with the simple faith of a child I may rely on you.

Mother Teresa