

A TRANSFORMING POWER

On September 14, 1898, the Boscobel Central House Hotel in Boscobel, Wisconsin was packed. It was noisy and the air was thick with tobacco smoke. A travelling salesman, named John Nicholson, was passing through and walked into the hotel at about 9 o'clock that night, looking for a place to stay. John made his way to the front desk to enquire about a room, however, every room had been booked out. The hotel clerk let him know, however, that there was a spare bed that wasn't being used in Room 19 which had been booked by a man by the name of Samuel Hill. If John was able to convince Samuel to let him sleep in the spare bed in his room, he was able to stay at the hotel that night. So John was introduced to Samuel and explained to him the situation. Samuel agreed to allow John to spend the night in the spare bed.

Later that night, Samuel went to bed and fell asleep but was woken up 5 minutes later when John had turned the light on. John apologised to Samuel and explained that it was his habit every night to finish the day by reading the Bible. Well it turns out that Samuel was a Christian and so he asked John if he would read it out loud so that he could listen to him read. So John did exactly that and when he'd finished, they began talking and praying together until 2 o'clock in the morning. During these conversations, the men decided they wanted to meet up more regularly. So they continued meeting up and they formed an organisation that we now know as The Gideons International. Basically, every hotel they would stay in as they travelled, they would leave a Bible behind in the drawer. Since then, this organisation has grown so big that it now has people working in 200 countries in the world. Today, they distribute over a million Bibles throughout the world every week. That's approximately 2 copies per second!

John Nicholson and Samuel Hill both believed that the Bible is an incredible piece of literature. And they are in good company. The Bible is by far the best-selling book of all time! Over 100 million copies of the Bible are sold or given away every year and it is estimated that there are around 6 billion Bibles in print. To give you an idea of how huge a number that is, catch this! If we were to stack every Bible in the world side by side, like we would on a bookshelf, assuming that the average Bible is 2 centimetres in width, we would have 120,000 kilometres of Bibles. Now, from the most eastern point of Australia to the most western point of Australia is 4000 kilometres. So if you wanted to make a bookshelf that would fit every single Bible on it, you'd need to make a bookshelf that was 30 times the length of Australia! That's pretty incredible, don't you think?

So what is it about the Bible that makes it so popular? That makes it the best-selling book of all time? That has led men and women throughout history to give up their lives in order to keep it alive so that we could have it today? What do you think?

Read [Isaiah 55:10-11](#).

In [verse 10](#), what does God say is the purpose of the rain and snow falling? The purpose of the rain and snow falling is to nourish and bring life, to make things bloom, flourish and blossom! And God says that the rain and snow will not return to heaven without having achieved this purpose.

God then says in the very next verse that His Word is no different. It will always achieve its purpose and its purpose is to bring life and make things bloom and flourish. Its purpose is not to give us more information or knowledge. Its purpose is to transform!

If you've ever read the Bible before, have you ever felt different afterwards? Have you ever felt full or inspired or changed?

God uses the Bible to transform us but we need to be careful not to think of the Bible as a magic book. It's not as if every time we open it up and read something, God is "activated" and, as a result, He does something big in our lives. It's not that at all. So how does this transformation occur? To answer this question, we need to understand what the Bible is.

The Bible was written by 40 or so authors over roughly fifteen hundred years. These authors, under the inspiration of God, wrote about their experiences with God. So essentially, the Bible is a historical and reliable record of humanity's interactions with God and therefore God's interactions with humanity. This tells us a lot about who God is and what He's all about.

For example, let's read [Exodus 14:5-31](#).

This was written by a man called Moses and he is recounting an experience he had with God. God had called him to go and rescue the Israelites who has been enslaved by the Egyptians for 400 years. With the help of God, Moses was able to get them out of Egypt and began leading them to a better place. The Bible calls it the Promised Land. On their way to the Promised Land, Moses and the Israelites found themselves in a pretty hopeless situation. They arrived at the Red Sea and couldn't proceed any further. Meanwhile the Egyptians regretted letting their slaves go so they began chasing them. So things were looking pretty bad for Moses and the Israelites. Then God stepped in and made a way where there was no way before. He parted the Red Sea and Moses and the Israelites were safe.

[What does this tell us about God?](#)

It tells us that He is loving. It tells us that He cares for His people. It tells us that He will fight for us. It tells us that He can make a way for us where there is no way.

See what we just did? We read a part of the Bible and it helped us understand who God is a little bit better. That's what the Bible does. And this is why it's transformative. This is how it makes things bloom and flourish. This is how it brings life. Because as we read the Bible, we are interacting with God and when we have an interaction with God, we're never left the same as we were before.

One of the authors of the Bible, Timothy, sums it up well in [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#).

Timothy isn't saying that the Bible merely tells us to do good works. He is saying that it equips us for good works! There is a big difference between telling someone to do something and equipping them to do it. When Timothy says that the Bible equips us for good works, he's talking about transformation. He is saying that as we read and contemplate and meditate and wrestle with the Bible, we're going to reflect God more fully and bloom and flourish and blossom.

We must, however, state the obvious. The Bible can be difficult to read. Some things the Bible authors say don't seem to make a whole lot of sense. After all, it was written a long time ago by people living in a totally different world to our world today. Over the next 8 studies, we're going to navigate our way through this world and learn how to make sense of the Bible. It's going to be fun!

In the meantime, give the Bible a go. Try and discover why it's the best-seller of all time. Try and discover why over 100 million copies of the Bible are sold or given away every year. And as you do this, watch as God transforms you!