

What Is Your Favorite Book to Read?

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Did you know that in 2024, 782.7 million printed books were sold in the United States. A slight increase from 2023. It's estimated that over 3 billion books were sold worldwide last year. Adult fiction had the biggest increase in sales. The biggest selling book in the U.S. was *It Ends with Us* written by Colleen Hoover. One of the reasons this book did so well was because the movie version has two actors that are in real court over hostile work environment. So, there is a smear campaign going on and the book is selling because of this. Some schools have banned the book from their libraries because of the content. There used to be a time where the requirement to have a best selling book was that the book was great to read. Most people have a favorite book to read. Maybe it's an old book like *Tom Sawyer* or maybe *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Many Christians read Christian books as well. Right now, I'm reading *A Pastor's Wife* by Sabina Wurmbrand. It's about how she handled being in prison and how she handled her husband being in prison for preaching the Gospel of Jesus. After I'm done with that book, I have a stack of books ready to be read. Many people call themselves Christians. However, if one doesn't read and study the Bible, how can one know God or understand Him without some knowledge that can only come from the Bible or God's Word? Many Christians have become Bible illiterate even though they may be one of the people to have purchased one of the adult fiction books last year. Studying God's Word should be part of the DNA of a Christian. In fact, God's Word is an important element of Holy Living. So, let's take a deeper look into this.

Let's turn to Psalm 119: 105 – 112 where we read this,

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

¹⁰⁶ I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to keep your righteous rules.

¹⁰⁷ I am severely afflicted;

give me life, O LORD, according to your word!
¹⁰⁸ Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O LORD,
and teach me your rules.
¹⁰⁹ I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
¹¹⁰ The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
¹¹¹ Your testimonies are my heritage forever,
for they are the joy of my heart.
¹¹² I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.^[a] (ESV – www.Biblegateway.com)

We're not sure who wrote Psalm 119. Some think it was Ezra the Priest during Nehemiah's day. Whoever it was had a very healthy view of God's Word. First, we see that the writer uses "your" about seven times. This means the writer saw the Word of God as God's. Now, we have humanized God's Word today to the point where many no longer believe in the Holiness of God's Word. In other words, many believe it is solely written by human beings and it is filled with fiction and errors. The writer here believes the opposite. The writer talks about God's laws and precepts. He would have been talking about the early books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The author of these books was Moses and they were handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth and through written material. It's almost the same method we have the New Testament today. It has been handed down from generation and generation. The writer of Psalm 119 still saw these early writings as God's writings. We have to remember, Moses was filled with the Holy Spirit. We know this because Scripture tells us this in Numbers 11: 16 when God picks seventy leaders to help Moses with leading the people. We read this, "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Summon before me seventy of the leaders of Israel. Bring them to the Tabernacle to stand there with you. I will come down and talk to you there. I will take some of the Spirit that is upon you, and I will put the Spirit upon them also. They will bear the burden of the people along with you, so you will not have to carry it alone. (NLT)'" God would put His Spirit upon leaders in the Old Testament

like He did with King David. So, when Moses wrote down the Words of God, the Spirit of God was involved. In fact, I'll go a step further, when God's Word was handed down by word of mouth, the Spirit of God was involved because it was the Word of God. Since the Holy Spirit was involved with the early writings, the writer of Psalm 119 saw God's Word as from God, not from Moses. This writer believed and trusted the Spirit of God and so the writer believed in the Holiness of God's Word. Many Christians today don't trust God's Word like the writer of Psalm 119 did. So, because this writer believed it, he found that the Word of God was a lamp for his feet. Since he trusted God's Word so much, God's Word was light in front of him during his journey on this earth. I went biking on Monday and I was riding through a thick tree area and it was dark. I didn't see a stone on the trail and I hit it with my bike. I didn't crash, but the stone blew out the inner tube in my back tire. If the path had been lighted, I could have seen that stone. When we trust the Word of God, God allows His Word to light our path and we know the difference from right and wrong because His light is the light of righteousness. Proverbs 13: 9 states, "The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out (NIV)" So, because of that light from God, the writer states that he has suffered much in this life, but because of his trust in God's Word, he can rest upon it to give him hope and strength to carry on. Then the writer states in verse 108 that he wants to praise God and he wants God to teach him His laws. This is very important to Holy Living. Do we want God to teach us through His Word? If so, then we push our fear of change to the side and allow His Spirit to speak to our heart and mind through the Word of God. We WANT to be taught righteous living by God. The writer here trusted that God would do this. So, when satan and wicked people set snares for him, he knew he could trust God's Word to give him guidance and direction. Again, this isn't Moses' word, it's God's Word. Just like with writers in the New Testament. It's not Paul's word; it's God's Word spoken through Paul by the Spirit of God which is far greater than Paul. We have to remember this. Then in verse 111, we see that the writer's trust is so strong that God's Word or statutes is his heritage. The Hebrew term used for "heritage" means an inheritance which can be allotted or cause to inherit or to obtain (Strong's Concordance). The writer saw God's Word as his inheritance from

God alone. Just think how differently we would view the Bible if we would view it as part of our inheritance from God. The Bible is truly a gift to us from God. The writer's trust became so strong in God's Word that his heart was set on keeping God's decrees till the very end. Are we as dedicated in living out God's Word in our life?

Let's now drop down to Psalm 119: 129 – 136 where the writer continues about the Word of God,

¹²⁹ Your testimonies are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.

¹³⁰ The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.

¹³¹ I open my mouth and pant,
because I long for your commandments.

¹³² Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your way with those who love your name.

¹³³ Keep steady my steps according to your promise,
and let no iniquity get dominion over me.

¹³⁴ Redeem me from man's oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.

¹³⁵ Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.

¹³⁶ My eyes shed streams of tears,
because people do not keep your law. (ESV – www.Biblegateway.com)

The writer's love for God's Word becomes so wonderful and he starts to pant and longs for it – verse 131. In Hebrew, "pant" can also mean "to devour" (Strong's Concordance). Through the working of the Holy Spirit, we start to see the need to devour the Word of God. We realize how much light it gives us during our journey on this dying world. We also see in verse 132 that the writer wants to walk in the way of the Lord through His Word because of his love of the Lord. We should be studying God's Word not because we have to, but because we love Him with everything we have. All the other human books we read should be done for

recreational purposes. We read the Bible out of love for Jesus, the Father, and for the Holy Spirit. In fact, we should get to the point where we study the Word of God so much, verse 136 becomes reality to us. We shed streams of tears for those who don't follow the ways of the Lord. Holy Living helps us to feel this Jesus compassion for those who go against the Word of God. We feel compassion because we know what the outcome will be. The outcome was the same for us, but because of the grace of God, that outcome has changed for us or at least it should have if you know Jesus as your Savior. Through the Holy Spirit, the Word of God changes our view of life itself and with the people around us. We understand the need for the Word of God in this world.

Paul, through the Holy Spirit, picks at this in 2 Timothy 3: 14-17 where we read this, ¹⁴ "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom^[a] you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God^[b] may be complete, equipped for every good work." (ESV – www.biblegateway.com)

Paul is telling us that Timothy, a young preacher, needs to understand the need for salvation through Jesus through the sacred writing which would have been the Old Testament. The New Testament was being formed during the days after Pentecost. Holy Living helps us to realize the importance of the Bible because it tells about Jesus and how we can receive the gift of salvation through Jesus. In fact, God's Word states in verse 16 that it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in the Righteousness of God. The Word of God can thoroughly equip us for every good work for the Kingdom of God. Human Christian books can not replace the Bible on training us fully. Human Christian books can be helpful, but it's not the Word of God that we can fully trust and have full faith in.

Plus, Paul makes sure Timothy knows that "ALL" Scripture is God breathed. The Greek term for "breathed or inspiration" depending on your translation means

God breathed, inspired by God, referring to a communication from deity (Strong's Concordance). In other words, Paul is communicating to Timothy from God that "ALL" Scripture is a communication from God to us. We have to look at the bigger picture here. God communicates to us through Paul, Peter, John, Matthew, Moses, King David, Zechariah, and the other writers in the Bible. Since this is God's communication, even though through human beings, it still can be fully trusted because the Holy Spirit was involved in the communication which is the word of God. We have to have the same view as Paul and the writer of Psalm 119 did on God's Word. If not, we will be easily led astray by the culture's teachings and false teachings of today. So, I plead with you to study and devour the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to breathe into your heart and mind the Lord's teachings, law, love, compassion, and Righteousness. You'll start to love the Lord more and more and you'll enjoy and understand how God communicates to us through His Word. Isn't great that we have something we can fully trust in. Don't let the culture and false teaching tell you otherwise. You can trust the Word of God. It should be part of your DNA as a Christian or as a true follower of Jesus Christ.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996

The Strongest Strong's Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001.