

Grace Evangelical Church
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Fall Series: Life Lessons From Biblical Personalities
Living By The Biblical God's Convictions - Joseph
Genesis 39

After shopping for most of the day, a couple returns to find their car has been stolen. They go to the police station to make a full report. Then, a detective drives them back to the parking lot to see if any evidence can be found at the scene of the crime. To their amazement, the car has been returned.

There is an envelope on the windshield with a note of apology and two tickets to a music concert. The note reads, "I apologize for taking your car, but my wife was having a baby and I had to hot-wire your ignition to rush her to the hospital. Please forgive the inconvenience. Here are two tickets for tonight's concert of Garth Brooks, the country-and-western music star.

Their faith in humanity restored, the couple attend the concert and return home late. They find their house has been robbed. Valuable goods have been taken from throughout the house, from basement to attic. And, there is a note on the door reading, "Well, you still have your car. I have to put my newly born kid through college somehow, don't I?"

That's the world we live in today.

People today operate from expediency rather than by conviction.

By expediency is meant a regard for what is advantageous for a person rather than for what is right or just. Thusly a sense of self-interest replaces any kind of conviction. In fact some feel that the world owes them something.

But why do people today operate from expediency rather than by conviction? Why is the popular idea today to do what you want and get away with what you can?

I. Why do people today live their lives by expediency rather than by conviction?

1. People live their lives based on their experience rather than on an absolute standard.

Look at our text in Genesis 39:6-12.

"Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. It came about after these events that his master's wife (Potiphar's wife- the man, who was an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the body guard- the one to whom Joseph was now a personal servant to), looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

This lady was willing to break her marriage vow to her husband to satisfy her lustful spirit, and to engage Joseph in activity that was based solely on what she wanted. She was ready to sacrifice her purity for her own advantage, and cause Joseph to sacrifice his purity as well.

The wife of Potiphar was basing her life on expediency, on what she wanted for herself and without any regard for how this would affect the other person, Joseph. She had no conviction of right or wrong.

In fact, the wife of Potiphar did not take, "No," for an answer. She kept asking Joseph day after day to lie with him (Genesis 39:10). She kept living by expediency rather than by conviction.

Then one day, when there were no other servants in the house, the wife of Potiphar caught Joseph by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" (Genesis 39:12), Joseph left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

Then what did the wife of Potiphar do? She called to the men in the house and told them that a Hebrew had come into make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. Then she told the same thing to her husband, Potiphar.

2. People who live by their experience continue to use their own experience to further their own lifestyle (Genesis 39:13-19).

The wife of Potiphar not only was lusting after Joseph, she was willing to lie about him to the men of her household, the other servants, but she also lied to her husband about what Joseph did. Of course, Potiphar was angry and as a consequence put Joseph in prison.

She, who was willing to attempt to seduce Joseph, was also willing to turn pseudo pious and pseudo righteous by telling lies, resulting in Joseph being taken from his high position and put in prison. Potiphar's wife continued to live her life by her experience meaning that she continued to live a life of expediency to fit her life-style.

3. Living by experience can lead to devastating consequences.

(1) If one lives his or her life by expediency, then anything goes, as long as the person is able to get what he or she wants. And if it's at the expense of someone else, as in this case, that makes no difference, for everything is to work for the individual's advantage.

(2) Now if such thinking of living one's life by expediency rather than by conviction begins to spread throughout a people or a country, we have what the Bible describes at the time of Noah, where everyone did evil continually, or in Romans 1, where morality had been replaced with gross immorality.

(3) Eventually such a lifestyle will lead to anarchy or dictatorship. For human behavior has to be curbed and a dictatorship bring that about at the expense of individual liberty.

A life-style of expediency can become very destructive to the society in which it exists if left unchecked. According the Scriptures, it eventually brings the judgment of God.

But there is a second question that we must ask.

II. Is it possible to live a life of conviction rather than a life of expediency?

Obviously, it is. For Joseph the biblical character we are considering today did just that. Joseph lived a life of conviction in a circumstance where expediency was the norm, particularly in the life of the wife of Potiphar.

But to see this in a little more depth. Let's consider the life of Joseph.

1. Joseph's background (Genesis 37).

The historical account of Joseph begins in Genesis 37:1. Evidently at this time, Jacob, Joseph's father and the entire family were living near Hebron (Genesis 37:14) (see slide). As the story

unfolds in Genesis 37, we are told that Joseph was pasturing the flock with his brothers, and Joseph brought back a bad report about his brothers, who evidently weren't doing what they should. Of course that didn't set well with his brothers. Then we are told that Jacob loved his son, Joseph, more than all the other sons, and made him a tunic, of varied colors, which has been called the coat of many colors. As you may remember there was an operatic musical, entitled "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." It was first produced in 1972 and first played on Broadway in 1982. It was written by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice.

Such affection displayed upon Joseph caused the other brothers to become very jealous and angry, and they hated their brother Joseph. After all in their eyes, he was just spoiled and shown favor over them. To top all that, Joseph had a couple of dreams that he told to his father and mother, and brothers.

The one dream was about sheaves in a field where the eleven sheaves bowed down to the one sheaf, and then in another dream about the moon and eleven stars and the eleven stars bowed down to the moon.

In fact, Joseph's father told him "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves before you to the ground?" The words of Joseph about his dreams caused his brother to be jealous, but Jacob kept the saying in mind. Of course there was no need for Joseph to tell the brothers his dreams, but perhaps he did it just as a matter of conversation relating what he had seen without any ulterior motive.

Regardless, the other brothers went to pasture their father's flocks in Shechem. While there, Jacob sent Joseph to Shechem to see how his brothers were doing. When arriving at Shechem, Joseph discovered that his brothers had moved on to Dotham about 20 miles north of Shechem.

When the brothers saw Joseph coming, for he was wearing his coat of many colors (Genesis 39:23), they began plotting how they might kill the dreamer as they called Joseph. They decided to kill Joseph, throw him in a pit, and tell their father that a wild beast had killed him. Reuben, the eldest son, evidently sensing responsibility for what was happening, convinced the brothers not to kill Joseph but to put him in a pit in the wilderness, thinking he might rescue Joseph later.

The brothers sat down to eat while their brother Joseph was still in the pit, telling us that their hatred for their brother Joseph didn't cause them to lose their appetite. Soon they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites and Midianites coming from Gilead taking their goods to Egypt. Judah commented that it would be no profit to kill Joseph, so why not sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay hands on Joseph. They, then, sold Joseph to the caravan for 20 pieces of silver the price of a slave which later set at 30 pieces of silver (Exodus 21:32). Jesus, of course, was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15).

Reuben evidently was gone during this time, and when he returned to the pit, Joseph was gone. Reuben confronted his brothers and found out what had had happened. They killed a male goat and dipped Joseph's coat of many colors in the blood and brought it back to their father, telling him that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast and devoured him. Jacob tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and mourned for many days, refusing to be comforted.

In the meantime, Joseph was sold in Egypt by the Midianites to Potiphar Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.

(1) Obviously, a consideration of Joseph's family background, is not a picture of peace and harmony. Jacob showed partiality to Joseph by making him the coat of many colors. The brothers became jealous and hated Joseph. When Joseph related his dreams which included his brothers and family, his brothers became even more jealous. When Joseph came looking for them at the direction of his father Jacob, the brothers, when they saw Joseph, wanted to kill him. And they would have if Reuben had not intervened. Then they sold Joseph into slavery and gave false information to their father as to what happened to Joseph, resulting in his being sorrowful for days.

(2) The family of Joseph was a very dysfunctional family. Not necessary a good beginning for a man whose name means "Increaser." He who seemingly may have had much potential ended up being hated by his brothers, and being sold into Egyptian slavery.

(3) Where did God fit into Joseph's life during that time within his father's house?

Evidently, from what follows in the life of Joseph during his time in Egypt, Joseph, somewhere in his life, had placed his faith in the LORD. Evidently, he didn't have an experience like Abraham. But it is obvious, from what takes place now in the account of Joseph's life (Genesis 39ff) that Joseph had his faith in the Lord. The action of his brothers didn't deter that faith. And that Joseph didn't get killed by his brothers is obvious that God was looking after him.

2. Joseph's time in Egypt (Genesis 39-50).

(1) Arriving in Egypt, Joseph was bought by Potiphar – the captain of Pharaoh's body guard.

Genesis 39:2 tells us that the LORD was with Joseph, and he became successful in Potiphar's house being named comptroller - in charge of all the affairs of Potiphar. Joseph became Potiphar's personal servant. He put Joseph in charge of all that he owned (Genesis 39:8).

(2) Potiphar's wife started tempting Joseph to have a physical relationship with her (Genesis 39:7-12).

The lady of expediency was tempting Joseph who had risen to great power in Potiphar's house. **How did Joseph respond to the lady of expediency? What does our text tell us?**

Genesis 39:8-9 is one of the classic passages in the Bible.

"But he refused and said to his master's wife, "behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my care. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"

What's that Joseph? What's that Joseph? You believe marriage is a sacred covenant between a man and woman? You believe that another man should not have a relationship with a man's wife? You believe that such action is evil? You believe that such action is sin – yes, sin against God?

Don't you believe, Joseph, that expediency is the way to live? Come on Joseph, loosen up. You need to be free. Let your emotions go. Live for yourself. Satisfy your desires. Is what Potiphar's wife is saying to him.

What's Joseph saying here to Potiphar's wife, and to us today?

- **I believe that there is an eternal God (Elohim – the Creator) who has revealed eternal objective standards for me to live by.**

- **I believe that these eternal standards God has given have a direct affect on my behavior as an individual.**
- **For me to enjoy God’s blessings on my life, I must obey these standards in my life.**
- **Thusly, I don’t live my life by my experience and how I feel, for my experience and emotions can change, but I live my life by God’s eternal standards that never change.**
- **That’s why I believe that marriage is a sacred trust between a husband and wife for God has established marriage as one of his unchanging standards.**
- **If I don’t obey the eternal God’s standards – I sin – I will have to bear the consequences which could be lethal for me.**

In the midst of expediency, Joseph holds up the unchanging eternal standard of the biblical God based on His unchanging character.

I trust that we do the same today, and seek in the Spirit’s power to live our lives in accordance with God’s standards given in His unchanging word, the Bible.

But does that mean life will always be easy if we seek to live by God’s eternal standards revealed in the Word of God?

(3) For obeying the eternal God in following His absolute unchanging standards, Joseph was condemned unjustly and sent to prison, but God did not forget Joseph (Genesis 39:21-41:14).

That doesn’t seem right. Obey God and get sent to prison. But God was in control.

1. In spite of being treated unjustly and unfairly, God blessed Joseph (Genesis 39:21). “But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness (hesed) to him and gave him favor (chen) in the sight of the jailor.

The jailor soon realized that Joseph was not a criminal but a very trustworthy man. Joseph the accused was given charge over all the other prisoner. Joseph prospered in all that he did (39:23).

As the account proceeds both the cupbearer and the baker for the king had a falling out with the king of Egypt and were sent to prison. Joseph was put in charge of them (Genesis 40). Both of them had dreams and Joseph interpreted the dreams of both- the cupbearer would get out of prison, and be restored to his former position, and the baker would have his life taken. Both came true, but Joseph told the cupbearer to please reminder him and tell Pharaoh.

2. Pharaoh two years later had a dream about 7 fat cows and 7 lean cows who ate up the 7 fat cows (Genesis 41:1-13).

None of his magicians in Egypt could interpret Pharaoh’s dream. At that time, the opportune time, the cupbearer remembered that he and the baker had a dream while in prison, and that a Hebrew youth had interpreted their dreams and both came true.

3. Joseph is released from prison – God is in control (Genesis 41:14).

Pharaoh sent for Joseph, he was shaven and put on different clothes and appeared before the Pharaoh.

(4) Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream and is promoted to prime minister of Egypt (Genesis 41:15-57). What did Joseph's name mean? Increase.

Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was that there would be 7 years of plenty, and 7 years of famine.

Pharaoh believed Joseph's interpretation and said in Genesis 41:38-44, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?" So Pharaoh said to Joseph, Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you. . . See I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Then he put on Joseph's hand his signet ring, and clothed Joseph with garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the Knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt.

Joseph was given an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife by whom he had two sons, Manasseh (God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's house), and Ephraim (God has made me fruitful in the land of affliction).

How old was Joseph at this time? Genesis 41:46 tells us, "30 years old." Joseph was 17 when he was sold into slavery. He had spent some 13 years in slavery – now he was second in command.

The seven years of plenty came and Egypt stored up for the 7 years of famine. Then the 7 years of famine came, people from Egypt came to Joseph who was in charge of the storehouses, as well as people came from all over the world at that time.

(5) Joseph's ten brothers come to Egypt the first time to get grain for food due to the famine in Canaan (Genesis 42).

Benjamin the youngest of the family was left at home, for fear of being harmed, but the 10 brothers of Joseph went down to Egypt to buy grain. When they arrived they bowed themselves to Joseph for he was the one from whom they purchased grain. Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn't recognize him, for he disguised himself and spoke to them harshly. Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about his brothers.

Joseph accused the brothers of being spies and put them in prison for three days. Joseph kept Simeon back with him bound and told them to bring the youngest brother back with them. In the process Joseph turned away from them and wept. Then he returned and ordered their bags filled with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and provide them provisions for their journey. When this generosity was discovered the brothers were overwhelmed, not realizing what was happening. Telling their father Jacob that Simeon was now in Egypt and the Prime Minister of Egypt wanted to see the youngest brother, which would be Benjamin, the Jacob said that won't happen.

(6) Joseph's brothers along with Benjamin make a second trip to Egypt to buy grain (Genesis 43).

Jacob let's his youngest son, Benjamin, go to Egypt with the other 10 brothers. They took their best produce, double the money, and the money that was returned in their sacks. The brothers came before Joseph, and eventually they bowed before him again (Genesis 43:26&28) as Joseph asked about his father. **Joseph brought them into his house and provided them a meal seating the brothers according to birth. (Note Genesis 43:29-34).**

(7) Joseph gives one final test to his brothers (Genesis 44).

Joseph had the house steward fill the brothers sacks with grain and put their money back in the mouth of the sacks. Then he ordered that his silver cup be put in Benjamin's sack. When they left, Joseph had the house steward follow them, and look for his silver cup. The steward accused them of repaying good with evil, for his lord's silver cup was missing. If the silver cup was found the brothers said that he must die, and they would be the lord's servant.

They searched frantically through the sacks, and the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack. The brother's rent their clothes and returned to the city. They fell to the ground before Joseph, and Joseph asked them what they had done. Judah spoke saying that their iniquity has been found out, and they are ready to be the lord's slaves. Joseph told them Benjamin must be his slave and they could go in peace.

Judah pleaded that Benjamin be released for his father's sake, and he take the punishment, lest their father die when he hears he did not return. He was surety for the youngest son.

(8) Joseph reveals himself to his brothers (Genesis 45:1-15).

Joseph has all those with him except his brother leave the house. He began to weep loudly, so loudly that all in the household of Pharaoh heard it.

Then Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. They could not answer him. They were dismayed, or trembling and terrified. **Joseph told them not to be grieved or angry with themselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life . . . God sent me before you to preserve a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God. (Genesis 45:5, 7-8). Joseph told them to bring down their father. He fell on his brother, Benjamin's neck, and Benjamin wept on his neck. He kissed all his brothers and they all wept and talked together.**

(9) Jacob and all of his family are invited to Egypt and settle in Goshen, the best part of the land (Genesis 45:16-47:31).

Pharaoh tells Joseph's brothers to get their father and return with their families and possessions to Egypt. He gave them wagons to bring back their families and supplies, and provisions to make the trip. **Joseph tells them not to quarrel on the way (Genesis 45:24). How cool is that!** Joseph's father, Jacob and all the members of his family return to Egypt and are given the best territory in the land. Their the sons of Jacob or Israel multiply and prosper.

What a reunion of Joseph with his father Jacob who lived 17 more years in Egypt before he died at the age of 147. (Genesis 47:28). Jacob asked that he be taken out of Egypt when they return to their homeland.

(10) Joseph has his father, Jacob, bless his two sons elevating them to the position of equality with his other sons (Genesis 48).

(11) Jacob blesses all of his sons, asks that he be buried with Abraham, and then dies. Jacob's request is granted (Genesis 49:1-50:14).

Jacob is gathered to his people. He is taken by Joseph, his servants, and his brothers to be buried in the cave where Abraham was buried, the burial site of Ephron the Hittite.

(12) Joseph offers forgiveness to his brothers acknowledging the sovereignty of God before he dies(Genesis 50:15-26).

1. The brothers are concerned now that their father is gone that he will bear a grudge against them for what they did to him (Genesis 50:15).
2. The brothers send a message to Joseph asking his forgiveness (Genesis 50:16-17a).
3. Joseph weeps when he hears this (Genesis 50:17b).
4. His brothers bow before Joseph again (Genesis 50:18)
"We are your servants, Joseph."
5. Joseph forgives his brothers (Genesis 50:19).
6. Joseph declares his faith in the sovereignty of God (Genesis 50:20)
All things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).
7. Before Joseph dies, he declares his continued faith that the covenant made with Abraham will be fulfilled to his people (Genesis 50:24).
Of course under Moses the people were delivered from Egypt, and Joshua led Israel into the promised land.
They took Joseph's bones with them when they went to Canaan (Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32).

III. What do we learn for our lives from Joseph's life as to how to live by the biblical God's convictions rather than the expediency of the day?

1.Our faith and trust must be in the Savior, Jesus Christ, the ultimate source of eternal truth, in order to have God's life within and the understanding of His eternal Word.
Even when a family life is not perfect, a person can still trust Christ as Savior and follow His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. The believer lets God's absolutes become apart of his or her life.

2.The believer who has the biblical God's convictions spontaneously obeys the Holy Spirit letting the unchanging absolutes of the Word of God become a part of his daily behavior.

Why could Joseph say, "No," to Potiphar's wife's daily temptation to have a physical relationship with her?

- Joseph had hidden God's word in his heart so he did not sin against God.
- Joseph didn't just believe the word of God in his head. It had become a part of his thought processes.
- So Joseph knew what to do when temptation came because he already had decided in his heart that he would obey the Lord.
- Which meant that Joseph also had God's view of marriage. He knew that God had created marriage and the marriage relationship must be kept pure between a husband and wife.

3.The believer who has the biblical God's convictions doesn't bring God down to his or her level of thinking which leads to expediency rather than living by biblical principles.
Once we say that the biblical God's eternal absolutes and standards are not for us, we lower our view of God and we become god ourselves, which leads to sin and judgment.

4.The believer who has the biblical God's convictions is faithful to the Lord even when there are challenges and persecution of some kind.

While in prison, Joseph was honored by the Lord, for his faithfulness to the Lord. Joseph could have felt sorry for himself and given up. But no, he knew he had done the right thing in rejecting Potiphar's wife's temptation. In the midst of his persecution, he kept focused on God's love and on His word.

I Peter 4:15-16 reads, "Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name."

5. The believer with the biblical God's convictions holds high the unchanging standard of God's person and word, seeking to be holy in thought, attitude, and word, and deed.

Joseph's words should keep running through our minds.

"How then can I do this great evil and sin against God."

That includes immorality to telling the little so-called white lie. Joseph had a sensitivity to God at work in his life. Today the believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

6. The believer living by the biblical God's convictions has a compassionate and forgiving spirit like that of Christ. He doesn't hold grudges.

- Joseph forgave his brothers when he revealed himself to them in Genesis 45:5, "Do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life."
- Then in Genesis 50:17, the brothers, after Jacob, their father dies, ask for Joseph's forgiveness. Joseph wept with them. Then Joseph told them not to be afraid, for he was in God's place. They were forgiven. He did not hold their action against them.
- Genesis 50:21 – So do not be afraid, I will provide for you and your little ones. So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.
- Ephesians 4:32 tells us that we are to forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us.

7. The believer, who lives by the biblical God's convictions has a strong trust in the sovereignty of God.

- Genesis 45:7 – God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant, in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance."
- Genesis 50:20 – "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.
- Romans 8:28 is the New Testament verse depicting the sovereignty of God. God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

8. The believer, who lives by the biblical God's conviction has an understanding of God's workings in history – A biblical world view.

Note these verses again

***Genesis 45:7 – God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant, in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance."**

Joseph had some understanding of the significance of what God let him be apart of. He knew something about the need for the line of Abraham to continue.

***Genesis 50:20 – “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.**

***Then this is amplified in Genesis 50:24 – “I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on earth to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then he tells them to carry his bones up from Egypt.**

Joseph knew the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that Israel would possess the land of Canaan as their land.

Of course, Joseph, as Noah and Abraham were, was used to save the line of the Savior, as Israel would prosper in Egypt and be delivered.

And Jesus Christ the Savior came through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and through Judah, the son of Jacob.

9.The believer, who lives by the biblical God’s convictions is a person filled with Christ’s hope, as he or she has one’s eye on the future.

- **Genesis 45:7 – God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant, in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.”**
- **Genesis 50:20 – “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive**
- **Genesis 50:24 – “I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on earth to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then he tells them to carry his bones up from Egypt.**

Today, as people living by the biblical God’s convictions we should live filled with the hope of the Lord as we look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:27; Titus 2:11-14).

As we look for the Lord’s any moment return, we also know there is hope for us in any circumstance, because the Lord never leaves us and is always with us even in the toughest times.

Living by the biblical God’s conviction, we can be assured that He is our unchanging eternal salvation and rock!

David Hume, 18th century British philosopher who rejected historic Christianity, once met a friend hurrying along a London street and asked where he was going. The friend said he was off to hear George Whitfield preach. “But surely you don’t believe what Whitfield preaches do you?” “No, I don’t, but he does.”

May it be evident in each of our lives this week that we live not by our own selfish expediency by the biblical God’s eternal and unchanging convictions revealed in His Word the Bible!!

