

17 The Bible has no relevance to modern life.

The Bible has no relevance to modern life. People today see the Bible as irrelevant because they've yet to get connected with its Author. When they do so they find it's *inspired by God and... useful for ...training in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16).

Former US President Theodore Roosevelt once said *a thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.*

Do you want guidance on the use of money? Or relationships? Or health of body, mind and spirit? It's all there in the Bible.

Do you want a vision for the purpose of history? Or to renew your marriage, family or society? You can find it there as well.

John Flavel wrote that *the scriptures teach us the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying.*

If the Bible seems irrelevant to people they'll be missing its great connector to human life which is the *Holy Spirit* who gives life to the Christian Church. He's the One who helps people open up to the Bible as the inspiring and life changing book it is.

Approached with an open heart the Bible brings relevant encouragement. Approached with argumentative pride it presents a different picture. The Bible's relevance dawns when the Holy Spirit opens humble seekers to its divine wisdom hidden in human words. People who take God at his word in scripture promises see their life changed by the same Spirit.

God has revealed himself in Jesus – this is our good news – and the Bible is the record of that revelation. If you see your life as part of the Bible story you find belonging in this world and hope for the world to come.

We've God's own promise that the Bible contains the truth necessary for our salvation. When we sit and read our Bibles or hear the Bible read and explained in Church we are reminded that truth is something outside of us that challenges us – not just something we think out for ourselves.

This is expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians when he says that *'our sufficiency is of God...it is God who establishes us'* (3:5, 1:21) and when he speaks of the church as *'the pillar and bulwark of truth'* (1 Timothy 3:15). God's truth sets us free and it comes to us through his instruments the bible and the church. *'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly'* he says to the Colossian church. *'teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God'*. It is in the infectious worship and fellowship of believers that the Bible opens itself up to us as the word of God.

Christians believe the Bible can't be mistaken as it presents the good news of Jesus to honest seekers of the truth. As the Bible says of itself in 1 Timothy 3:15 *'the sacred writings are able to instruct (us) for salvation through Jesus Christ'*.

This witness to God's salvation is the principal function of the Bible as a truth teller. Biblical truth is about coming one to one with God first and foremost. Many examinations of the Bible are fruitless because they are dealing with it as less than it is as the word of God in human words. Like the Ethiopian eunuch helped to understand the Bible by St. Philip in Acts chapter 8 people very often need a guide to get into scripture.

We will always have questions about the Bible but the Bible also has questions about us – there's the rub! So Mark Twain wrote with his typical humour: *Most people are bothered by those passages in Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those I do understand.*

People sometimes question the significance of the Old Testament. The church uses this first part of the Bible carefully and only in the light of Christ. The sacrifices recorded there point towards his Cross. Without the framework of God's dealings with Israel in the Old Testament the Christ of the Gospels would still be a beautiful picture but one without a frame.

That frame we find in the Bible as well as the word and promises of God that bring power and direction into the life of the church.

The Bible is still the most read of all the books in the world. It is, as the Coronation Service says, *the most valuable thing that this world affords.*

John Twisleton 14.8.08