

WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS TO ME

Ray C. Stedman

In a world generously supplied with con-artists, pitchmen, wordy politicians, and outright liars, it is a great relief to know there is a place where one can always hear the truth---the truth plainly and simply put, without fear or favor. That place is the book of God, the Bible. God is a Realist. He deals with everything and everyone exactly the way they are, and he knows what that is because he made everything and everyone. It is impossible for him to tell a lie, because he himself is Truth! He deceives no one and no one deceives him, for apart from him there is no reality.

It is only to be expected, therefore, that the Book that comes from him, though it comes through many different humans writing and speaking over many centuries, should nevertheless be characterized by truth. Jesus affirmed it as such. He prayed for his disciples, saying to the Father,

"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17).

The truth is not always easy for us to hear. Sometimes it pierces me and convicts me. Sometimes I wish I could evade it, and then I am reminded that it was sent to heal me. Often it encourages me and enheartens me. Sometimes it restores me when nothing else can do so. It confronts me with paradoxes of revelation which intrigue me and challenge me. It exposes the secular illusions of the day and reveals the destructive ends to which they lead. It deals honestly with uncomfortable concepts and opposes the strangleholds of tradition, correcting them with the authority of God.

I have learned to appreciate the Bible most because it brings me face-to-face with my God! Or at least the relationship is so real and personal that it seems to be a face-to-face encounter. My heavenly Father becomes more real and close than any earthly father. I can all but see my Lord and Savior standing beside me and talking to me as I read his words in the gospels. Sometimes the words of Scripture become so vivid and luminous that I feel like kneeling or even falling on my face before the majesty of God. No other book has such power to transport me beyond earth to heavenly places.

I am often made aware of the power of the Bible in other people's lives, as well. I see it awaken a response in many readers to seize and possess for themselves the promises of God. I have watched it repattern the minds of an entire congregation to view life biblically and realistically. For many, the Bible has unfolded to them the meaning of their humanity and clarified the way it was meant to function. It awakens compassion and delivers from selfishness. It arouses a sense of true worship, grounded in the truth and issuing from the spirit within. No wonder Jeremiah could say,

"When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty." (15:16).

Pasted in the front of my Bible are the words of Henry Van Dyke which I often pray:

Grant us the knowledge that we need,
To solve the questions of the mind.
Light Thou our candles, while we read,
To keep our hearts from going blind.

Enlarge our vision to behold,
The wonders Thou hast wrought of old!"

[The Ray Stedman Library Index](#)

From the archives of Elaine Stedman, July 30, 1996.