



**“LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION:
ACTION-THE TRANSFORMATION
BY THE WORD”**

Self-help books are the top sellers in stores across the country. People desire to change so they read the latest advice from experts. Since sales are increasing instead of decreasing, we can surmise that the “experts” are not helping us. For those who desire to change, let me tell you about a book that has been on the bestseller list since the beginning: it’s the Bible!

DAY 1

Today’s Scripture:

Luke 6:46-49; Isaiah 1:15-20

The Word

Have you ever given anyone advice yet he or she refuses to put into practice what you are saying? He may listen to what you say and agree that it is right yet still make the same poor choices. It is upsetting to watch the people fall into the same trap time and again.

The Word of God has the answer for getting out of an endless cycle: to listen and obey the Word. If you do, you will be protected from more devastation in your lie.

Luke 6:47-49

⁴⁷I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. ⁴⁸He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

Verse 47-49: There are only two types of spiritual houses being built: one that is based upon the Word and the other that is not. When we obey the Word of God, our foundation is sure. When we do our own thing, listen to culture, or choose any way that is not obedient to the Word, our lives will crash down all around us. You must listen to the Word for it is from the Lord.

Luke 6:46

⁴⁶"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

Verse 46: This statement is so convicting. We can pray, sing songs, and even talk about our Lord but it is all in vain if we are not obeying His commands. It is like a child saying to a parent, “I love you” yet disobeying all of the house rules. The words and actions must match for love to be shown. When our actions do not match our words, it is repulsive in God’s sight.

Isaiah 1:15-17

¹⁵ *When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even if you offer many prayers,
I will not listen.
Your hands are full of blood;*

¹⁶ *wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds
out of my sight!
Stop doing wrong,*

¹⁷ *learn to do right!
Seek justice,
encourage the oppressed.
Defend the cause of the fatherless,
plead the case of the widow.*

Verse 15-17: We must decide to change your ways. Stop the evil. Learn to do what is right. God is willing to show the right way but we must be willing to accept it. If there is any part of our lives which are not lining up to the Word of God, change can begin right now. Our pasts may be filled with sins but our futures do not need to be defined by it.

Isaiah 1:18-19

¹⁸ *"Come now, let us reason together,"
says the LORD.
"Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.*

¹⁹ *If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the best from the land;*

Verse 18-19: Look at the word "if" in the verses above. God will bless our lives if we obey His Word with a willing heart. However, if we refuse to change and choose our own way instead, there will be consequences.

Isaiah 1:20

²⁰ *but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword."
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*

Verse 20: Devoured by the sword, or the house collapsing in the flood, both of these show us the destructiveness of not allowing the Word to change our lives. If we want to be spiritually blessed in this life, we must change. The basis for that change is the Word. All we must do is obey it.

Up Close and Personal

Confess any part of your life where you are not following the Word. Turn from the sin and choose to obey.

How have you experienced the devastating consequences of not obeying the Word of God?

In what area do you hear the Word (know what you are called by God to do) and yet not obey?

How could following the Word in the above mentioned area bring blessing to you and your family?

DAY
2

Today's Scripture:
1 Peter 1:13-24

The Word

The lesson yesterday was a simplistic view about obedience. I do not want to give the impression this it is easy to do. Instead, it involves hard work and determination.

1 Peter 1:13-16

¹³Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Verse 13-16: We are called to holiness. This is nothing less than perfection. How can imperfect beings act in a holy way? It is impossible unless we choose to do so. It does not come naturally. Our natural ways lead only to sin. We must live supernaturally. But to cultivate holiness in our lives, we must do the following:

1. Prepare our minds for action
2. Be self-controlled
3. Set our hope fully on the grace to be given
4. Obedience
5. Do not conform to evil
6. Be holy

All of these steps involve us choosing to do something. It is not by default. Why would we choose the more difficult path of holiness when we could just choose to act like our natural selves? Because our actions matter and we will be held accountable for them.

1 Peter 1:17

¹⁷Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

Verse 17: If fear of future judgment is the only motivation to be holy, then we will fail miserably. The fear should be one of respect for the One who loved you enough to save you from your unholy ways.

1 Peter 1:18-21

¹⁸For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Verse 18-21: The Lord who redeemed us by the shedding of His blood desires our holiness. In love, we respond in thanksgiving to Him by obeying His Word. This will transform our lives.

1 Peter 1:22

²²Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

Verse 22-23: Obeying the truth of God does not lead to robotic motions. Often we view holiness as pious and cold. The opposite is true. As we are purified from our sins and take on more of the holiness of God, we will grow in love towards others. For this is the heart of God: love. To be more like the Lord is to be more loving of others. For this is the defining mark of believers.

1 Peter 1:23-24

²³For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For,

*"All men are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,*

Verse 18-21: Our lives on earth are short. Generations have come and gone. Throughout it all, the Word has stood the test of time. In this generation, at this moment in history, will you live a holy life before the Lord? If so, others will see the evidence by the love in your life. Be transformed by the Word: Be holy as God is holy.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to help you be holy like He is holy.

Write your own definition for the following:

Prepare our minds for action

Be self-controlled

Set our hope fully on the grace to be given

Obedience

Do not conform to evil

Be holy

How are love and holiness linked together? How does this defy the typical idea of "holy people"?

DAY 3

Today's Scripture:
Ezra 9:1-10:4

The Word

The discipline of children by their parents is expected. However, how does an adult confront another adult about sin? This is not an easy topic to address. But when others around us are committing sin against our Lord, should we just sit by and watch? A true heart after God will desire change in others.

Ezra 9:1-4

¹ After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. ² They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness."

³ When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. ⁴ Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice.

Verse 1-4: When was the last time that you were appalled by sin? Do you remember a time that the wrongdoing of someone else broke your heart because you knew it had broken the heart of God? Oftentimes we justify the sins of others, "That's just the way he is." Or we gossip about it amongst ourselves but we never confront the person with what he is doing wrong. We may even just consider it just a running joke. We are allowing sin to be committed by another and we are not even upset by it. But when we know the Word and tremble at it, our response will be like Ezra's, for we will understand that sin is against a holy God. Our example needs to be Ezra, who was distraught by the sin of the people around him and went to prayer over this desperate situation.

Ezra 9:5-15

⁵ Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose from my self-abasement, with my tunic and cloak torn, and fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the LORD my God ⁶ and prayed:

"O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens. ⁷ From the days of our forefathers until now, our guilt has been great. Because of our sins, we and our kings and our priests have been subjected to the sword and captivity, to pillage and humiliation at the hand of foreign kings, as it is today.

⁸ "But now, for a brief moment, the LORD our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage. ⁹ Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.

¹⁰ "But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For we have disregarded the commands ¹¹ you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: 'The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. ¹² Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance.'

¹³ "What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this. ¹⁴ Shall we again break your commands and intermarry with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor? ¹⁵ O LORD, God of Israel, you are righteous! We are left this day as a remnant. Here we are before you in our guilt, though because of it not one of us can stand in your presence."

Verse 5-15: The people had disobeyed the Word of God. Ezra knew their sin. And he confesses their sin. He agrees with the Lord that what the people are doing is wrong and deserves judgment. Ezra did not do this privately. Everyone around him saw his prayers and because of his intercession, they were moved to repentance.

Ezra 10:1-3

¹ While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites—men, women and children—gathered around him. They too wept bitterly. ² Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, "We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel. ³ Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law.

Verse 1-4: Because Ezra upheld the truth of the Word in front of others, the people responded in obedience. What they did physically, we need to do spiritually. We must agree with the Word, follow the Word, and get rid of anything that is not of the Word. They cast out the sin from them. We need to remove the sin from our lives. But to

carry this out, they had to submit humbly to Ezra, the one who had spoken truth in their lives.

Ezra 10:4

⁴ Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it."

Verse 4: Confrontation of sin is difficult. However, when we know the Word our hearts will break over those who are not living out the Word. Through the power of God, lives around us may be transformed by the Word if we are willing to share its truth with them.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to break your heart over the sin of others. Stop judging, justifying, or gossiping. Instead, pray for them.

If your heart is not broken over the sins of others, what is the danger in confronting a person about his sin?

Name some people that you will daily pray for transformation in their lives.

What is a godly response that you should have if you are confronted about sin in your life?

DAY
4

Today's Scripture:

Hebrews 8:10-12; Psalm 119:9-16

Growing up, I thought only pastors had to read the Bible. I never knew that the Lord invites everyone to know and study His Word. This is not for the elite few. In fact, it is through His Word that He communicates with anyone who is willing. Each of us can learn and grow through the Word, not just through someone else's sermons.

Hebrews 8:10-12

¹⁰*This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
after that time, declares the Lord.*

*I will put my laws in their minds
and write them on their hearts.*

*I will be their God,
and they will be my people.*

¹¹*No longer will a man teach his neighbor,
or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.*

¹²*For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."*

Verse 10-12: You can know God. Each person can know Him because you can be taught all about him from the Lord Himself. Imagine: the Wisdom behind the universe sharing wisdom with you. But the Word must be implanted in you, in your mind and heart. This is not done by osmosis but involves deliberate action on your part.

Each day we choose what to put on our hearts and minds: music, T.V., movies, a book, magazines, conversations with others, etc. We have allowed it this information to be taken into ourselves. Everyday we can add the Word to this list. But we must make an intentional effort to do this. We set aside time for other things which do not have any long term value yet we need to set a date with the God who is eternal. Only then will our lives be transformed.

Psalm 119:9

⁹*How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word.*

Verse 9: Purity for all ages comes from living according to the Word. By knowing the Word, you live out the Word. Choose to learn the Word.

Psalm 119:10

¹⁰*I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.*

Verse 10: Seeking requires effort. But when you seek God, He will be found. The more you know Him, the more you desire to obey His Word. You understand that He can help you live a blameless life; you are not alone.

Psalm 119:11

*¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.*

Verse 11: Memorizing the Word is necessary to keep us from sin. If you want to overcome sin in your life, find Scripture that you will commit to memory.

Psalm 110:12

*¹² Praise be to you, O LORD;
teach me your decrees.*

Verse 12: Ask the Lord to teach you. He is an amazing God, worthy of praise. He can show you the truth of His Word. Be His student. Commit to His “class” daily.

Psalm 119:13

*¹³ With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.*

Verse 13: Recite the truth of the Word. Speak it aloud. Tell others about the Word. This will help reinforce the truth that God is teaching you.

Psalm 119:14

*¹⁴ I rejoice in following your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.*

Verse 14: The commands of God are not restrictive boundaries. Instead, they free us into being all we can be in Him. A loving parent gives rules to the child out of love in order to protect the child. The Lord does the same. Rejoice in His desire to protect you from harm.

Psalm 119:15

*¹⁵ I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.*

Verse 15: Think about the Word. Ponder it. We take time to consider sport statistics or try to figure out a mystery plot so we have the mental capacity to contemplate the Word. Recall it throughout the day.

Psalm 119:16

¹⁶ *I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.*

Verse 16: I am going to make a bold statement: If you are not spending time in the Word on a daily basis, you are neglecting it. Change your ways. Let the Word of Psalm 119:16 inspire you to keep your time with the Word everyday.

Up Close and Personal

Thank the Lord for His desire to teach us more about Him. Ask Him to help you be a more willing student.

What do you allow to enter your mind on a daily basis?

How can you make time to allow the Word to access your heart and mind?

How does it feel to know that you can be “tutored” by the Lord Almighty?



Today's Scripture:

1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

The Word

This week you have been encouraged to be in the Word of God. The choice to obey is yours. I can attest to the immense blessing the Word has been in my life. I have learned so much, not just knowledge but also how to live a life that pleases God. In fact, I recognize that my times of rebellion were marked by lack of Bible study. My pray for you is that the Word will become a daily part of your life. I will thank the Lord when this is true.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

¹³*And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which*

you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Verse 13: If you will receive the Word, it will work in your life. The Word is living and active. It will make a difference in you. It already has made an eternal difference, for by the Word you were saved.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

¹³But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

Verse 13-15: Take a stand in life. The world will want you to sway this way or the other. Sometimes, you may be unsure of which way to go. But in the Lord, if you hold onto His teachings, you can stand firmly on a sure foundation. This will allow you to live a life that pleases your Savior.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

¹⁶May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Verse 16-17: Do you need to be encouraged? Do you want to be strengthened? Do you desire to do and say good things? The Lord is willing to do all of this and more. He will transform you by His Word. Are you willing to give the Word your time? Jesus, our Savior, has given eternity to you.

Up Close and Personal

Praise the Lord for His ability and His willingness to transform your life.

Why do you believe that the Word is able to change you?

How will you live out this belief?