

## Dig In

June 6 & 7, 2009

**Intro:** We're in a series talking about *Six Decisions that will Change Your Life*. Our title today is Dig In.

When I think of the phrase, *dig in*, a Thanksgiving meal comes to mind. Mom says, "*Dig in, you're going to love this!*" But there are even better things to *dig into* than turkey and stuffing. Jesus said, **Matt 4:4 - Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.** Digging into God's Word brings more *nourishment* than even the best meal. This is because *our deepest hunger isn't physical*, but spiritual. You may not be in tune with this, but it's true. What we really need isn't a full belly, but the experience of hearing from God. Jeremiah experienced this: **Jer 15:16 When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight.** God's Word filled him.

The idea of *digging* may make you think of mining for something valuable, like silver or gold. You come to a place that looks promising and your partner says, "*Let's dig in!*" You're looking for *treasure* and the *hard work is worth it*. But the Word of God is better still. **Ps 119:72 - The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.** There's *nothing more valuable* than God's Word, that's why I'm telling you to *dig into the Bible!*

Yes, I remember that I taught on this recently but I just couldn't skip over this topic in our series on decisions that will change your life. The commitment to digging into God's Word will do just that. I can't think of a more important choice than to listen to God and respond to him.

Many of us would say we believe the Bible. And we would agree that it can *meet our needs* and *satisfy our souls*. Yet we would *have to admit* that *we neglect it*. We *don't dig in*. We don't put out the effort to mine its depths.

Why not? That would take time that we invest, or waste, on other interests and activities. There are so many

channels to choose from in life; lots of competition. Rival preoccupations push away any thought of really getting into God's Word. Maybe we need a little motivation. I'm going to share *five big benefits to digging into the Bible*:

**1. You'll encounter the supernatural realm by hearing from the God of the universe.** When you dig into the Bible, you'll be doing what many people only dream of doing, *breaking through the barrier!* It is almost like paranormal science fiction, but so much better because it's fact: *God is available* and *you can connect* with him!

The Bible both claims and proves to be God's Word. God has spoken (**Heb 1**). He didn't have to, but he decided to disclose himself and reveal his will. It makes sense to pay attention to what he's communicated. **Is 1:2 - ...listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken...**

**2 Tim 3:16** succinctly states that *the Bible is God's Word*. **All Scripture is God-breathed...** About 4,000 times in the Bible the writers claim to be writing the Word of God. **Isaiah: *The Lord said, here's what I want you to go and tell the people...*** **Jeremiah: *The Lord said to me, I have put my words in your mouth.*** **Ezekiel: *God said, receive my words in your heart and go speak to the people.*** **Amos: *God said, go prophesy unto my people...*** **Paul** was appointed by God to listen to him and speak what he was told. **John** said, *I heard behind me a great voice saying, "What you see write in a book..."*

As **2 Tim 3:16** establishes *the fact* of inspiration, **2 Pet. 1:20&21** describe *the method* of inspiration - **Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.** The word *prophecy* here means any revelation from God. Recording this for us involved a *supernatural* process! Jesus told his disciples how they would know what to write: *I will bring all things to your remembrance. I will lead you into all truth.*

This makes the Bible unique. Other books can influence your thinking, but this is the only book that can *alter* your very nature. It *transforms* you from the inside out. It cuts and penetrates like a surgeon's scalpel. **Heb. 4:12 - For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword...** This is supernatural and it is available everyday! Imagine being able to connect with the other world, the unseen realm, the God who made you! You can!

## **2. You'll experience increased significance as you discover the depth of God's love for you.**

When you dig into the Bible, you'll find the ultimate healthy basis for self-esteem - the love of God! **John 3:16; Rom 5:8.** *Everyone's looking for something to prove they have value.* Here it is! Look up. He loves us! Where do we learn about that? In the Bible. **Col 3:12** - we are **God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved...** = *God picked you, he set you apart, and he loves you!* Your worth is in him.

Paul knew about this. He assured us that nothing could separate us from God's love (**Rom 8**). Paul's most complete treatment of the basis for significance is in **Phil 3**. Paul knew the legalistic way of approaching God was a dead end; he had tried it! So he challenged the false teachers to a duel. **4b** *If anyone could base their identity and status on religion and reputation, it would be me!* Launches into his autobiography: **5** Paul had taken pride in his pure ancestry. **Pharisee:** not a synonym for *hypocrite*; they were known as devout. He had everything going for him; no one could compete with his *performance and pedigree*. **6** He saw the new sect as blasphemous and attacked the heresy.

**7 But** he came to understand that all his impressive credentials could not provide real significance and satisfaction. For that, we all need Jesus. Nothing else can function as a stable foundation. **8,9** Life is about **knowing Christ**. This knowledge is to be intimate, a spiritual union. In the Bible, you can discover the depths of God's radical, sacrificial love for you.

Is your significance wrapped up in external or internal things? List the usual rivals: money, power, possessions, sex-appeal, intellect, style. None of these last; they are all at risk. You can lose them. There should be no competition. Healthy significance is found in grasping the love of God and you can discover this in the pages of God's Word!

That's why I say we should dig into the Bible.

### 3. You'll discover true and satisfying answers to the big questions that plague humanity.

When you dig into the Bible, you'll find what people of every culture, continent, and century have been searching for. All people have a built-in curiosity about the big questions: *Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going?* We long for answers. Many people live and die without ever discovering what life is all about. Without answers, we live *confused, aimless, lives*.

As you dig into the Bible, you find that *you were created to experience a relationship with your Creator*. There really is a God. *You didn't just happen*. You're not *an accident of nature; overgrown algae, sophisticated pond scum that crawled out of a primordial slough*. The real answer is in the Bible:

**Col 1:16 - all things were created by him and for him.**

The answers to your origin, purpose and destiny are all tied together. *How we got here, why we're here, and where we are going* are all linked. If you believe you're the result of a cosmic accident and your destiny is annihilation, how can there be any transcendent meaning while you're here?

The atheistic philosopher, Bertrand Russell: *"Unless you assume the existence of God, the question of life's meaning and purpose is irrelevant."* There is no answer outside of God. Without him we're hopeless. The Bible says we were created for the highest purpose. Speaking about us, God says, **Is. 43:7 whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.** Anyone who grasps that purpose has a certain destiny: **1 John 2:17 - The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.**

I read a story of a guy who was looking for his car in a parking garage. He was certain that he parked on level three but it was not there. Only at the insistence of the security guard did he willingly look on a different level. He assumed his car had been stolen but it wasn't. They found it. Have you ever been sure of something only to be

completely wrong? The author applied this story saying, *here we are looking for answers at one level when all along God's trying to take us to another level entirely*. Dig into the Bible; that's where you'll find what you're looking for.

### 4. You'll be equipped to fulfill your purpose of glorifying God by leading others to follow

**Christ**. When you dig into the Bible, you'll find that *your purpose is to glorify God*. The way we do this is to *follow Christ's commands*. There is *no ambiguity*; he *clearly commissioned his follower to continue his work*. **Mat 28:18-20.**

As you continue to study the Bible, you'll be equipped to accomplish Christ's agenda for his followers. For instance, **Rom 3:23 - All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** Why share such bad news? *It's true: an accurate diagnosis.* **6:23 The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Like any gift, salvation must be received. **John 1:12 - To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.** This is a new kind of life! **2 Cor. 5:17 - If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.** This new life is a life with power (**Acts 1:8**), a productive life (**Gal 5:16**). It's a life that is full (**John 10:10**), and this life lasts forever. **1 John 5:13 - I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.** And leading someone to Christ isn't the end of road, it is the beginning: **Col 2:6,7 - So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.**

You can be equipped to use the Word to lead others to Christ. But the power is not ours, it is the Word: **the gospel... is the power of God for... salvation...**(**Rom 1:16**). Because the stakes are so high and the opportunity is so great, let me share two more verses about our responsibility to dig into the Bible. **1 Peter 3:15 - Always be prepared to**

give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. You can do that! **2 Tim 2:15 - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.** You can be equipped to fulfill your purpose by leading people to follow Christ. *Just dig into God's Word.*

### **5. You'll learn practical principles that will guide you to succeed in every facet of your life.**

When you dig into the Bible, you'll receive the instruction you need to honor God in every role you play: parent, worker, you name it! **Ps 19:7 The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.** God's Word gives direction, guidance. It helps us make decisions. **Ps 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.**

When I mention success, I'm thinking of **Josh 1:8 meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.** Let's consider those two examples I mentioned: oParenting: **Eph. 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.** To exasperate is to provoke or frustrate your kids by being inconsistent, unavailable, unfair, unreliable, dishonest, etc. Its opposite is to encourage. The Bible is full of examples of what happens when people fail to follow God's plan in raising their kids: David set a bad example, Eli neglected discipline, Isaac and Jacob showed favoritism. The list goes on. *We can learn from their mistakes!*

If you're going to train your children in Word, you need to dig into the Bible yourself that you may know it and follow it. Again: **Josh 1:8 be careful to do everything written...**

oWork **Col 3:23,24 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Give it your all.**

*Do the best you possibly can. The key to your motivation is thinking of Jesus as the recipient of your service. Work is an act of worship.* This kind of practical guidance is all through the Bible. I urge you to dig in to mine it's treasures. **Rev. 1:3 - blessed are the ones who read, hear and heed the words of this prophecy.** This blessing applies to the whole book.

T - Let's bring up two people who have experienced that this year. Their testimonies will be of encouragement to you. **Connie Duncan. Tim Coburn. Prayer:** may we not settle for a superficial grasp of Scripture, but dig in! **More meat** (unedited, unused ideas):

**Ps. 19:7,8 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. Ps 119:52. I remember your ancient laws, O Lord, and I find comfort in them.**

Results of having God's Word in your heart: speak more kindly to your children. Bring joy into your work place. End the search for significance. Redefine what it means to be successful. All of these are results of meeting with God in his word.

Read with the expectation that God will meet you there and bless you. Start with prayer **Ps 119:18 - Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.**

Dwight Moody - "The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives."

**Ps 119:16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.**

**Matt 24:35** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Ps 42:1,2 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Ps 63:1 - My soul thirsts for You; • my flesh longs for you • in a dry and thirsty land • where there is no water. •

2 Tim. 4:2 - Preach the Word... If you shop around, you'll find many alternatives; objective truth has its competitors. Some allow subjective feelings to challenge the unique authority of the Bible. We can't allow anything to be raised to the level of Scripture, whether it's tradition or the teaching of an individual. An overemphasis on psychology or even pragmatism can demote the Scripture and dilute our ministry of power.

Jer 23:29 - "Is not my word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

Pr 6:23 - God's commands are ...the way to life... God gives us what we need.

*I'm convinced that the bottom line is that there is a bottom line! Moral truth exists and that God has revealed it in His Word. Truth is not relative. There's an absolute standard. What God says is truth.*

More verses to use in leading someone to Christ:

Acts 16:31 Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

Rom 10:9 - If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Rev 22:17 - Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Rev. 3:20 - Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Luke 11:28 - Blessed... are those who hear the word of God and obey it. James 1:22 - Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

David Rios: I would have loved to share on that. I'm finding that Bible study is much like compounded interest. I can't say that each morning's study or evening's study is a mind-blowing event like winning the "spiritual" lottery. However, over the course of time it grows at an exponential rate that is always moving you upward and closer to spiritual security. Thank goodness for the Holy Spirit's guidance and influence. I know that the Spirit reveals exactly what I need to know when I stay in the Word.