

Does the Bible *Really* Change Lives?

Many skeptics of the Bible have challenged the Bible, claiming that it does little or nothing to really change the way men and women live. Does it really improve man's condition or his relationships? One thing that often leads to such conclusions is the fact that many who profess Christianity live little differently than the non-Christian society around them. "Professing" Christians have been known to get drunk, beat up their wives, steal from their employers, cheat on their income taxes, and otherwise violate the teachings of the Bible and of Jesus.

On the other hand, many lives have been changed for good by the teachings of the Bible. This transformation has changed personal lives and influenced society for the good.

Consider the little boy who was playing in his yard when a man walked by on the street. The little boy was singing the children's song "Jesus Loves Me." The man stopped and demanded of the boy, "You quit singing that right now. There is no God or Jesus."

The little boy responded by saying, "Please don't tell my daddy that there is no God."

The man was curious. "Why don't you want me to tell your father there is no God?"

The little boy's sincere reply challenged the atheist. "My daddy used to come home drunk. He was unkind to Mommy and me. But then he became a Christian and believed in God. He quit drinking and is now kind to us. Please don't tell my daddy there is no God."

Countless other stories could be told of people who have been rescued from drink, drugs, and criminal actions to a right relationship with their families. They are no longer burdens to society and even the criminal system.

The Word of God can and does change our outlook on life. An account of how the freshly translated Word of God began to change lives in a Mexican Indian village some years ago reminded me again of the power of the Bible to change lives.

The Bible was being translated into the language of the Tzeltal people in Mexico. The Bible had been available to these people for years in Spanish, but many of them did not understand Spanish very well. Those who did understand Spanish were not always able to grasp the meaning of the Scriptures. Bible translators saw the need to translate the Bible into the Tzeltal language.

As soon as a new passage was available in Tzeltal, the pastor of the church in one village used it to teach the people. Little did the translators realize the effect that hearing the Bible in their mother language would have.

In that village, the leaders required the heads of households to help on village projects. This requirement was unpopular, and many men tried to evade the responsibility. To enforce the work requirement, local police would take some valuable object from the homes of the men. They would only return the object when the men would show up for work.

After Romans 13:1-8 was translated into Tzeltal, the Christian men in the village began to turn out for the work projects. This passage teaches us to obey authorities and submit to them. The authorities, who opposed the Gospel, no longer needed to confiscate valuables from Christian homes. They were dumbfounded. The Christians took seriously what the Bible taught about honoring and obeying the authorities.

Now, what about you and me who have the Bible in our mother tongue and can understand it? What does a passage like Romans 13:1-8 do for us? Does it still inspire us anew to apply its truths to our relationship with authorities? What about inspectors and other local officials? Do other Bible passages on sacrificial living and giving inspire us to share willingly with those in need, especially the spiritually needy? Does the Bible and our obedience to its teaching affect our family relationships and keep us from the corrupt influences of our society? When God's Word calls for love and obedience, do our neighbors see the change as the Mexican village officials did?

"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).

~Roger Berry