

A Word from Pastor Chuck



The Man God Uses—part 4

Knowing God's Word

As we continue our series on the characteristics of people whom God uses, we see that they know, believe, and follow the Bible.

God's Word: Our Authority

Throughout His time on earth, Jesus often quoted the Old Testament Scriptures. After His ascension, Jesus' disciples shared His words and the Hebrew Scriptures as their authority for truth. In Acts 3, after Peter and John were used by God to work a miracle, Peter proclaimed Christ as the Messiah. But he did not simply use the miracle as evidence that this was true; he cited evidence from God's Word: ***"But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled"*** (Acts 3:18). He went on to quote Moses and referred to prophetic Scriptures from Samuel to Malachi.

We as believers do not rely on miracles or spiritual experiences to know the truth; our ultimate authority for truth is God's Word.

Spiritual Experiences

Many churches have abandoned teaching God's Word in order to emphasize dramatic spiritual experiences in their services. We saw this in the "Holy Laughter Movement" of the 1990s. The "Toronto Blessing" and the "Pensacola Blessing" were just a few examples of spectacular phenomena churches used to lure people into their pews. When a church comes up with a fantastic new sensation, other churches then feel compelled to create something even more exciting.

This type of situation is not new in the church. Notice the apostle Paul's exhortation in 2 Timothy 4:2-4, which says, ***"Preach the word! ... For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."***

Let us not turn our ears away from the truth to go after our own desires or

dramatic spiritual experiences. We must stay focused on the Word of God.

Has God Said?

Some have doubted whether the Bible was authored by God. Peter said in Acts 1:16a, ***"Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David."*** Two things stand out in Peter's statement: First, he believed that the Scripture ***"had to be fulfilled."*** He believed it was the inerrant Word of God; it simply had to come to pass.

Second, Peter said that the Holy Spirit spoke through David; therefore, the words of David in the Psalms are the words of God. Peter emphasized that God is the author of the Scriptures. Since God cannot lie, we know His Word is true.

There is a common tendency today, especially among the intellectually elite, to challenge the Word of God rather than believe it. Unfortunately, seminaries are constantly disputing the inerrancy of God's Word instead of discovering what it says. As a result, liberalism has spread in pulpits across the United States. In many churches, God's Word has been replaced by a lukewarm, social gospel.

Feeding the Flock

The result of this social gospel has been a rapid decline in church membership throughout almost all of the major denominations. As the older members in the congregation pass on, church attendance dwindles. Meanwhile, church doctrine continues to drift further away from the radical life-changing truth of God's Word. Consequently, people avoid going to church because many churches have become irrelevant to our changing world in trying to become more relevant by denying God's Word.

One Example

Renowned for his teaching of God's Word, G. Campbell Morgan was a distinguished Bible expositor in London during the early

20th century. From his biography, *The Ministry of the Word*, we find that Morgan's reliance upon the pure teaching of the Bible caused thousands to flock to his church each week. Several of his successors also continued with pure teaching.

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Tragically, the church led by Morgan eventually moved away from the chapter-by-chapter teaching of God's Word. Years ago, I visited the church one Sunday evening and counted fewer than 30 people scattered throughout a huge sanctuary—a sanctuary that once overflowed with people standing in the aisles.

Thoroughly Equipped

In contrast, churches in which the Bible is believed, taught, and practiced are flourishing. One element that separates Calvary Chapel from mainstream denominational churches is the emphasis on the verse-by-verse teaching of God's Word from Genesis through Revelation. Why is studying the whole Bible, verse by verse, so important? Second Timothy 3:16-17 says, ***"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*** We study all the way through the Bible because we want to be completely equipped for every good work.

If you want to be used by God, then you must read and believe God's Word. The man God uses is a man of the Word. God help us to become people who wholly trust in His Word! ☞

Note: This article was edited by permission and taken from the book, The Man God Uses, by Pastor Chuck Smith.