

VOLUME 1

BY
GOD'S
WORD

60 REFLECTIONS
FOR LIVING IN GOD'S WORLD



PHILLIP D. JENSEN

Not hearing the word of God is like missing the rain: one day you may not notice that it did not rain, but over time, you cannot live. We do not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

By God's word the world was made.

By God's word it is sustained moment by moment.

And by God's word we can know God through Jesus Christ, and live each day to please him.

In this encouraging collection of reflections, Phillip Jensen offers warm encouragement to live by God's word in every aspect of our lives—from prayer to politics, and from forgiveness to fatherhood.

Each reflection is followed by a Bible passage for further thought and prayer.



Phillip Jensen is an internationally renowned preacher and evangelist. He is the author of the well-known *Two Ways to Live* gospel presentation, as well as numerous books and Bible study materials, including *Guidance and the Voice of God*. With his wife, Helen, he lives in Sydney, where he is currently the Dean of St Andrew's Cathedral.

ISBN 978-1-921068-91-1



9 781921 068911



matthiasmedia

BY
GOD'S
WORD

VOLUME 1

60 REFLECTIONS
FOR LIVING IN GOD'S WORLD



PHILLIP D. JENSEN

By God's Word: Volume 1
© Matthias Media 2007

Matthias Media
(St Matthias Press Ltd ACN 067 558 365)
PO Box 225
Kingsford NSW 2032
Australia
Telephone: (02) 9663 1478; international: +61-2-9663-1478
Facsimile: (02) 9663 3265; international: +61-2-9663-3265
Email: info@matthiasmedia.com.au
Internet: www.matthiasmedia.com.au

Matthias Media (USA)
Telephone: 724 964 8152; international: +1-724-964-8152
Facsimile: 724 964 8166; international: +1-724-964-8166
Email: sales@matthiasmedia.com
Internet: www.matthiasmedia.com

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978 1 921068 91 1

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Cover design and typesetting by Lankshear Design Pty Ltd.

BY
GOD'S
WORD

VOLUME 1

60 REFLECTIONS
FOR LIVING IN GOD'S WORLD



PHILLIP D. JENSEN

 matthiasmedia

Contents

Preface	9
1. By the breath of his mouth	11
2. What we do in church	15
3. God in the likeness of sinful flesh	18
4. A time to mourn, a time to dance	22
5. Reforming the nation	26
6. Eating and drinking together	30
7. The gift of each other	35
8. Real repentance	38
9. The kingdom of God	42
10. Living in abnormal times	45
11. Unity in diversity	49
12. True spirituality	52
13. The ploughboy's Bible	57

14. Notable testimonies	61
15. Old Testament law	66
16. Expectant prayers	71
17. Raising godly offspring.....	75
18. Living gracefully	80
19. Thank God for the rain	84
20. The privilege of prayer.....	89
21. A devilish persuasion	93
22. Religious reality	98
23. A drought of God's word	102
24. A time for games	106
25. Why celebrate Father's Day?	110
26. Teach your children well	114
27. The great room in the Great House	117
28. Sing his praises	121
29. Just deserts	125
30. The Pope and the papacy	128
31. True Christian unity	132
32. One way to God.....	137
33. Mary: the mother of God?	142
34. Reconciled to God.....	146
35. The image of the invisible God	149
36. What to do with the Old Testament.....	154
37. Deliver us from evil	160

38. Impatient with tolerance	165
39. The political Christian	170
40. Scripture twisting	175
41. A reason to work	179
42. Your children's children	183
43. Plimsoll and Parks	187
44. To err is human; to forgive, Christian	191
45. Happy Australia Day	196
46. Suffering for righteousness' sake	200
47. The object of worship	204
48. Not Christmas but Easter	208
49. Celebrating victory	212
50. Keeping the peace	216
51. Maternal instinct	220
52. Mrs Howard's contribution	224
53. Music appreciation	229
54. Being democratic	233
55. Your mind matters	239
56. The Diana syndrome	243
57. Individual differences	248
58. A little piece of fun	253
59. Killed in the square	258
60. The Lord's patience	262

Preface

*T*he Scriptures are the glasses by which we bring the world into focus.

It is important that we study and understand the Scriptures—in their own terms, in their own way. To push the analogy a step further: studying the Scriptures is like cleaning the glasses and putting them on. But the purpose of cleaning the glasses and putting them on is not to look at the glasses themselves. The purpose of wearing glasses is to look through the glasses and see the world better.

When we look through the glasses of Scripture, we see God and his world and his people and ourselves in clearer focus. There are some things, especially about God, that we would never see at all without the Scriptures. There are many things about the world, others and ourselves that we would see in a completely distorted fashion without the glasses. The word of God changes our perspective.

Since being drawn to Christ in my early teens, I have been trying to understand life and live by the word of God. It has been a wonderful journey. It has been made much richer by the many Christians with whom I have journeyed—those who have taught me and those that I have had the privilege to teach.

Each week now, I write a short essay about living in God's world, written from the perspective of God's word. There is no real rhyme or reason to the topics. I write about whatever is facing Christians in Sydney or at the Cathedral in which I serve. Some of these weekly reflections have been far too local to be worth reprinting for a wider audience. But thanks to the work of Matthias Media, and in particular Karen Beilharz and Tony Payne, a selection has been prepared for publication.

I hope in reading these you will gain something of an insight into how one Bible reading pastor views the world around him. And in gaining this insight you may be encouraged to see the world through the lens of the word of God where you are living.

Phillip Jensen

August, 2007

I

By the breath of his mouth

People of real power need do no more than speak to cause things to happen. No-one has more power than God, and no-one can create through speaking like him. The psalmist says, “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host” and “For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (Ps 33:6, 9). It is therefore very important that we pay due regard to the Scriptures as they are God’s words to us.

Let us note four things about them: they are God-breathed, they are authoritative, they are contemporary and they are practical.

Firstly, they are God-breathed. ‘God-breathed’ is a better term than ‘inspired’ because it speaks of what God

has done, rather than his finished product. People call Shakespeare inspired and, great as the poet was, he was not inspired in the sense that Scripture was inspired, for his writings are not God-breathed. But “All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Tim 3:16), and the psalmist referred to the creative word of God as being “the breath of his mouth” (Ps 33:6).

Secondly, the Scriptures are authoritative. To us, they hold the very authority of God himself. If you hear his word, you hear him, and as you respond to his word, you respond to him. The Bible writers easily jump from quoting Scriptures to quoting God for it is the same thing (see, for example, Hebrews 3:7, 4:3, 7). That God speaks to us through the activities of human writers does not diminish the fact that the words are still God’s.

Thirdly, the Scriptures are contemporary. Because God’s word is living and dynamic, it is always relevant. Jesus could quote the Book of Exodus to the Sadducees as though it was something God was saying directly to them: “And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God ...?” (Matt 22:31). These words were first spoken to Moses over a thousand years before Christ. They were then written in the Book of Exodus. But to Jesus, the fault of the Sadducees lay in their failure to see that *God* was saying it to them. As Paul pointed out concerning the biblical account of the exodus, “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the

end of the ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11). The Old Testament was written for us—we who live in the last age, in the year of the Lord.

Fourthly and finally, the Scriptures are practical. God’s purpose in writing was eminently practical: he wrote so that we may know him and his plan of salvation. The Scriptures are “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16b-17).

So, knowing that the Scriptures are God-breathed, authoritative, contemporary and practical, let us “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” the sacred Word as *The Book of Common Prayer* urges—at home alone, with our family, and, most especially, in our churches.

For reflection

Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous!

Praise befits the upright.

Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;

make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!

Sing to him a new song;

play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

For the word of the LORD is upright,

and all his work is done in faithfulness.

He loves righteousness and justice;

the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap;
he puts the deeps in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe
of him!

For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm. (Ps 33:1-9)

What we do in church

The church is the gathering of God's people in the name of Christ. Each week, there are many such gatherings, and central to these gatherings is our fellowship with one another. Most things we do in church we could do alone at home, but one thing we cannot do alone is fellowship with each other.

Our fellowship should always seek to glorify God, but this is not the only purpose of our meeting. We meet in this world to encourage one another in love and good works—and all the more as we see the Day of Christ approaching (Heb 10:24-25). So we meet to build the church and each other by encouraging each other prayerfully to live by the gospel. The way we encourage each other is by using the gifts that God has given us in

love. He gave us these gifts so that we would serve each other, and so build each other and the church as a whole. As Paul said, “Let all things be done for building up” (1 Cor 14:26).

Therefore, there are things we will always do when we gather together. We will always pray to our Father in heaven in the Spirit by the merits of our Lord and saviour. We will always gather to hear God’s word read and taught. And we will always seek to challenge each other to continue in faith and obedience to the Scripture’s message. When we sing to each other, we will do so in words and ways that are edifying, teaching each other in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as we express our heartfelt joy to the Lord.

There are other things we will usually do because, inevitably, humans are creatures of habit. We will meet at the same time each week, and follow a preaching pattern or series. We will sit in much the same chairs, and sing much the same songs. There is nothing wrong with doing these things, but they are not of central importance to the gathering. They can be changed without hindering our congregational life.

Indeed, churches always need to change some things. Often we need to change things so that we do not settle into a rut and fail to hear God speak. Sometimes we need to change things to make use of the gifts he has given us. Sometimes erroneous and misleading habits creep into our pattern of church life, and, of course, once recognized,

these must be changed. The serpent on the pole by which Israel was saved in the time of Moses became an idol that had to be destroyed in the days of Hezekiah (Num 21:4-9, 2 Kgs 18:4), and we must be sure not to make the same sort of mistakes.

So it is my hope that every week in your own church, you will see three things: the gospel faithfully ministered (that what we say will honour the Lord Jesus, build his people and save those who do not yet know him); sufficient predictability so that participants can concentrate on the content and purpose of the gathering without being distracted by secondary matters; and sufficient variety to make every meeting special and not to be missed.

For reflection

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb 10:23-25)

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. (1 Cor 14:26)