

God's Word is like a hammer.

Read Jeremiah 23:28-32. What kind of theological environment do you think Jeremiah was ministering in? What parallels do you see between that environment and your own? How is scripture like fire? How is scripture like a hammer? What is the difference between straw and wheat? What is the difference between a dream and scripture?

Do you feel closer to God when you have a dream than when you study your Bible?

1) Stay close to the nail. (v. 3)

Why do you think Paul urged Timothy to remain at Ephesus? Do you think he wanted to leave? Why? Are you tempted to move away from the place of difficulty? Do you dream of easier ministry assignments? Are you wrongly believing things would be that much different if you could just escape? What is wrong with that kind of thinking?

2) Take good aim. (v. 5)

The aim of all sound doctrine is love for God and love for others. Yet many perceive teaching and calling for obedience to God's truth to be unloving. Why do some people believe it is not loving to demand our lives conform to God's truth?

Sound doctrine always makes its way from the head to the heart. Describe how specific doctrinal truths produce the following three results:

- A pure heart vs. polluted passions
- A good conscience vs. guilty conscience
- A sincere faith vs. hypocritical religion

3) Avoid swerving in the swinging. (v. 4, 6-7)

How to smell a doctrinal stinker

1. They distance themselves from the local church. (v. 3)

What is the reason self-proclaimed "faith healers" don't hang out in hospitals or among the wounded soldiers?

Why do false teachers have a low view of churches that have a plurality of elders responsible for doctrine, direction, and discipline?

2. They intimidate others by subjective claims of supernatural knowledge. (v. 4)

Do you think people who think they have heard from God in a dream are more spiritual than people who study the Bible to hear from God?

Do you ever feel spiritually inferior to people who speak of "prophetic words", "gifts of healing", or the "gift of tongues"?

3. They use ministry as a platform for personal gain. (v. 5)

What is often the motive of those who preach a "prosperity gospel."? Whose prosperity are they most concerned with?

4. They mistake uncertainty for humility. (v. 6)

Do you have confidence that God has revealed himself sufficiently enough in Scripture for you to know him?

5. They fail to find the glory in the simplicity of the gospel. 11

Subjective mystical experiences can detract from the true ministry of the Holy Spirit. Discuss how you see the Holy Spirit's activity in your life through the following biblical expressions of His work.

- Regeneration (John 3:3,5)
- Indwelling (Romans 8:9-11)
- Assurance (Eph. 1:13-14)
- Illumination (John 16:13)
- Conviction (John 16:7-8)
- Comfort (Acts 9:31)
- Fruit Bearing (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Sanctifying (Romans 15:16, 2Thess. 2:13)

Do these seem less "spectacular" than signs and wonders sometime accredited to the Holy Spirit? Why is it dangerous to seek ecstatic, extra-biblical activity of the Holy Spirit?

4) Use only as directed. (v. 8-11)

Read Romans 7:7-12. The worst and most dangerous way to use the Bible is like a ladder to climb your way to Heaven. Have you ever tried to use the Bible like this? Do you unwittingly use the commands in the Bible to try to get your children to "be good"?

The only proper use of the Bible is like a hammer to break you of sin and self-righteousness. Its purpose is to convince us that we can never be good enough. When we realize we have broken the law of God we see how glorious the gospel is.

To show us how to properly use the Bible, Paul references five of the Ten Commandments. Are you on his list of lawbreakers? How specifically have you broken these commands? How does the guilt in your heart, as you think about this question, show you your need for a savior?

- 5th Commandment – Honor your father and mother (including verbal or physical violence)
- 6th Commandment – Do not murder (including hatred in our hearts)
- 7th Commandment – Do not commit adultery (all sexual immorality, including lust)
- 8th Commandment – Do not steal (including enslaving others through your desire for control)
- 9th Commandment – Do not lie (including allowing some to believe something about you that's not true)

The Gospel is glorious to those who realize Jesus is their substitute law keeper. Are you still trying to earn your way to heaven by being good? Are you using the Bible?

When did you see yourself the way Paul describes those in need of a savior: lawless and disobedient, ungodly and sinners, unholy and profane?

Additional Scripture

- Galatians 1:6-8
- Galatians 3:24-24
- 2Peter 2:1
- Colossians 2:16-23
- Ephesians 4:14