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Each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is

—**1 Corinthians 3:13**

A Word Filled Life Is the Only Way to Not Waste Your Life

WE ARE NOT OUR OWN.¹ As a redeemed child of God we have a life to live that ends with a personal examination by the One we love, the One who bought us, and the only One who really matters—Jesus Christ our Lord. How we’ve used our time on Earth will one day be tested by fire—the fire of Christ’s presence that will burn away everything we did which wasn’t pleasing to Him.

How can we live in a way that truly pleases the Lord? Is it something we have to guess about or wonder whether we are doing what He desires?

The description of what lasts and pleases Him is in God’s Word. To glorify Christ to the maximum by how we live takes choosing to stay in step with His plan. That plan, His Word, is intended by God to fill our lives. Hence, a Word filled life won’t be burned up, which is the only way to not waste the life He has given each of us to use for His glory. If I could describe the best life possible—a life of peace, serenity, security, and joy—it would be the Word filled life!

1 MP3 CD Audio DYG-37:040104AM, MP3 CD Audio DYG 20:030622AM Each of the 37 messages used to write these chapters is also available in both audio and/or text format from the original sermon at www.DTBM.org.

² For more on marriage and the family, see my book, *The Joy of a Word Filled Family*. Available at www.discoverthebook.org

God's Word contains clear guidelines for how to have an exciting lifetime filled with confidence, purpose, direction, and hope. The Scriptures instruct us on how to have a joyous Word filled marriage and the most harmonious and loving family possible—a Word filled family!² And a Word filled work life can be the most satisfying, purposeful, and rewarding employment for an entire lifetime!

God wants to greatly bless us through the Word filled life and into senior citizenship! Then, as we face that appointment with Christ to show what we have done with our lives (2 Corinthians 5:10), we can enter His presence with joy—thrilled to be with the One who loved us, and whom we love supremely.

No matter who you are or where you are in life, your age or what your past might be, God has described His perfect plan for you in the Scriptures. The Lord of heaven and earth has much to say about the optimal operating range we should live within, and has instilled in each of us every needed option to operate and fulfill His plans.

We find the details on how to do all those things in God's Word. If you want to live life the way God says it should be—the best life possible—live a Word filled life!

What Were Christ's First Words in Ministry?

In the New Testament, Christ's recorded words during His ministry on earth are highlighted in what we call a "red letter edition" Bible. To me, it is astounding to read these first words Jesus said after He was introduced publicly at His baptism:

... "It is written, 'Man shall not live [exist, continue, go on] by bread alone [eating our physical food], but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God' " (Matthew 4:4).

In other words, Jesus was saying, "It is not enough just to eat and exist and have physical life. If you want to have a full and abundant life in your youth, marriage, family, work, and senior years, as I designed it to be, you must allow My every Word to fill your life!"

The only way for us to have the mind of Christ is to invite His leadership into our lives by becoming filled with His Word so His Spirit can use those words to sanctify (John 17:17), guide (Psalm 119:105), defend (Ephesians 6:17), encourage (Romans 15:4), and feed our spiritual lives (Matthew 4:4). In Colossians 3:16-17, Paul equates the necessity for filling our lives with God's Word with the filling of the Spirit. Compare Ephesians 5:18-20 with the Colossians 3 passage, the lists are identical, and lead to the conclusion that the fullness of the Spirit is equal to His Word filling our lives!

What Is a Word Filled Life?

A Word filled life is

God's way of communicating with us.

*Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
and I shall keep it to the end (Psalm 119:33).*

You can't be sustained, nurtured, and have life the way God intended unless it is a Word filled life. Every time you open God's Word, prayerfully ask Him: Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law (Psalm 119:18). This is like going online and downloading fresh, new, personal e-mail from God Himself. Have you heard from Him lately? You can, as often as you want. Just prayerfully open your heart before the Word of God and, like a wireless device, your soul will start getting both encouraging and challenging "download messages" from heaven.

A Word filled life is

God's way of recharging our batteries.

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

We expend strength daily in the battle of "plain old life." We need spiritual power to go on—to receive direction, comfort, and all God wants for us in our spiritual lives. When we stop our busy lives to get in the Word, it quickens³ us, giving life and power through the Spirit of God.

3 Note: "Quicken us" is an old-fashioned way of saying "Fill us with life!" I will be using the biblical term "quicken" again as I discuss Psalm 119 in upcoming chapters.

Look at the beginning of John 6:63: “It is the Spirit who gives life ...” Perhaps you have been going through life in your own strength and failed to realize whatever you do in the flesh “profits nothing”—even if you are teaching a Sunday school class, or performing other ministries in the church. You may even be doing a personal Bible study without first connecting with God by praying, “I want Your Spirit to speak to me. Teach and lead me through this Book.” If you don’t connect with Him, however, and get charged spiritually, it all amounts to nothing because verse 63 says, “... The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” Why go through life with a dead spiritual battery and miss the vital calls from the Lord? Read the Word daily because it is an essential, life-giving battery charger.

A Word filled life is

God’s way of giving us hope.

... Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4 NIV).

When Paul wrote Romans (A.D. 55-58), only a handful of New Testament books had been written (perhaps James, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and one of the Gospels). So “everything that was written in the past” primarily referred to the Old Testament. Have you ever read through the Old Testament? Did you pay attention to the type of people God used? Many had messed-up personal lives, family lives, public lives, spiritual lives, and everything-else lives. But the Lord changed all that.

The Word of God is the key that unlocks a Word filled life, a constantly hope-filled life, no matter what your situation. In one of my counseling sessions, after the person tearfully finished pouring out the tragic details of a sinful life, I said, “You know what? The Christian life is a series of new beginnings. Right now, you can start over—all fresh, cleansed, and brand new with the Christ who gives you hope!”

A Word filled life is

God's way of cleansing us.

... He [will] sanctify and cleanse ... with the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:26).

Although the context of that verse is speaking of the various roles of the Spirit-filled life, and it is a husband sanctifying and cleansing his wife with the Word, the ultimate lesson is this: as you allow the Word to fill your life, it will constantly sanctify, bathe, and cleanse you. God wants this for every one of His children.

I used to work at a custom pool company where I ran a jackhammer. If you run one of those things very long, you shake and sweat, and get covered in crushed debris and dust. By the end of the day, the first thing I wanted to do was take a hot shower to get clean again. So it is spiritually. When Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He reminded them we all get our feet dirty as we walk through life.

As the day starts and after it ends are two great times to take showers and physically stay fresh and clean. So it also is with staying spiritually clean. Through the washing of water by God's Word, He thoroughly cleans us so we may freely come into His presence for joy-filled fellowship.

A Word filled life is

God's way of giving us weapons for victory.

... [Take] the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:16-17).

The only offensive weapon we have in our spiritual life—the Sword of the Spirit—is the Word of God. Is there something troubling you? Some old habit, old fear, or old insecurity making you spiritually falter, that keeps you wanting to go on the offensive? A Word filled life provides you with the weapons for victory so you can ... Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

When you feel spiritually cold, you will know to Draw near to God ... (James 4:8). And when old shackles enslave you, you can remember since "... the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John

8:36). Should you start feeling hopeless, you can recall Romans 15:4. God expects you to use His Word as an offensive weapon to fight the world, the flesh, and the devil as he attacks.

A Word filled life is

God's way of teaching us discernment.

... Solid food belongs to those who are of full age, ... those who ... have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).

You exercise spiritually by daily being in the Word of God. Your soul needs constant exercise to grow strong enough to discern between good and evil, what is pleasing to God and what is not, the fruitful and what will be consumed at the judgment seat of Christ.

When I was a boy, my mother, an antiques buff, used to take me to garage sales to help her discern between the real and the fake. She especially liked Sterling silver and pearls, but because her eyes were not good, and her teeth not her own, she needed my assistance. She taught me the markings (British, European, and American), so by reading the backs of the silverware I could easily spot Sterling. As for pearls, Mom taught me to scrape them on my teeth to find the rough ones—the genuine pearls. Perhaps you can spot real silver and pearls because your senses have also been exercised, but have you exercised your soul yet? Can you discern immediately if the direction a conversation, relationship, or business deal is heading is not good? A Word filled life is one in which your spiritual muscles get strengthened as your soul receives daily exercise in the Word.

A Word filled life is

God's way of helping us feel secure in Christ.

... Lay aside all filthiness and ... wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:21).

To “lay aside” is similar in meaning to the putting aside of our soiled clothes at the end of a hard, dirty day. Prior to receiving the Word, you should put aside any sin that will hamper your humbly coming to feast at the Lord’s table of fellowship. He promises: If we

confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Just as clean garments at the end of a filthy day feel so very refreshing, so does keeping clean accounts with God. Regular confession and cleansing through the Word keeps our consciences clear so we can feel secure in our fellowship and peace with Christ.

The opposite is also true, however. Sins that are not forsaken grieve God's Spirit and make you feel distant, then detached, and finally feel insecure about salvation. Believers who sin act like unbelievers; unbelievers who act like unbelievers soon feel lost and insecure.

A Word filled life is

God's way of growing us so that we can taste God's goodness.

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2:2-3).

A craving for God's Word with the same intensity a baby craves milk is characteristic of a Word filled life. Without that craving, discernible spiritual growth is unlikely. If you do not have such a desire for the Scriptures, pray 1 Peter 2:2 back to the Lord and ask for a passion for His Word as you commit to the daily reading habit. Then rejoice as you taste of His goodness by getting to know Him intimately through His precious Word.

So, why live a Word filled life? It is God's perfect way of communicating, recharging your battery, giving hope, cleansing you, providing weapons of victory, teaching discernment, helping you feel secure in Christ so you can taste of God's goodness. All those benefits of a Word filled life can be distilled down into one verse: You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).

The Lord God of the Universe wants to lead you in His perfect path, to fill you with joyful fellowship, and to keep you secure in His sovereign hand at work in your life. He also wants you to rejoice in the knowledge that He created you to accomplish some specific works for His glory. Look at Ephesians 2:10: ... [You] are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that [you] should walk in them. Are you delighting

in the fact you are Christ's workmanship—a beautiful work of art—designed for good works? And that He has placed you here on earth to accomplish something in particular for Him—something unique and wonderful? Such truth is at the heart of why you should long to live a Word filled life!

God wants to do something in you that only you and He together can accomplish. He wants to write Himself across all the pages of your life, which happens when you allow His Word to take control of your heart, mind, and life. Ezra experienced this when he ... prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel (Ezra 7:10). As he zealously studied God's Word, and faithfully practiced it, Ezra then led others to do the same. Ezra was a testimony of how to faithfully live a Word filled life.

Until I began studying Ezra's life in depth, I never knew much about him. I always thought: Ezra? That is one of the more boring books of the Old Testament. What's the deal with Ezra? As a result of my studies, however, he has become a monumental person in my mind. Finally, I understand why, to the Jews, only Moses eclipses Ezra in Jewish history.

Ezra: A Wonderful Model of Living a Word Filled Life

Ezra's life has touched each Jew and every Christian to this day. The Jewish people revere him as the one who launched the Jewish synagogues and perpetuated the study of the Word of God. In fact, synagogues still follow the reading schedule Ezra devised 2,500 years ago. They read in a certain spot every time they gather in an ongoing through-the-Scripture study. And it is Ezra who copied all the Scriptures into the Hebrew form we have today. The entire Old Testament is the product of his careful work.

Under the inspiration of God, Moses began recording the Bible 3,500 years ago. Since Moses was from Egypt, he wrote from his basic understanding of language learned in the Egyptian schools. After Moses, 500 years later, David wrote another large portion of the Bible under the influence of the Phoenicians in whose realm he lived. The Mosaic writing in that Egyptian and the Phoenician-style

Hebrew all came to be the collection of books we now know as the Old Testament.

As time progressed, except for the scholars, the old forms of written Hebrew became unreadable to later generations. At that moment in Jewish history one man stepped forward to remedy this problem—Ezra. He copied every word of the Old Testament canon into what we now call Biblical Hebrew. God used him to pull together the group we know as the scribes, men who faithfully and tirelessly copied the Word. Ezra captured the Biblical Hebrew, codified it, made it consistent, and brought it forth to be copied, and recopied, again and again, until the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls and modern manuscripts from which we get our present-day Bible.

It is interesting that Ezra wasn't in school when he did this. God told him, "Leave what you are doing and travel up through the Fertile Crescent, and then down to the heart of the land of My people, Israel. I want you to minister to the remnant of people who are there." Ezra was in Persia (modern-day Iran) when he walked 975 miles to get to Jerusalem. There, he worked with about 50,000 people, a worldly congregation saturated in the ways of Babylon and Persia.

Some of them, abandoned by the Babylonians, left to till the land; others were returnees with Zerubbabel; and about 5,000 of them (1,500 of them men) came with Ezra. But a very worldly Babylonian group of people, some of which had basically lost their faith, had been so deeply affected by the Babylonian and Persian influence they barely knew or believed in God.

What if you and I had to go face 50,000 or more people like that? What would we do? Ezra 7:10 reveals the proper answer, and not just for Ezra 2,500 years ago, but for all who desire to do what God has planned only for them.

I have a simple philosophy of life: planned neglect. I purposefully plan to neglect everything except what God wants me to do. Why? I can only achieve well what God wants me in particular to accomplish. Ezra also had a very simple philosophy of life: "If I am going to bring lasting change to those I am called to serve, I will have to start with my own life." He lived out that philosophy by learning to point his heart frequently toward doing God's will.

Ezra 7:10 defines the secret of his towering success:

... **Ezra had prepared** ... [to establish, set up, accomplish, make firm; to direct toward (moral sense); to arrange, order]: Ezra just packed up and got ready to go. He prepared by meditating on God's Word so everything was put in order in his heart, to make him receptive to what God wanted.

... **his heart to seek** ... [to resort to, frequent (a place); to consult, investigate, to ask for, require; to practice, study, follow]: Ezra learned from the Lord, and readied his heart to follow God. That is a great way to look at what God wants from us.

... **the Law of the LORD, and to do it** ... [to observe, celebrate, to acquire]: "Do" is an interesting word. Ezra wanted to observe and celebrate the Lord, acquire Truth from Him, and then live it so he would be prepared to teach others.

... **and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.** After learning the Word, and living by it, he wanted to fulfill God's calling by leading others to follow what he had learned.

What was the result of Ezra's deep commitment to the Word of the Lord? I personally believe the longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119, is Ezra's testimony of the effects in his life from meditating on God and His Word. I have read every available commentator and commentary on this subject, and opinions vary. Mostly, they say Psalm 119 could have been written by David, Hezekiah, Nehemiah, or perhaps Daniel. But, after much research, and forty years of reading this psalm, I am persuaded the one man who copied every single character of the text of every single book of that Old Testament, and brought it into uniform ancient Biblical Hebrew, was Ezra, chief of the scribes, who started the synagogues and the reading of the Word of God. Hence, references to Ezra throughout this book will be from this frame of reference.

Not only am I persuaded Psalm 119 is Ezra's testimony, but I believe it is also the probable content of his teaching and preaching to the exiles who came home to Jerusalem to seek the Lord.

Psalm 119 beautifully reveals Ezra's Word filled life and, by both example and instruction, he exhorted others to do the same. That

worshipful love for God and His Word led to radical changes not only in Ezra's life but also in countless other lives for the past 2,500 years. Just these verses alone should be enough to convince anyone of Ezra's deep devotion and commitment to the Lord: (Emphasis added to the verses below.)

- **I will praise You with uprightness of heart**, when I learn Your righteous judgments (v. 7).
- **I will keep Your statutes**; oh, do not forsake me utterly! (v. 8).
- **I will meditate on Your precepts**, and contemplate Your ways (v. 15).
- **I will delight myself in Your statutes**; I will not forget Your word (v. 16).
- **I will run the course of Your commandments**, for You shall enlarge my heart (v. 32).
- **I will walk at liberty**, for I seek Your precepts (v. 45).
- **I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings**, and will not be ashamed (v. 46).
- **I will delight myself in Your commandments**, which I love (v. 47).
- **My hands also I will lift up to** [in my hands I will carry] **Your commandments**, which I love, and I will meditate on Your statutes (v. 48). Literally, God's Word was close at hand!

One holy habit in particular empowered Ezra to keep his commitment to the Lord on a consistent basis—meditation. What is meditation? In essence, it is the spiritual discipline of practicing Christ's words in Matthew 4:4: "Man shall ... live by ... every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." That is the secret of every one of God's great warriors—those who have a heart like Ezra's.

Ezra's Secrets of Meditation

Seven times Ezra confessed a secret of his meditation. Here is his Psalm 119 pathway: (Emphasis added to the verses below.)

First Secret—Purifying Meditation:

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed

*according to Your word. ... I will meditate on **Your precepts**,
and contemplate **Your ways** (vv. 9, 15).*

Note that these verses reveal two ways to describe the Word of God: “precepts” and “Your ways.” The Bible contains God’s precepts, the individual elements which make up life; “Your ways” represents the big picture of the direction of God. Ezra was basically saying, “Meditation purifies my life. As I look at the individual requirements of what to expect from Your precepts, and the way (direction) this whole thing is going, as You have revealed, I more clearly realize what You want and do not want. And following the Truth sanctifies me.”

Second Secret—Illuminating Meditation:

*Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.
... Princes also sit and speak against me, but Your servant
meditates on **Your statutes** (vv. 18, 23).*

This talks about the Word of God being opened and clearly seen, or illuminated. As Ezra was meditating on God’s statutes (another description for God’s Word), he received the insight needed to respond to affliction the way God intended. Each time Ezra described God’s Word he was saying, “I look on the Bible in every different way. I look at it as statutes, or codes: it is God’s code, the standard by which I want to live. Therefore, it is what I meditate on, what I can use to make sure my life is up to God’s standard.”

Third Secret—Refreshing Meditation:

*My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to Your word.
... Make me understand the way of **Your precepts**; so shall I
meditate on **Your wonderful works** (vv. 25, 27).*

The whole stanza (verses 25-32) talks about a life refreshed through the Word. “Works,” another name for the Bible, drew Ezra to meditate. He was saying, “I meditate on Your hand in the past, and what You are doing, and the wonderful works You have promised.” As he meditated on the Word, Ezra was refreshed by clinging to God, having his heart enlarged by Him, and thus becoming stronger in the Lord.

Fourth Secret—Testifying Meditation:

*I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. ... My hands also I will lift up to **Your commandments**, which I love, and I will meditate on **Your statutes** (vv. 46, 48).*

Verse 46 speaks of the testifying power of God's Word. Ezra was saying, "When I lift up my hands to Your commandments, and meditate on Your statutes, I can testify to what You are doing in my life—not in days gone by, but today." What does the lifting up of hands in verse 48 mean? He was saying, "What I do is bound by Your Word, clean hands, and a pure heart. Therefore, I am going to completely do as You say; I am going to obey You—to gladly meditate on Your statutes—Your precious Word, which I love!"

Fifth Secret—Refining Meditation:

*I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me. ... Let the proud be ashamed, for they treated me wrongfully with falsehood; but I will meditate on **Your precepts** (vv. 75, 78).*

Ezra was expressing, "Your Word trains me precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little (Isaiah 28:10) so meditation is my highest priority in life. For only through Your precepts can I be refined to serve You better!"

Sixth Secret—Focusing Meditation:

*I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for **Your testimonies** are my meditation (vv. 101, 99).*

The entire Bible is a testimony. It testifies you can operate when there are only eight people in the whole world who believe in God. "You can make it!" was thus Noah's testimony. Job's testimony claimed: "You can still operate when you lose family, friends, fortune—and everything else you once held dear!" "When you are all alone and discouraged, and haven't got a friend in the world," said Elijah, "you can still keep on keeping on!" David testified: "Even if you are on the run for your life, and your own family hates and pursues you, and is

trying to kill you, you can go on through God's strength." Daniel's life told us: "You can still operate in a foreign country in which you are surrounded by a pagan, wicked culture threatening you!" The Bible recorded the lives of these people as a testimony of God's great and wonderful works. Thus, Ezra loved to meditate on His Word!

Seventh Secret—Interceding Meditation:

*I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help;
I hope in **Your word**. ... My eyes are awake through the night
watches, that I may meditate on **Your word** (vv. 147–148).*

This is interceding meditation. I can easily imagine Ezra praying for those people—praying God would be at work in their lives, praying they would turn back to the God of their fathers, and praying they would honor His Word.

Do you remember what happened when Ezra led in prayer before the people (Nehemiah 8:1-12)? They stood all day long and listened as he explained the Word of God. At the end, they were weeping and wailing. I believe his prayers were answered. Why? Because Ezra chose to ask the Lord for every character quality necessary to fruitfully live. He had a worldly congregation, but he started with his own life. He learned to point his heart frequently toward doing God's will. Thus, God radically changed him. Through Ezra, He changed a whole generation. And Ezra's life testimony is still changing lives today.

Do you also want to be great for God? Then learn what He has to say; live what He has to say; and lead others to follow God's way. That is the best life possible—a Word filled life!

My Prayer for You:

Father in Heaven, I pray the readers of this book will choose to prepare their hearts like Ezra did. May they seek to live according to Your every Word, and to lead others in their lives toward You. There is no limit to what can be accomplished because You have prepared some good works for each of us to do. I thank You that everything we need in this life, that will last forever, is tied to Your Word though the power of Your Spirit and for Your glory. Oh God, we discern where You want to lead us when we are full of Your Word. We feel the fullness of Your presence when we are full of Your Word.

that place of powerful usefulness when we are filled with Your Word. But we can only get full when we let Your Word in little by little, day by day. And Lord, for those who haven't even begun because they have never started in Jesus by faith, or received Him whom to know is life eternal, having never said, "Yes, Lord," never said, "God be merciful to me a sinner"—I pray at this very moment they might begin the greatest journey of all, the journey of faith and learning of their great salvation in You, oh Christ, in whose name I pray. Amen.