

Lost In Translation

The Bible - God's Word - is truly remarkable! On the one hand, it is a complex literary masterpiece, incorporating a multitude of literary genres and expressing a broad spectrum of emotions. On the other hand, it is incredibly simple in its central message, prompting some cynics to label it as "silly" or "illogical". It is widely recognized as being comprised of 66 books and being written over the course of nearly 2000 years, by 40 authors, on three continents, and in three languages, yet it "is the story of one problem - sin - with one solution, Jesus Christ" (Geisler & Nix, 194). We must conclude that the Bible is **both** incredibly intricate while remaining singularly unified in its message and doctrine.

There is another reason the Bible is remarkable and like nothing ever written - **it has the power to transform and bring joy**. As Nehemiah puts the finishing touches on the re-construction of Jerusalem's walls and gates, his attention shifts to the re-consecration of God's people who are to populate God's holy city. Since Jerusalem and the Jewish people play an integral part in God's plan for the redemption of the nations, Nehemiah begins the dedicatory process by re-introducing the people to the Law of Moses and, by doing so, reminding them of their commitment to the Lord and His faithful promises (Deut 6:1-9). With the help of Ezra the priest and a trained group of Levites, the people hear and respond to the Scriptures:

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also ... the Levites, **helped the people to understand the Law**, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and **they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading**. (Nehemiah 8:5-8)

Based on the text, God's people needed to have God's Word explained to them. For some reason the Scriptures had become so foreign to them that its truths and commands were lost in translation and needed clarification. God's Word needed to be introduced into their presence (Neh 8:2), opened to them (v. 5), and finally explained (vv. 7-8). Their response was both physical and spiritual. "Truth, truth," they answered as they lifted "up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground" (v. 6). Interestingly, Nehemiah,

Ezra, and the Levites admonished the people not to mourn or weep, but rejoice. Why? Certainly the Bible is to bring conviction and lead to repentance, right?

Yes. The Bible is a deposit and treasure worth guarding (2 Tim 1:14). It is breathed out by God and is profitable in knowing what is right, what is not right, how to get right, and how to stay right (see 2 Timothy 3:16). In other words, it is the primary tool God uses for our sanctification. It is a seed that produces life (1 Pet 1:23). And, as it does, it brings joy because God's grace is applied. Mourning leads to comfort and dancing (Matt 5:4; Ps 30:11).

So keep the Bible near you at all times. Open it often. Memorize it. Study it. Listen to it! It is milk that nourishes (1 Pet 2:2), sweet as honey from the comb (Ps 119:103), and a lamp that gives light (Ps 119:105).

Psalm 119:33-37 (ESV) -

*“Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes;
and I will keep it to the end.*

***Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.***

*Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.*

*Incline my heart to your testimonies,
and not to selfish gain!*

***Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;
and give me life in your ways.”***

Source

Geisler, Norman & Nix, William. 1986. *A General Introduction to the Bible*. Chicago: Moody.