

## Protect Yourself

Imagine someone trying to attack you, but all you have to protect yourself is a sword. The sword has warded off millions of enemies for centuries, but would it help *you* much? Do *you* know how to use a sword? If this happened to me, I would go to heaven very quickly. The sword is an effective defense weapon, but I am not trained how to use it.

Paul called the Word of God the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17). The Bible is invaluable to ward off the enemy of our souls, just as Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy three times when Satan tempted him (Matt 4:4, 7, 10). Like the literal sword, the sword of the Spirit has warded off millions of enemies, but how effectively is it for *you*?

Apparently, even being with Jesus didn’t help here. After Christ’s resurrection, we find him walking along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus (Luke 24). Two key disciples (though not among the Twelve) spoke with him, wondering why Jesus was the only one in Jerusalem who did not know about his recent death, burial, and resurrection.

While they thought Jesus was ignorant, he quickly rebuked them for their ignorance: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘You foolish people! You find it hard to believe all the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn’t it predicted that the Messiah would suffer all these things before entering his glory?’ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

These disciples had heard from their “sword” all their lives. They had grown up in the synagogue, hearing the Scriptures each Sabbath. They had access to the learned rabbis and even had a few years with the best Rabbi ever. Yet they could not identify the Messiah in their midst nor discern that Old Testament texts such as Isaiah 53 foretold his suffering.

Jesus spoke to them about how the OT pointed to him during this walk. Most people walk about five kilometers per hour, so his explanation during this 13-kilometer trip must have taken 2-3 hours. Did they miss that much of the Old Testament teaching about such an important subject? To their amazement, they did.

Before we are too critical of their inability to use their “Scripture sword,” we should check our own ability to handle our sword of the Spirit. In a recent sermon I preached at a church that planted 37 other churches, I asked the congregation how many read the Bible daily. Only one-fourth of the hands were raised. Most hands went up when I asked how many of them ate daily. Why do we take our physical food but live on such an impoverished spiritual diet?

At age 16, I made one of the most important decisions of my life. When I saw that we have millions of books to read but only one inspired Book, I committed to reading that Book for five minutes every day for the rest of my life. This truly changed my life.

The average reader can read the entire Bible aloud in only 70 hours and 40 minutes. This means you could read the whole Bible in a year for only 12 minutes daily. How many times have you read through this most important Book? Is finding God’s view on your life worth 12 minutes a day? Are you protecting yourself from error by learning to use your sword?