

TUTORIAL
9.7

Making use of God's word

This tutorial discusses the fifth question in the area of *Word*: 'Are they increasingly able to make use of God's Word as He intends for His children and His Church?'

2 Timothy 3:16–17: 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.

That verse ties into what we're talking about in this tutorial. In particular verse 17 says that God uses Scripture to prepare and equip His people to do every good work. It highlights just how important it is to be able to give and provide God's Word in the hands of the people.

It's very easy for us to appreciate that in our own lives. Scripture helps us and teaches us and points things out in our own lives that we need to correct. So many of the strategies that are out there for reaching people just have to do with presenting the Gospel. But not a lot of effort is given to what follows that, what happens after people get saved. We see here very clearly that God intends for this people to be able to have His Word so that He can equip them to do every good work. That's necessary in order for that to happen. They have to have it in their own hands so that it can speak to their hearts.

Last time

We looked at the fourth question from the WILD outline. We discussed how people can grow in their level of understanding of God's Word as one Story, or Narrative, with Jesus Christ at the center. In this tutorial we will discuss the fifth and last question in the WILD outline in the area of Word.

Are they increasingly able to make use of God's Word as He intends for His children and His Church?

We asked Clark how having God's Word available has helped the believers there to feed themselves, to do correction and to reach out:

I would say, because having the translations is fairly recent, we're just starting to see that happening. My example is going to be mainly with First Corinthians. We really consolidated as we were going through it, actually beginning to address areas of sin in the body. That became very important to them, which prior to that, they would just ignore it and let it go. They became very conscious of their responsibility to deal with it and how to deal with it and go in to one another. We've actually seen that the Word is what they'll take with them when they are doing outreaches. We've seen them actually relying more on the Scriptures than the lessons that they have. That's been a huge help even in the outreach that they're doing.

Are they learning to use God's Word to spiritually feed themselves and any others He has entrusted to their care?

In this next clip we hear how the believers in a church community are finding God's Word sufficient for all areas:

Once we knew God, and that we were under His protection, we found joy in our lives and real peace. When difficult issues arrive in the community, the believers gladly come to the leaders in the church because they know that the real help lies in God's Word. They are happy to come because they know that from God's Word they will receive encouragement. They know that regardless of what happens, God has dealt with the major issue of the sin debt. They are always glad to be reminded of those things from God's Word.

Matt describes the importance of the church and community having access to good, Biblical resources:

When we left a number of years ago, we had to leave for a pretty good amount of time. We left a lot of written materials, a lot of Bible lessons, a lot of materials in the hands of folks who aren't saved. As we're teaching, it's really exciting to hear their growing understanding of what they've read as they've read ahead of what we're teaching. A lot of the questions and a lot of the conversations are broader than just the actual lesson that we're teaching at that time.

We asked Kelley to give us an example of how real access (including literacy skills) to God's Word has served to equip them for using it in that setting:

It is supernatural to see the Holy Spirit working alone. He doesn't work in a vacuum either. He uses His own Word and things of the world and helps them to apply those things. The literacy in our situation...they are untaught, uneducated, no written language. That took time, just putting time and principles and things into place that could improve that. And it took spending time with them: day in and day out doing Bible studies, teaching them to read, teaching them to read faster. It's very time consuming but they practiced it and spent all that time in the Word.

That's where applications are coming from. Not only are they supernaturally one with the Spirit now, but also are spending a lot of time in the Word of God. The things that are being said, the things that are being applied, are coming straight out of that time spent. People are understanding Scripture and it's just flowing out of them.

We had a lady who is now a lady's Bible teacher. There were some things that were coming up with some of the young girls. Her response to that was to have a Bible study. She got them together and we hadn't even translated the book of Proverbs, but just individual verses, and she felt like that was something that she could do. She had been reading it in the national language. She wanted to impart that wisdom to them. She started on her own, translating five to seven verses each week. Coming up, getting them checked, and leading the Bible study. Going through those we saw a drastic improvement in the girls. I feel like she probably carved off a lot of problems that would've come up later just by her ability to go and see a problem and want to fix it with the Word of God.

Palava talks about how specific teaching from the book of James about controlling the tongue has helped her:

I wanted to talk about the effect it has on us when we hear teaching for the first time from the apostles. We see that it has a real impact on our day to day lives and we are grateful for that. We are grateful that as we are hearing it, we see the relevance to life in the community and it has brought real change. God's Word provides us with help in every area. That is something we really praise Him for. For example, I've been hugely helped by hearing the teaching from James that describes the right way to live together. For example, it discusses gossip and the harm it can do. It talks about this one small part of us, our tongues, that can do so much enormous damage. I am grateful to the Lord for the guidance He gives and how we should speak to each other. I have really been helped by the exhortations not to be going around talking about people or gossiping. I am very grateful for that.

Are they using Truth practically to correct wrong thinking and habits of life, not in a way that produces fear and bondage, but real joy and freedom in Christ?

Dave describes how for the believers there, it was a natural thing to intertwine the Truth with their daily lives:

Once they became saved, we continued with the regular public teaching meetings. We weren't teaching five and six days a week like we were initially. Still, we would have regular teaching meetings generally at least two days per week and they would come in from

their gardens and everyone would be there. Along with the public teaching meetings, we wanted to continue to spend time with them in their daily lives as different things came up, as they faced various questions in life. We wanted to help them work through those and know how to apply God's Word to everyday life. Honestly, there were some ways that it's perhaps easier for them than it is for us in our culture because we tend to make more of a strict dichotomy between the spiritual elements of our lives and the everyday physical or just the common daily elements of our lives such as work and family. There are a lot of people in our culture for whom there are times where they're just really focused on their work or other aspects of just living in their home. Then they redirect their focus and now they're more specifically focused on God and their spiritual lives.

Historically, they never separated the spiritual realm from the physical. In some ways, it was almost more natural for them to just keep the spiritual elements of Biblical truth intertwined with just the normal affairs of their daily lives.

Palava talks about how the things of heaven are more important than the things of the earth:

Something else that has been very helpful from James is how we view possession. God's Word has explained that those things are of very little value and not something that we should be preoccupied with. It has put into perspective the things that really matter. Now when I go to town and I see things, I remember what God's Word has to say about possessions. It says that these things decay and get destroyed by rats and we know that we are going to be astonished by the things that God has promised in His Word. We are eagerly awaiting that.

Are they learning to reach out with the Good News of Jesus Christ so it is communicated clearly and faithfully within the Biblical Narrative?

Palava talks about the work of her and her husband, Kaikou, who is a teacher and elder in the churches in their village.

In reference to God's work, I have realized over the years that it really is the priority over the other things that we might be involved in. This plays out in my role of working alongside my husband Kaikou in God's work. Sometimes it is difficult. I'm glad to do it because I know that the work I support him in is very important. I really respect him for what God has given him to do. He also involves me in it. I try not to complain because we are in it together. It is something we are grateful for. Even when it takes up a lot of his time, I don't resent it because it is God's work. I am fully supportive

of his role in leading in the church and teaching God's Word. Often when there are invitations from other churches for help, he doesn't just go on his own. We go together as much as possible. We regularly go to churches or conferences for example and we see that there are often real needs we can help with there.

We typically work with the leaders of the church and I will spend time with their wives discussing their part in the work. We also help local believers who are involved in translation projects in their languages. I talked with their wives about how as women we can be appropriately involved in the work as well. I am able to share from my own experience as being a part of God's work because I understand the realities of having a family to raise but also wanting to contribute to God's work. We can trust in God in these things because our lives are connected to Christ right now. We talk about how they can work in partnership with any foreigners who came to plant the church initially. My role is to help the women consider these things and have an effective role working alongside their husband and others.

When Palava works in the churches with the women, she considers what foundational truth they have available to them:

When we are visiting churches in other language groups, often the women ask me some very in-depth questions. In that situation I'm careful to answer only considering what they have heard of God's Word so far in their teaching program. I say to them, I'm only going to explain up to what you have heard. That might be the book of Romans or Ephesians or whatever. I'm not going to jump ahead because those teachings, God's Word, and those areas of truth haven't been shared yet. It is their job to teach God's Word in the initial instance. That's not my job. I'm not going to take on the role of teaching new truth. I just relate according to what they have heard so far. I'm not going to jump ahead because I respect the role of those who have come and planted the church there. I consistently don't answer questions if God's Word hasn't been taught and applied in those areas yet.

It's obvious that God has given Palava wisdom as she's thinking about the situations and opportunities that God is putting her and her husband in and is able to look at spiritual needs and assess them. In each of the testimonies above, it's obvious that God has given each person wisdom to be able to teach and bring His Word to bare on current realities. They were not just randomly following a program, but actually considering the spiritual diet that is necessary in order to move others on to the next level of growth.



DISCUSSION POINTS

Making use of God's word

1. Try to imagine how your daily life would be different if there wasn't a clear translation of the Bible in your 'heart' language.
2. At this time, can you picture yourself being able to make the long-term commitments needed for equipping believers and a church in the way described by the people in the tutorial? Share any thoughts you care to as you reflect on this.
3. In the video a perspective was shared that literacy was a key factor in the growth of the church there. How do you rate the importance of literacy-based strategies in church planting? Research how 'orality strategies' have developed in missions and share your perspective.