

Chapter Eighteen:

The Word Hand

Chapter Sixteen: The Word Hand

A Diagnostic Tool For Discipleship

As I reflect back upon my life and the life of my contemporaries, I can think of no single item that is held in such reverence, so carefully owned, so carefully carried and yet so little used, as is the Word of God. In my travels and speaking I often ask this question,

“How many own a copy of the Word of God?” and the response is almost unanimous.

A second question, “How many have owned a copy of the Word of God since their childhood?” again, an almost universal affirmative response.

A third question, “How many have read through the entire Word of God, reading every page, every word?” and yet here I get only a smattering.

A fourth question, “How many have a reading program, whereby they are reading through the Word of God each year?” and on this question I am lucky to find one person, many times none at all.

So you see my point. All there would affirm the Bible as the Word of God. All would proudly produce their personal volume, many times expensive leather with gold leaf pages of the highest quality. Most if not all would attest that at sometime in their childhood they received their first copy of the Word of God. Yet most have never read it through once and almost none read it through on a regular basis. This discrepancy between avowed reverence and the reality or practice never ceases to amaze me and even as I write I do so in almost disbelief.

For this reason it is good to have a diagnostic tool handy for our personal discipleship skills. Many of us use diagnostic tools on a day-to-day basis. The doctor has his stethoscope, the nurse, the thermometer; the mechanic has the tire gauge; the craftsman, a level and the list goes on. Almost every profession has a diagnostic tool whereby they can either evaluate a problem or gauge the progress and quality of their work.

In the area of personal discipleship and the Word of God, the Word Hand is an invaluable diagnostic tool. By it we can both evaluate our problem or gauge the progress of our walk with God.

I tire may look full, but the tire gauge may reveal a slow leak. A table may look level, but the level may reveal shoddy craftsmanship. A computer may respond fine, but a virus program may reveal imminent disaster. Even so, our walk with God may look to ourselves and to others as zipping along, when in fact we in real problem, we have a slow leak, we are out of level with the standard of God’s excellence, we have a spiritual problem that is waiting to explode the myth of our appearance.

In this section we will...

Cover the Word Hand

Illustrate its use as a diagnostic tool

use it to diagnose our own walk with God

cover each section to fully understand the principles involved.

I. I Peter 1:6 – 9

- A. In this passage we see a common diagnostic tool is used to illustrate the purifying of our faith by trials. This diagnostic tool is still in use today. Metals are placed in a smelter, heated till liquid form, impurities rise to the surface and then are scraped off, the metal is allowed to cool and the process is repeated. It is through this continual heating and removal of dredges that metals are purified.
- B. In the same way, God places us in His furnace to purify our faith. This is the furnace of trials or hard knocks.
- C. Many of us use diagnostic tools in our daily lives. The Doctor – Stethoscope; Carpenter – level; Mechanic – Tork wrench; Lawyer – Book of legal codes; Banker and Insurance Agent – actuary tables.
- D. Diagnostic tools are nothing more than simple tools which give us a clear picture of where we are in terms of quality or progress in a project or situation. In our spiritual lives, diagnostic tools help us to see where we are in terms of obedience and spiritual growth. Much like the marks on the wall recording the growth of a child over the years, so a good diagnostic tool will tell us whether we are growing in Christ or standing still.
- E. In Hebrews 5:12 – 6:3. We find that mature Christians are not content with milk, they desire the richer deeper things of God. Not only this they are able to distinguish between good and evil. Many Christian confuse judging others with this trait of distinguishing.
 - 1. Judging has to do with our judicial relationship with man. There is of course one Lawgiver and Judge, He who is able to save and destroy and we are not to judge our fellow man in this way.
 - 2. On the other hand we are not helpless in face of the conduct of others. “I know he left his wife, I know he cheated on her for years, I know he has abandoned his children, but who am I to judge? Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.”
 - 3. This reaction could not be further from the truth. We can, from God’s Word, say confidently that sin is sin; righteousness is righteousness and distinguishes between the two.
 - 4. From the use of the Word Hand, as a diagnostic tool, we can begin to grow in God’s Word and in our ability to distinguish between good and evil. In so doing we will prove to be adults not merely babes in Christ.

II. The Word Hand

A. Hear

ROM 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.
HEB 2:1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

- 1. Who speaks and you take notes? This is a good question because so few of us take notes in church. When your pastor gets up to speak does it sound like a lecture hall in a major university, a press conference before the leader of the nation speaks, do people come ready to write down important information? Why do we take notes in other arenas but not in church? Consider the following situations, picture yourself and the earnestness with which you would record information being given and then compare it with a mental picture of you during a church service or conference.
 - a. Professor giving a pre-exam lecture. How many of us agonized over these notes, comparing with friends and classmates the information to insure that we got it all, only at the end of the semester to carelessly toss this same precious notebook into the trash.
 - b. Internal auditor giving a breakdown of his expectations in a coming audit.

- c. Systems manager going over major changes in the running of your departmental operations.
 - d. Benefits department giving you a breakdown of the changes and additions to your insurance, retirement and workman's comp programs
 - e. Directions to an important in town facilities workshop being given out at a departmental meeting.
 - f. Can you picture yourself in these situations? What are you doing, what is the level of your concentration, how alert are you?
 - g. Now think of yourself the last time you were sitting and hearing a message on the Word of God. How does it compare with the above situations and why?
2. Many of us, if we were honest would confess that we, like most people sit and listen to the Word of God being presented in a fairly critical manner. In fact we often hear and think... I would do a better job - Wish I could take this guy out to lunch and...
 3. It is time for a major change to take place in the way Christians approach the hearing of God's Word. We all know from secular experiences how to listen to something you take very seriously. We are sitting up, alert, pen in hand; we carefully take notes, organizing them as we go along. It is time for us to take the teaching of the Word of God even more seriously than we take the dissemination of secular, temporal facts.

B. Read

DEU 17:18 - 20 "Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left; in order that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

1. John Hus was an Anna Baptist, burned at the stake, in part for his commitment to the Word of God being provided to the masses in the vernacular, that they might read it in their own language. What will you say to John Hus when you meet him in heaven and he asks you about your reading of the Word of God?
2. In my travels I often have layovers in historical cities. When I do I always try to take in an historical sight. One time in England I made my way by train to Lewis to climb to the top of a medieval Norman tower. As I walked the battlements I noticed in the distance a cross and monument. Upon inquiry I found that this was the monument to the seven martyrs of Lewis. These were seven godly men, a Baptist minister and six deacons, who were burned at the stake by Mary Queen of Scots. As Protestants, they eschewed the Latin Bible for the English, proclaiming that all men should have the Bible and be able to read it in their native tongue. For their trouble they were burned, one by one, at the stake. They sang psalms and chanted as each was marched individually to the stake over a period of a month. The townspeople were so taken by their faith that the last two were fitted with metal mouth and tongue clamps to keep them silent. As their praises turned to screams of agony in the flames, the town's people looked on.
 - a. Someday we will meet these saints of God and they will ask,
"Did you have the Bible in your language?"
"Was it readily available?"
"Was it freely owned?"
 - b. To which we will reply in the affirmative. They will no doubt exclaim that it was worth it all. The imprisonment, the torture, the agonizing death, that the world might have the Bible in its language. Then they will ask, "Was it widely read, did you read it through often?" and you will answer

- c. The question is, how will you answer, what will be your answer to the seven martyrs of Lewis. The Word of God is freely available to us to read through the blood of the martyrs. We must not take this price lightly. If it is not enough that God command the reading of His Word, then surely the price that has been paid over the ages for you to hold the precious Word of God in your hands. As good stewards it compels us, simply by the price that has been paid, to immerse ourselves in the Word of God.
- 3. Another question you can ask yourself is, “What does it mean when you stop listening to somebody?” You are bored, you are disrespectful, you are busy, there may be many answers, but few if any are positive or adequate, especially to the one speaking. God’s Word is just that, God’s Word, it is God speaking to man. What does it mean when you stop listening to God? When you stop reading daily in the Word of God? Many people continue to talk to God daily, even multiple times a day through prayer, but they are not interested in God talking. They want to do all the talking, God is to sit still and listen. What does the ratio between your talking and your listening to God reflect about your view of God?
- 4. I seek to read through the Bible at least once each year. It is my goal to allow the Holy Spirit to speak on every area, every year. This is a relatively simple thing to do. Simply add the pages in your Bible and divide by 300. For most this comes out to five pages a day. This leaves plenty of room for illness, forgetting your Bible when you go to work and sin, yet still getting through the Bible everyday. Make it your goal to sit still and listen for a change, when it comes to your relationship to God and His Word. I don’t know of any Christian, no matter how mature, that it would not help to sit still and listen to what God has to say at the beginning of each day.

C. Study

EZR 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.

2TI 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.

- 1. What does it mean when you do not study information that is being given to you?
 - a. It may mean you are planning to fail. My wife and I have both taught in the public school system. It has always amazed us that there are students who take a course and from the outset they have decided to fail. Their whole attitude reflects this. They simply are not interested in studying and do not plan to study for any test. They sit; they listen, (sort of) but live with no anxiety concerning tests. They plan to fail.
 - b. In most universities in the US it is possible to audit a course. If you are interested in the subject, but do not need it for your major, you can pay the fees, sit in on the lecture but not participate in the tests, the course does not appear on your transcripts, you are simply there to broaden your education. If there is room in the class and the professor permits, you may audit the course. While serving as a minister at major Universities I often audited courses during my lunch hour yr. Needless to say there was a marked contrast between my attitudes toward studying for tests as compared with those who needed the course for their graduation requirements.
 - c. Consider your own attitude towards Bible study. Does it reflect the attitude of someone who is planning to fail, of someone who is simply auditing a course, or does it reflect the attitude of someone who is majoring in discipleship? What do you think of when you picture in your mind someone who is earnestly studying? Perhaps it is a major exam, perhaps your department head has asked you to master a

new system and present it to the district managers, perhaps you are presenting to a corporate client your bid for the biggest job you have ever sought to take on, it is the night before, what do you look like. I would picture myself at a table, books open, small sheets of key material I need to memorize, reference books available, lists of facts and an clear organization of study material spread around me. It is night, the house is quiet, my cup of coffee is by my side, the study lamp shines bright, the clock ticks softly and I am hard at my studies.

d.How does this picture contrast with your attitude and behavior the night before the Bible study or Sunday school class you attend? Can you really even say you study God's Word or is "audit" a more accurate term?

2. Contrast with Matthew 23:1 – 4 "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them. And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. (NAS)
 - a. Do you pay lip service to Bible study, present yourself as a student of the Bible, tell others about you the Bible study you attend, while all the time you are not really studying the Bible at all you are simply talking, reading, listening and sitting, you are auditing and interesting topic, but you are not studying. What does what you encourage others to do contrast with what you are actually doing on your own, when no one is there to see.
 - b. Many studies have suggested preparations, be they a home Bible study or a Sunday school lesson. Do you study these before attending? Many will say, I study at the study. I will answer, what class, other than a Bible study, would accept that as an adequate response? What professor would begin a course with, "I will give you daily assignments and weekly reviews for your exams, but don't worry, just as long as you come to the lecture and give your opinions, the University will be happy. We will just call that type of participation "studying"?
3. When you were a child your parents made you study. When you go to the University, when you take a job, no one makes you study, you are either self-motivated or you fail. It all depends not, on what you say or do in public, but rather upon what you do in private. If you are to be a mature disciple of Christ, not simply a mild fed babe, then it will all depend on what you do in the privacy of your home. You must decide whether or not you are going to study the Word of God.
4. Make it your goal, apart from the expectations of man, to be a serious student of the Word of God. To be one who takes the Bible seriously, one who earnestly and in a disciplined manner, studies the Word of God.

D. Memorize

PSA 11 9:9 & 11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word. Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee.

PRO 4:21 Do not let them depart from your sight; Keep them in the midst of your heart.

1. It is interesting to hear the protestations which otherwise reasonable men make when it comes to scripture memory. "I just can't memorize"; "I have a terrible memory"; "I tried that, it doesn't work"; "I am too old for that" All these and more by men and women who even though they present themselves as unable to memorize new facts, nevertheless, survive in their day to day routine by the shear volume of facts and numbers which they have memorized.
2. For instance if were today to ask you to list all the phone numbers you have memorized I would get quite a list. Add to that addresses, schedules, directions, accounts, procedures,

and the list goes on and on. To survive in the modern world we must be constantly memorizing new and important information.

3. For two primary reasons this type of memory comes easy to us. First, we use it and second, it is very important to us. An illustration would be the pin number on your bankcard, your phone number, you zip code, the directions to church, school or store. Use coupled with importance equals ease in memorization.
4. Contrastingly for many of us the Bible is not a day-to-day occurrence in our conversation. It is not the pin number which accesses God's Word, it is not the key to important directions in our life's journey, it is not something we are constantly dialing in to and as a result of the lack of use and our failure to see it's daily importance, we do not memorize it.
5. For many scripture memory is a childish discipline, like finishing your Sunday school lesson or reading a Bible story. Nothing however could be further from the truth. Scripture memory is most certainly an adult discipline, one used extensively by the ministers in the book of Acts and one which we as well should master. Scripture memory reflects our reliance on God's Word in the fight against temptation, the use of the Word in our prayers and the amount of God's Word which we use in fellowshipping and ministering to those around us.

E. Meditate

PSA 119:97 ¶ O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.

PSA 119:147 & 148 I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Thy words. My eyes anticipate the night watches, That I may meditate on Thy word. Everybody meditates...

1. We all meditate. Meditation is the turning over of facts in our minds, making them part of our lives, analyzing them until they shape our perspectives and our actions. We meditate on relationships, on wrongs done to us whether real or imagined, on our personal goals which we have set, on our possessions or possessions which we hope to acquire, on music, on movies, on many, many facts, events and objects.
2. The question is not will we meditate, but what will we choose to meditate upon. If when driving your car, falling to sleep, waiting in line, walking down a sidewalk, if you have the Word of God memorized, then you can choose to meditate upon God's Word. If you begin to have sinful, unhealthy or fearful thoughts, you have recourse, not just to try to think about something else but rather to feed upon the spiritual nourishment of the living Word of God.
3. This is why the disciplines of the Word of God are so important to us. They allow us a proactive alternative to the sin which so aggressively wages war against our souls.

F. The Hand Illustration

1. These principles of the Word of God have been aptly illustrated by the Hand. The Word of God in Eph 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.(NAS). If God's Word is the Sword of the Spirit, then these disciplines are the hand which grips the Sword. In the illustration below draw and open left hand and connect the disciplines to each finger, beginning with hearing as connected to the little finger and on through to meditating connected to the thumb.
2. Try holding the Sword of the Spirit with just the little finger. How effective is that. Keep trying till you have added all five disciplines. The difference you see in your ability to hold the Word of God is just as vividly reflected in your spiritual life as well.
3. Now draw your own hand as it is reflected in your week-to-week life. Draw each finger as it reflects the time given to it remembering that the perfect hand will never be attained.
4. This may give you a real insight into why you are not experiencing the victory which you desire in your daily spiritual battles.

The Word Hand

I Chronicles 5:18

"The sons of Reuben and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, ... valiant men, men who bore shield and sword ... were skillful in battle...who went to war"

"in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left," II Corinthians 6:7

for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. II Corinthians 10:4

Introduction: The Sword Of The Spirit – Ephesians 6:17 ...*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

- A. The Bible does not assign an offensive or defensive designation to the armor.
- B. The Word of God is the Holy Spirit's weapon of choice.

1. He does not look to the other weapons so attractive to man.

"satan's only hope is that we will choose other weapons. He will even supply them to us if we will make the change. Matt 7:22" Idemotor 11/97

Read

Deuteronomy 17:18 – 20: What will you say when you meet Joho Hus, 7 Martyrs of Lewis, What does it mean when you stop listening to somebody

Study

Ezra 7:10; II Timothy 2:15 – 1.
Reasons you do not study: 1. Plan to fail or 2. Auditing the course 2.
Contrast with Matthew 23:1 - 4

Hear

Romans 10:17

Hebrews 2:1

Who speaks and you take notes...

1. Professor
2. Internal audit
3. Systems manager
4. Benefits department
5. Directions

Most people hear and think...

1. I would do a better job
2. Wish I could take this guy out to lunch and

II Timothy 2:15
It is true you do not have to, but why don't you want to?

Memorize

Psalm 119:9, 11

Proverbs 4:21

1. Facts you memorize
2. Numbers
3. Why – Important

Meditate

Psalm 119: 97

Psalm 119:147, 148

Everybody meditates...

1. Relationships
2. Wrongs
3. Goals
4. Possessions
5. Music
6. Movies

"... we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives."

Deuteronomy 5:24

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD
JEREMIAH 15:16
THEME: The Word Hand

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Romans 10:17; Hebrews 2:1

How does this passage relate to the theme?

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?
Explain why:**

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Deuteronomy 17:18 - 20

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Ezra 7:10; 11 Timothy 2:15

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD**JEREMIAH 15:16****THEME: The Word Hand****PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION:** Psalm 119:9 & 11; Proverbs 4:21**How does this passage relate to the theme?****When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?
Explain why:****How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?****PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION:** Psalm 119:97, 147, 148**How does this passage relate to the theme?****When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?
Explain why:****How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?****PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION:** Joshua 1:8**How does this passage relate to the theme?****When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me?
Explain why:****How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

