

LESSON 8

ANCHOR 8

Allow God's Word to become the authority over my life.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip His people to do every good work."

PRAY

Ask God to speak to you as you read His Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a revelation of God's truth and love and give you understanding of what you are about to read. Pray that you will have an Encounter with God as you earnestly seek Him. Don't rush through reading everything and don't rush through praying. Take some time to stop and listen so you may hear anything God wants to say to you.

After you read the scriptures, ask:

- "God, what are You saying in these scriptures?"
- "God, what are You saying to me in these scriptures?"
- "God, how do You want me to apply this to my life?"

Write in your journal as you spend this time with God.

At Encounter, we believe and teach that God's Word is the authority over our lives. We believe God's Word is true and God-breathed, because God inspired the writers of the Bible to communicate His love and life to us through His Word. God loves us so much that He wants us to know Him and His character. He left us a roadmap, His Word.

Only God could have been so wise and loving as to have left us with an eternal love letter. The Bible, God's Word, is a letter of God's love to and for us. Within the pages and the Person of the Word, God reveals Himself and His character to us. He tells us how we can be forgiven and be reconciled to Him. He instructs us as to how we can live a godly life that honors Him. He encourages us and guides us. God's Word gives us wisdom, peace and joy. It equips us to serve God and others with love and purpose.

The impact of Anchor 8 in the life of a Christ follower will differentiate between a person that is firmly anchored in the life and love of Christ and a person that is lukewarm or double-minded, with a lack of true or consistent belief in the Word of God as the authority over their life. Anchor 8 says that you allow God's Word to become the authority over your life. Have you ever considered what that kind of life would look like?

Most people find themselves in one of three camps in their spiritual life. When it comes to knowing and following God and His Word they:

1. Believe they can do whatever they want to do and, thus, live their life doing just that. They either don't believe God's Word or flat out ignore and reject it.

2. Believe they know the right thing to do and attempt to do so, for the most part. They think they are a good person and try to do the best they can in their own strength.
3. Believe God and His Word and allow it to be the authority that guides them in their life choices. They believe God and His Word and pursue Him and His truth in their daily living.

The definition of the word **authority** in the Webster dictionary is “power to influence or command thought, opinion or behavior”. Taking that at face value, allowing God’s Word to become the authority over your life would mean that you look to God and His Word as the ultimate source of power to influence your thought, opinions and behavior. It would mean that you believe and agree with what the Bible says and that your choices regarding your life reflect both observance and obedience to the truth of God’s Word. It would mean that you yield your thoughts and your will to the higher and better thoughts of God and the perfect will of God. It would mean that your response to God’s love for you would be to gratefully love Him back in a way that honors Him. With this in mind, think about which camp most accurately describes your choices.

You may be asking why it is so important to learn, know and follow God’s truth in every area of your life. It is important because every self-defeating behavior in your life is the result of a lie that you have believed to be true. Every stronghold that has taken root in your life began with a lie that you believed. Until you get to know the God of the Bible through His Word, you will never learn the truth that sets you free. Jesus made objective claims in the Bible based on true facts. In **John 14:6**, He said, **“I am the way, the truth and the life!”** He didn’t say He knew the way, or that He could point the way, or that He was only one of many ways to the Father. He didn’t say He knew the truth or had the truth. He didn’t say that He simply taught the truth. No, to paraphrase, Jesus said, “I Am It!”.

We live in a society and culture of subjective and competing ideas and opinions. It seems that anything goes for most people in today’s pluralistic society. Often, just because a thought comes into a person’s mind, they decide that it is their reality and everyone else should accept it as such. Feelings, perceptions or attitudes tend to translate into a mindset of “to each their own”. Many have views that are shaped and molded by the causes and emotions of this world and many of those views differ dramatically from the truths that are in God’s Word.

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus spoke to the tendency man has to follow his own thoughts and interpretations and reject God’s Word. In **Mark 7:8-9**, Jesus said, “You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions”. And He continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions”. He was speaking to the Pharisees back then and their zeal for legalistic observances, but Jesus knew that the crux of their rebellion was a heart matter. The same holds true for us today. We like to put our own interpretations on Scripture, as it suits us, and we like to pick and choose only what we want to follow in Scripture and push the rest aside as irrelevant or outdated. We too can be guilty of following traditions and ideas, or even making up our own instead of following God’s commands that are for our ultimate good.

Proverbs 14:12 and **Proverbs 16:25** says, “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death”. It’s safe to say that God knew we would prefer to follow our sinful and rebellious nature of doing things our own way, so He inspired these words of wisdom to be written in the Bible – more than once. When things are repeated in God’s Word, it is always a wise idea to pay attention to what is being written and communicated, because it is important and significant to God for us to get the point for our own benefit.

Anchor 8's key scripture passage is 2 Timothy 3:16 – **"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."**

Who and what you believe can influence your life more than most anything else. Believing in someone or something has a direct correlation to how you choose to live your life. If you believe God is who He says He is and that He can do what He says He can do, your life and choices will reflect that. If you don't believe God and His Word, your life will likewise be a reflection of your poor choices and disbelief in God and the authority of His Word. Furthermore, if you fail to become a student of God and His Word, you will not know the truth about either one.

Hosea 4:6 in the NIV records God saying, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge". God's people, and the priests that were their spiritual leaders, had looked to idols and false gods instead of looking to God and worshipping Him only. They had not believed God and His laws to be their authority and, subsequently, their destruction was imminent. Not knowing and following God and His Word will lead you astray and will become harmful to your well-being, leading you to believe things that are not true and, as a result, causing your actions to be in conflict with godly and peaceful living.

Dr. Charles Stanley once taught a sermon about **convictions**. He said a conviction is something we are so completely convinced is true that we will take a stand for it regardless of the consequences; but a **preference** is a belief that could change under certain conditions. **Isaiah 66:2** says, "My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in them are Mine. I, the LORD, have spoken! I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at My Word." A healthy understanding of God's Word creates awe and respect for the Scriptures and the One who gave them to us. Everyone must make the life-impacting choice of whether they will live by convictions or by preferences. One leads to life; the other leads to death.

God's Word has stood and will always stand the test of time. It is eternal. **Isaiah 40:8** says, "The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the Word of our God stands forever". In three accounts of the gospel - Matthew, Mark and Luke - Jesus says, "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass (See **Matthew 24:35**, **Mark 13:31** and **Luke 21:33**). Culture changes, but God never changes. Nor does He ever become outdated or irrelevant. Nothing in God's Word is void of meaning or relevance - **Isaiah 55:11** says, "So is my Word that goes out of My mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it".

To be a person led by God is to be a person who allows God's Word to be the authority over your life. To know God is to know His Word. To love God is to obey His Word. **John 16:13** says, "But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into truth". The Holy Spirit of God lives in Christ followers and guides them into truth. As a person led by God, you have to be yielded to His guidance and truth. Accepting the grace of God and having faith in God are central to the Christian life, but God's truth never competes with those things - it only compliments them.

Take time to read **Psalms 119** throughout this week - This is the longest chapter in the bible, but it is also one of the most encouraging, because the psalmist is focusing on the truth and the many benefits of God's Word. The psalmist had experienced and knew full well who God is and how important it is to recognize the wisdom and blessing of knowing and following God and His Word. There are so many nuggets of wisdom in this psalm, but, following, are a few that can equip you in this life as you hold them in your heart and in your memory:

Psalm 119:9 – How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word.

Psalm 119:11 – I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You.

Psalm 119:89 – Your Word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

Psalm 119:105 – Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:114 – You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in Your Word.

Psalm 119:133 – Direct my footsteps according to Your Word; let no sin rule over me.

Psalm 119:160 – All Your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

Simply said, God's Word has a lot to say about God's Word! But in order for you to allow it to become the authority over your life, you are going to have to read it, believe it, know it and obey it. Jesus said in **John 14:15**, "If you love Me, keep My commands". Knowing God's Word and allowing it to get into your heart translates into knowing God better and loving Him out of gratitude. Obedience won't seem nearly as difficult to you if it is done out of gratitude and love for all God has done for you.

Read the words of David in **Psalm 19:7-11** – The phrase, "the law of the Lord" used in the NIV, is a Hebrew term used to describe Scripture. Some translations even say "the instructions of the Lord". It is basically saying that God's Word, the Bible, is full of amazing benefits. It is the Word of life.

Reflecting upon the above verses, we see that God's Word is perfect - nothing needs to be added to it and nothing needs to be taken away from it. What's more, as society and culture changes, you don't have to change what you know to be true of God and His Word. You can stand on the firm foundation of God's Word. By that, you can know right from wrong. God was very purposeful to leave us good instructions.

God's Word also gives wisdom. You don't have to be a scholar or theologian to understand God's Word. If you believe it, God will make it clear to you as you come to know Him and His nature through His Word. In **Psalm 19:7** it refers to the trustworthiness of God's Word to make even the simpleminded wise. That's good news for all of us!

When you read and believe God's Word, His Holy Spirit does the work of illuminating the truth, therein, so you will be transformed. **Hebrews 4:12** says, "The Word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires". God's Word is *living power* that will change your life if you believe it, apply it to your life and trust God for the results.

Ultimately, success or failure for the Christ follower depends upon how much of the Bible you get into your heart and life on a consistent basis and how responsive and obedient you are to it. If you are not reading and applying the Word of God to your life, you are not going to be equipped or encouraged to fight the good fight in this life. Spiritually speaking, you are setting yourself up for a fall.

Read **John 8:31-32** – "To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. *Then* you will know the truth and the truth will set you free". If you are going 61

to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, then you will need to get into the Word of God, so the Word of God can get into you. The Word of God will get into you only when you make it the authority over your life!

As mentioned before, one of the core values at Encounter is that God's Word is our truth. When God's Word is believed and perceived as truth, it becomes the authority over your life. Change requires learning the truth. People often think they are accurately quoting the above scripture when they say, "The truth will set you free". If you read it closely, you will note that these words are only a portion of what Jesus said. People repeat the second part of **John 8:32** and take it out of context. Honestly, if you are not submitted to the truth of God, then it will probably make you miserable, angry and confused. Truth, alone, never sets anyone free. Knowing and following Jesus, and applying His truth to your life, is the key to freedom. But nothing truly changes, and freedom certainly isn't attained, until you start at the bedrock of God's truth.

By submitting and surrendering your life to Jesus, you are agreeing to make the Bible the authority over every single issue in your life. You can't be submitted to Jesus and not be submitted to God's Word. Making Jesus and God's Word the authority over your life allows you to have the peace of God and experience the blessings of God in your life. You will have trials and temptations in this world - that is a given - but you never have to face them alone and never without God's help to carry you in and through everything you face in this life.

You have a decision to make in Anchor 8. You can acknowledge it and even agree with it, but Anchor 8 requires doing something more. It requires that you make God's Word the authority over every issue, every matter, every event and every decision that you will ever make from this day moving forward.

There is a catastrophic breakdown in our society of people not personally reading, believing, applying and making God's Word the authority over their lives. But, without exception, nothing can ever change people or this world like the Word of God can. He does it one heart at a time, and it starts with each of us, individually. Nobody else can study God's Word for you. It has to be your decision to passionately pursue God and his Word. You pursue that which you prize. In other words, when something or someone is a priority in your life, you will chase after it or them with passion and abandonment, placing the prize you treasure ahead of other pursuits. To attain the prize, you have to be purposeful about getting to know God by reading His Word. To attain the prize, your old patterns and former ways of living in this world must be replaced by new ways of living, as God instructs you in His Word. To attain the prize, the lies of this world have to be replaced by the truth of God's Word.

It is not enough to *think* about Scripture. You have to *think Scripturally*. Wisdom is seeing life from God's perspective. When you start seeing life from God's perspective, you start *putting into practice* that which you are learning. God's Word, if left sitting on a shelf, will not transform you. The truth has to penetrate your heart. You have to get to know God and His Word in order to become a student of truth.

We learn far more by doing than by hearing. It has been said that people retain about 10 percent of what they hear, 20 percent of what they see and 90 percent of what they do. "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do** what it says. Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in the mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, **and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard,**

but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does” – James 1:22-25.

Who says the Nike company was the first to say, “Just Do It”?! It seems the idea may have always been in the Bible. So how will you respond? Allow God’s Word to become the authority over your life. Just do it, and God will do the rest.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU:

1. Which one of the 3 spiritual camps best identifies my behavior and choices? Do I need to change camps? What would I need to do differently in order to change camps?
2. Do I live by convictions or by preferences? Explain what this lesson has taught me regarding both and how knowing the difference will have an effect on my future choices.
3. What lies have I believed that led to self-destructive behaviors, patterns or strongholds in my life?
4. What is keeping me from allowing God’s Word to become the authority over my life?