

“More Than Words”

Presentation Handout

“Tear-jerker” Wedding

- William was riding on Cloud 9. He just met Fiona who was a wonderful woman in comparison to his former wife. Fiona was a beautiful woman, inside and out. This is what attracted William to her
- She was also fiercely loyal to her family as she took in her two grandchildren near the end of their high school and beginning college years after their parents died in a car accident.
- This was amazing considering her husband had been unfaithful to their marriage vows with a co-worker around this same time. Fiona’s life was already devastated and then this tragic accident that claimed the lives of her daughter and husband.
- But now, meeting William was a “breath of fresh air” for her. Her life seemed to be turning around. Fiona had hope again!
- Her grandson, Eric, bonded right away with William, the future new step-grandfather, like he was his own biological grandfather.
- Debbie, her granddaughter, was a very different story. She didn’t want anything to do with William, or at least as little as possible. She still had a connection with her biological grandfather, Peter, even though he cheated and was an alcoholic.
- No matter, how much William tried to connect with Debbie, she rebuffed all his attempts, leaving him disappointed and sad!
- One day, later on, Debbie and her boyfriend of three years, Rick, announced to Fiona & William they were getting married, but they would have to wait one year to save up enough money for the wedding. At the end of their announcement, William surprised them all by offering to pay for their wedding with the work bonus he just received.
- Rick was ecstatic and very appreciative, but...Debbie was cool and somewhat thankful. William was stunned. He couldn’t figure Debbie out. Neither could Fiona.
- Finally, the wedding day arrived and all the guests were there to celebrate with Debbie and Rick, including Fiona & William, who greeted all the guests on behalf of the couple.
- Then something odd, really disheartening and sad, happened as everyone took their seats. William was seated in the back of the wedding hall, not with Fiona up front. Wow! Did Debbie really dislike him that much! It seemed so. The truth of her feelings were finally plain to William.
- Everyone was seated. Rick eagerly took his place up front ready for his bride to enter.
- As the music began, Debbie entered from the back, but mysteriously stopped at William’s seat in the back. She reached out her hand and asked if he would escort her to the front to give her away. William was shocked. He couldn’t believe her request, her offer.

- Debbie’s biological grandfather, Peter, was also at the wedding. He could bring her in. Why not, him? Yet, Debbie asked William instead!
- Of course, William excitedly and proudly escorted Debbie up the aisle, still not believing what just happened.
- At the end of the vows that Rick & Debbie wrote for each other, Debbie turned from her groom to their wedding guests to make an announcement.
- Debbie began by thanking William for paying for their wedding when they didn’t have the money, even though he wasn’t her biological grandfather. Then she went on to explain that William was more of a grandfather to her than her biological grandfather, Peter.
- And she was sorry for how rude she had been to William since he joined their family. There wasn’t a dry eye in the whole place, especially William who gave her a hug!

TAKE-AWAY: What a “tear-jerker” story, particularly for William, like a Hallmark movie with their happy endings! Only one problem. It’s not true! It’s not a real story! It was made up by a creative writer-“word-smith” who is gifted with words that “tug” at one’s heart.

This is how many people view the Bible.... It’s a nice story with many interesting characters, but it’s not real! At least not relevant for one’s everyday life.

But..., Pastor David Platt, author of the book *Radical*, shares a different perspective, really a testimony, from his many years of studying God’s Word, the Bible, and seeing it transform his life and the life of his members, particularly, when he pastored the Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham AL.

Warning!

- Here’s Pr Platt’s story:
 - “A year ago this time (2008), I (Pr Platt) hit a crisis of belief. I started looking at what the gospel teaches and the Word teaches about the poor. All throughout Scripture, God measures the integrity of his people's faith by their concern for the poor. And he has strong words on this subject.
 - “I asked myself, *Do I really believe the Word? I preach it, I love it, I memorize it, and I study it, but am I really willing to submit my life to it in such a way that I reorient how I live my life in Birmingham to have deep compassion for the poor?* This process overflowed into my preaching.
 - “As we studied the Rich Young Ruler or Luke 16 and saw concern for the poor all over Scripture, I said, ‘We are ignoring the poor with the way we're living in Birmingham. ...We need to make major changes, individually, in our families, with our houses, cars, and stuff.’
 - “People would not say they wanted to resist the Word, but that message created all sorts of stirring. That's where the Word is attacking a core issue in our culture.
 - My wife and I put our house on the market and began making adjustments. Others have been doing the same.
 - “One wealthy member in our faith family, while we were studying the Rich Young Ruler, told me I'm nuts. But then he said, ‘I think you're right. This is exactly what the Word teaches.’ With tears in his eyes, he said, ‘I have reached the conclusion

that I'm never going to stand before God and hear him tell me, 'I wish you had kept more for yourself.' Now he's selling his house to invest in needs around the world.”

TAKE-AWAY: God’s Word, the Bible, is more than a “fairytale,” it’s authentic, real, raw, dangerous!” The Holy Spirit uses it to “mess” with us—convicting us, molding us, transforming us, inviting us into a deeper relationship with Christ, and the radical, non-status quo life it produces. Something is different about this “book”—dangerously different! So what is this Bible that seems to be more than just another “book?”

Bible

- **God's Word {2 Timothy 3:16}**
 - The Bible is God’s word that He inspired (or “God breathed”) through human authors.
 - Inspired or “God breathed” means the Bible is God’s thoughts made known through the inspired thoughts of its human authors by the Holy Spirit.
 - ❖ In other words, God didn’t dictate the exact words to the Bible authors.
 - ❖ The Bible is His thoughts made known, not His exact words—thought inspiration, not verbal inspiration. The inspired Bible authors wrote their words/message within the context of their educational background, life experiences, historical setting, personality, etc. as they were “moved” or lead by the Holy Spirit {2 Peter 1:21}. This is why some of the debates on which Bible version(s) to use are an exercise in futility.
 - ❖ These Bible writers didn’t lose their individually, like some type of robot or machine as the Holy Spirit inspired them. No, the Bible authors wrestled in the Spirit how to write the thought-message the Spirit inspired them with.
 - ❖ That’s what makes the Bible “real”—humanly raw, yet divinely inspired. The Bible doesn’t hide/”sugar-coat” human sin/failure!
 - ❖ The Bible displays real life lived by people like you and me who struggled with sin and dysfunction, understanding God’s plan/will for their lives and how to live out His will in their everyday life, in an imperfect culture/world.

TAKE-AWAY: Thus the Bible is not just another book or common reading material, like a romance novel, history book, school textbook, DIY manual, or Sports Illustrated magazine.

- **Relationship not just rules {2 Timothy 3:14-(15)}**
 - The context for Paul’s teaching on the Bible in 2 Timothy 3 is a message of mentor-counsel to his spiritual son, Timothy.
 - In his counsel Paul reminds Timothy to keep the Bible central and continue in its message—doctrine, principles, etc.
 - Part of his spiritual counsel about the Bible is the reminder that God’s Word is the “vehicle”/means the Holy Spirit used to bring Timothy to salvation and help ground him in a faith-relationship with Jesus.
 - If the Bible is only a code-book of rules, it becomes another book we must or should read sometime, but it really is disconnected from our lives.
 - Then God becomes just a theological doctrine/idea to learn and debate, but not our God who we have a real relationship with.

- God, then, becomes distant from our everyday lives, “something” we put “on-the-shelf” of our lives and forget.
 - Unless the Bible is a story about *our* God who loves *us* we just live outward rules that don’t connect with our everyday lives, like a hamburger patty without the bun or fixings, or a baked potato that’s not baked.
 - ❖ Some of the meanest people I’ve [presenter - David] met (including myself over the years) are the most ardent believers in the Bible...as a rule book. Just ask the religious leaders in Jesus’ day or the church leaders in the Middle Ages.
 - Yes, the Bible has doctrine, theology, “rules,” boundaries, principles, etc. but they are to lead us to God, reveal God to us, convict us of our sin, protect our relationship with God, keep us from ruining our lives, etc. They are positive in the context of a relationship with God!
 - This is what happened in the life of Pastor Platt and the members of Brook Hills. They made major, life-altering changes because they wanted to, not because they had to. They loved God and His Word!
- **Standard for faith and life** {*2 Peter 1:16-19*}
 - The Bible is the “foundation” and “framework” for one’s life, like with a building. They’re its strength, structure, and endurance. The same for one’s Christian walk!
 - So, each one of us must settle personally if the Bible is the ultimate standard for faith practice and belief for our lives or will it be our culture, others, social media, or even oneself as the final-decider of what we believe and how we should live!
 - Peter illustrates this important point through a personal experience involving Jesus’ transfiguration in *Matthew 17*, which he shares in *2 Peter 1:16-19*.
 - Thus, what we think about and how we relate to individuals racially different, abortion, sexuality or gender issues (LGBTQ+), political parties or their ideologies, biblical beliefs, etc. must be informed by the Bible, not culture, family, friends, social media, or oneself!
 - ❖ Please remember: just because someone is not living according to God’s standard taught in the Bible or embraces the Bible as their standard for living, doesn’t mean we treat them with disdain, rudely, harshly, etc.
 - **Powerful to change and keep** {*2 Peter 1:2-4; Isaiah 55:10-11*}
 - The Holy Spirit has a way of “messaging” with us, upending the status quo in our lives—the incongruences, the hypocrisy, the guilt, the impurity, the pride, the shame, the sin, etc.—as Pastor Platt learned in the opening story.
 - As much as change might scare us, growth/transformation is a healthy part of life. We all have our blind spots that keep us from enjoying the fullness of what God has planned for us.
 - Which one of us would be happy with strawberry plants if they never grew and produced strawberries?
 - What parent would not be concerned if their child were not growing and maturing?
 - Is it any different for us spiritually? The sign of a healthy faith is spiritual growth, maturity {*Galatians 5:6*}.

- The problem is, I can't empower this transformation change. I'm helpless!! However, since the Bible is God's Word and not just another book, it has a power to change and keep us!
 - In the Creation {*Genesis 1*}, we discovered God's word is creative—it produces what God says and desires {*Genesis 1:3, 6-7, 9, 11, 14-15, 20, 24, 26*}.
 - God's word being creative and powerful is a theme that is applied to our spiritual lives by the Bible writers {*Psalm 33:3-4, 6, 9; Isaiah 55:3, 10-11; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:2-4*}.
 - ❖ Anger was a big issue I [presenter - David] struggled with for years, damaging my marriage and relationship with my son. Through the creative-power of God's Word (Bible) and good Christian counseling, the Holy Spirit helped overcome my anger through deep inner healing from my childhood. This is the power of the Bible!!

TAKE-AWAY: How do we tap into the power of the Bible in our own lives? Through devotional-study time with God in and through His Word.

How to Study the Bible

- **Importance of Personal and Family Devotions**
 - God's way to connect and commune with humans, building their faith in Him {*2 Timothy 1:14-15*}.
 - The way humans connect and commune with God, which empowers them to live faithful, Christian lives {*John 5:39; 6:63; 2 Timothy 1:14-15*}.
 - God teaches humans His will for their lives and what decisions they need to make based on a biblical worldview {*2 Timothy 3:16-17*}.
 - Family devotions are the way God uses to pass on faith values from parents to children {*2 Timothy 1:3, 5*}.
- **How to Get Started with Personal Devotions**
 - Schedule your devotional time—be deliberate
 - Pray for the Holy Spirit's:
 - power to schedule time with God
 - enlightenment/understanding of God's Word
 - power to follow what He teaches, convicts, or prompts you to change or do (application)
 - prompting to following-through in doing your devotions
 - Find a comfortable, quiet, regular place for your devotions
 - Be consistent, regular in your devotions, not haphazard
- **Ideas for Personal Devotions**
 - Personalize a verse/promise and reflect on its meaning for you (*remember its context*)
 - "For I know the thoughts that I think toward {*your name*} [you], says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then {*your name*} you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And

{*your name*} you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." *Jeremiah 29:11-13*

- ❖ *How do I feel when God speaks these words to me personally?*
- ❖ *What kind of future does God want for me?*
- ❖ *What storms or issues in my life need God's peace right now?*
- ❖ *How can I "seek" God in surrender to Him?*

- Read a Bible chapter or passage, asking the following reflection questions
 - *How is God (Father, Jesus, or Holy Spirit) revealed in this passage—character, attitudes, actions, etc.?*
 - *What do I learn about human nature, about me personally?*
 - *What attitudes, behaviors, thoughts, etc. does God want to help me change or do?*
 - Journal your answers and/or reflect on them in your prayer time (see a sample journal page at the end of this handout that you copy and use).
- Word/Topic Studies
 - Use a Bible concordance and/or other biblical resources to study a particular word, attitude, character trait, doctrine, etc. throughout the Bible (*read the context for each Bible verse*)
- Read prepared devotionals—they ones for different age groups
 - Don't just study for facts or to teach. Feed your inner being as well—devotional worship.
 - Caution with devotionals: read the context of the Bible verse(s) being referred to in the daily readings
- **Family Devotions/Worship How-to** (*This is one of the best ways to keep children and youth connected to God and His church*)
 - Schedule time & Keep It Daily
 - Once to twice per day—one a shorter time, one a longer time
 - Shorter: during breakfast, commute to school, etc.
 - ❖ Read a Psalm, short chapter, listen to dramatized Bible and discuss what you've heard.
 - ❖ Short prayer by family members
 - Longer: during supper or in the evening after
 - ❖ Use devotional helps
 - ❖ Study and discuss life issues from the Bible
 - Format
 - Opening prayer
 - Study
 - Closing prayer
 - Prep ahead on the weekend to save time during the work-school week.
 - Make worship short, interesting, and to the point—younger the child(ren), the shorter the worship needs to be.
- **Personal/Family Devotions Resources**

- Andrews Study Bible ~ NKJV Bible with great study notes plus charts, maps, beliefs, etc. Many of these study notes and thoughts have been used by the presenter in *theJourney* seminar (get digital format at: www.Logos.com/AndrewsStudyBible)
- Bibleproject.com ~ Teach the Bible as a continuing story of God’s love and salvation through short videos overviewing Bible books, topics, etc. Also they have online deeper teaching on the Bible along with handouts, blogs, etc. (bibleproject.com)
- *iLumina Gold (Win & Mac)* ~ interactive multimedia Bible software program featuring narrated and musically scored digital animations with many other study aids. Good for kids and their devotions. (Note: software is now out of print and only sold through resellers)
- NKJV Study Bible ~ good word studies, backgrounds and charts (*digital format also available*)
- NIV Study Bible ~ good in-text maps and cross referencing
- ESV Study Bible ~ good charts and articles (*hard copy & digital formats available*)
- *Bible Gateway* ~ read, listen to, search, and study the Bible in over 100 languages along with many biblical resources (biblegateway.com)
- Accordance Bible Software ~ Bible software for Macs
- *E-sword* ~ free online Bibles with study resources (e-sword.net)
- *PC Study Bible Software* ~ good study tools with option to write your own study notes
- *Logos Bible Software* ~ many study resources with additional resources (www.logos.com)

Take-Away: A second component for our devotional-study time is prayer. In prayer the Holy Spirit helps us to apply God’s Word, the Bible, to our lives in a practical, life-changing way.

Prayer

▪ Purpose

- Prayer opens up our hearts as a friend. Yes, God is God, yet He longs to commune/connect with us. So our prayers don’t need to be perfect in old King James English!
 - Thus prayer is more than asking and demanding, this is part of prayer.
 - What human friendship/relationship would thrive/survive if this were all it consisted of? None!
 - We need praise in our prayers too!
- Prayer humbly, reorientates our lives to God—His beautiful character, recognition of our sin—the sin-blind-spots, and what needs to change in our lives as a result.

▪ Praise in prayer

- Praise directs our hearts to God in appreciation for He is, not just for what He does.
- We’re reminded God cares enough and is powerful enough to deal with our issues!
- Practical tip to add prayer to our prayer life:
 - ABC of Praise
 - ❖ Use each letter of the alphabet as a prompt for a character trait, name, etc. of God in praise.

❖ A=Alpha, B=Brother, C=Creator, D=Dependable, E=Eternal, F=Faithful, etc.

▪ **Ways to pray—staying focused in prayer**

- A-C-T-S = A-doration (praise), C-onfession (repentance), T-hanksgiving, S-upplication (asking)
- P-R-A-Y = P-raise/thanksgiving, R-epentance, A-sk, Y-ield

LIVING CHOICE: Will spend time in the Bible drinking in the beauty of God and His plan for your life? Will you by God's grace live your life by its message/truth?