

February 14 Sermon
Chris Deeds

The Bible is not your Grandma's Cookbook

Several years ago, my stepmother compiled a cookbook of recipes she collected from her extended family. On the front of the cover is a photo of her own mother. I received a copy, and I can flip through its pages at leisure and pick and choose any dish I want to cook. Beef stew, I like it. Green jello pineapple salad, no thanks. Mississippi mud cake, most definitely. Salisbury steak.....maybe, I don't know. I do not have to give much thought to the recipe choosing process; I just stop when I see something I want to make.

The Bible is not your grandmother's cookbook. With recipes, I can choose which dish I want to try and reject the ones I do not. And as a human being with freedoms, you have a choice to reject parts of the bible and favor others. However, the bible was not designed to be a spiritual cookbook of recipes. There are times I have applied this concept to bible reading. Story of Sampson, not bad. All the begets, booooring. Jesus is walking on water... enjoyable. Book of Revelation-what is that all about anyway?

No doubt this particular cookbook was compiled with a great deal of love and effort, but whether I choose to make the Salisbury steak or not does not affect my life as a Christian. This book will tell me how to make broccoli salad. This book will tell me that Jesus loves me more than I can fathom. To treat the bible in the same fashion as you would your cookbook entitled Wonderful Wedding Cakes and Other Confections is to misunderstand the meaning of this holy tome. This book gives me something to eat. This book gives me life.

Here is a Magic Eight Ball. Remember these? I had one in Jr. High and High School-I could ask it questions like, does Scott like me, or does he just see me as a friend? Will I get an A

on the test I did not study for? Let's ask this Magic Eight Ball some questions. Let us confess. We have all implemented the Bible like this Magic Eight Ball. We give God a problem and then implore God to answer it. We will open our bibles, stop, and land on a particular scripture with our fingers. Personally, I believe God has probably responded to a few questions using this technique. However, it is not the recommended method of usage. Let me impart some wisdom from someone who has implemented the Bible Magic Eight Ball method of getting answers from God. Please do not adopt the shake, drop, and choose a scripture method. The Bible is not a Magic Eight Ball. Why? Because God is not a magician, and the Bible is not a book of magic tricks.

What can the Bible be for us in our present life? After all, it was written thousands of years ago. There have been some outstanding books written since then. For those of you who believe this to be true, I want to challenge that notion today. Think back to the scripture read at the beginning of the sermon, Psalm 119. What is it about God's word that makes this author so enthusiastic? Perhaps it is because this person understands there is more to God's word than words. Behind the words is God Godself.

You see, the Bible is a compendium of some of the most significant literature ever written by humankind. To discover the Bible is to discover the creator of the universe. Reading the gospels unearths one of the most priceless treasures-salvation. And not just salvation, but salvation through a man named Jesus Christ, a gift for humanity from God alone. I could read a thousand novels, and manuals, and cookbooks, shake a million Magic Eight Balls, and still not be as wise as I would as reading the Bible. This book is not just a discussion or discourse about Adam and Eve, or David, or the apostles. This book is life. This book is wisdom. God's word

is so tasty that the psalmist wrote, “how sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

There are times we attempt to fit the Bible into our current understanding and knowledge. We wonder why God would allow such atrocities and unusual stories to be printed on a holy book's pages. We need to take a step back and think about what we are trying to grasp. We are attempting to place our own conceptions of life and make them fit into a standard that makes sense to us. However, God is not finite as we are. God is infinite. God is not limited by space or time. Consider the words of Steven in Acts 7:47-49. Steven was brought before a religious council on trumped-up charges of blaspheming God. Steven gives us insight about God that is important for us to know. "But it was Solomon who built a house for God. Yet the Highest does not dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says, Heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool. What house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all of these things?" God is telling us, there is nothing that is not made with my hands. Heaven is my throne. The earth is my footstool. God is explaining the magnitude of God's glory. Therefore, if God is that infinite, how do we expect the Bible to precisely fit into our human understanding? Isaiah 55: 8-9 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are my ways your ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

According to the psalmist, God's word gives wisdom, keeps one from doing wrong, and gives light as we walk. When the electricity goes out in the middle of the night for whatever reason, the first thing we long for is light. We grope along the sides of our furniture seeking out the drawer or storage area where the flashlights and candles are kept. Once we find the light source, we turn it on. Suddenly, there is a glow of light in the darkness. We no longer have to

stumble around trying to find our way around the house. While we wait for the electricity to be restored, we are assured and comforted by our light source. The Bible, God's word, is our illumination in the dark. Its words keep us from stumbling around and getting lost. We can find comfort between the pages of the Bible.

Even though the author of Psalm 119 did not have a complete bible in front of him or her, they were already aware that God's word was a treasure. More valuable than a roomful of gold or a drawer full of priceless diamonds. There is not a lottery large enough to compare to the invaluable work we call the Holy Bible. However, this book is not going to reveal its riches to you until you pick it up, read through its pages, and ask God to guide you in the process. What can the Bible be for you? I cannot tell you. You have to experience it for yourself.