

Sermon Series: Awake: The Call to a Renewed Life
To be used with: Session Four: Return to God's Word
Sermon Title Possibilities:
 Read Daily
Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Connection to Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of Awake: *The Call to a Renewed Life*, these sermon outlines will use different Scripture passages to reinforce the same themes regarding leadership, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit, focusing on the same topic, but using different Scripture.

Session Four of the small group material is called "Return to God's Word." The Scripture passage is Nehemiah 8:1-8. The Point is "God's Word is fuel for a consistent lifestyle."

Introduction: The Bible is God's spoken word, making known his reality, his sovereignty, and his purpose. It is God's revealed word, made known through Jesus Christ. It is God's written word, making it sacred. Tertullian, the second-century theologian, said, "The Scriptures are the writings of God." It is God's authoritative word, providing us with truths and guidance to live our lives.

In order for the Bible to awaken our hearts, we must:

1. Accept its authority (2 Peter 1:20-21, 2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible consistently affirms its divine origin. It represents God's words. God did not overwhelm the human authors as dictation secretaries. Rather, by his Spirit, God worked in and through the human authors so that the end product was precisely as God intended it and could thus accurately be called God's Word. Theologians have referred to the process as "inspiration."

When one yields to the authority of Scripture, they yield to God's authority.

We all have authorities. Our authorities are the preconceptions that determine how we spend our time, invest our money, make our decisions, and determine our beliefs. Some people base their preconceptions on unreliable authorities, such as: People ("Well, so and so said . . ."), culture ("Everybody is doing it."), tradition ("We've always done it that way."), reason ("Well, I've always thought . . ."), or emotion ("It just feels so right.").

Only one reliable and trustworthy authority abounds—God's Word. The Bible must become the authoritative standard for your life. It must have the first and last word in your life.

2. Incorporate its insights.

It is not enough to just believe the Bible; you must fill your mind with its insights and truths. To do this, you need to:

- a. Read the Bible. The Bible is not a newspaper to be skimmed but rather a mine to be quarried. Don't just read books about the Bible, read the Bible. It takes seventy-one hours to read the Bible from cover to cover. If you break it down into minutes and divide it into 365 days, to read the entire Bible would only take twelve minutes a day.
- b. Study the Bible. The difference between reading and studying the Bible involves two additional activities: asking questions of the text and writing down your insights. Study the Bible a little at a time. God seems to send messages as he did his manna: one day's portion at a time. Chose depth over quantity.
- c. Memorize the Bible. The benefit of memorizing Bible verses is that they will help you resist temptation, make wise decisions, reduce stress, build confidence, offer good advice, and share your faith with others.
- d. Meditate on the Bible. Meditation is focused thinking. You select a verse and reflect on it over and over in your mind. If you can worry you can meditate. Worry is focused thinking on something negative. Meditation is focused thinking on God's Word.

More Bibles are in print today than ever before. But a Bible on the shelf is worthless. Many believers are plagued with spiritual anorexia, starving to death from spiritual malnutrition. Don't be one of them. Begin today to make Bible reading, studying, memorization, and meditation a regular habit in your life.

3. Apply its teachings (James 1:22).

It's not enough just to believe the Bible, and to fill our minds with the truths of the Bible. We must, also, apply its teachings.

The Bible is to our spiritual lives like oxygen is to our physical lives. We need oxygen to sustain us physically; we need God's word to sustain us spiritually. Just as oxygen has to be internalized to give us life, so does God's Word. Without implementation, Bible studies are weak.

God's Word exposes our motives, points out our faults, rebukes our sin, and expects us to change. Applying God's Word is often hard work. But it is well worth the effort. The great preacher Charles H. Spurgeon once said, "A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to a life that isn't."

4. Allow its truth to transform.

We accept the authority of God's Word by believing in it, by assimilating its insights, and by applying its teaching. Then the Holy Spirit can transform us with the truth. Truth transforms. Rick Warren writes, "Spiritual growth is the process of replacing lies with truth. . . . The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make us like the Son of God. To become like Jesus, we must fill our lives with his Word."

D.L. Moody said it best: "The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives."

When your name is William Franklin Graham III, you know you've got a lengthy heritage. But when your father is Billy Graham, your heritage throws an even deeper shadow. Franklin

Graham fought to escape that shadow for many years. He lived one adventure after another, but still felt an emptiness. One evening in Rome, he found his friend, David Hill, reading Romans 7, “I have the will to do good, but not the power” (Rom. 7:18). He felt like that deep inside. In his room that night he read the gospel of John. When he came to the third chapter he grasped that Franklin Graham had to be born again as well. Franklin Graham is a changed man who carries on the ministry that his father Billy Graham began years ago.

The truth of the Bible can transform anyone—regardless of past, or age, or race, or disposition.

Scripture is the message of God to man. Whatever your theories, arguments, concerns, or reservations, the Bible is big enough, broad enough, high enough, deep enough to meet any human need, and it contains everything you will ever need to know to show you the way to God.

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