

# Notes from Swedenborg - The Bible as our Mirror

Transcripts of YouTube clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89pFkaWth2k> based on the insights Emanuel Swedenborg experienced as recorded in his writings. Produced by the Swedenborg Association of Australia (SAA) [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au)  
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The Bible is a religious book that can be fascinating and relevant on many levels. First, there is a lot about God in it and all through it. There's a big chunk about Jesus of course. Then there's heaps about people like us and how we live. Things that are right and wrong, or that matter or not. Then there is an amazing amount of history, quite a lot of it actual, and known about from other sources, and some history which doesn't look like it fits with other records. There's a large number of individual people who have their part in things, and stories and many other things. The Bible is a story in itself.

Some people take the whole Bible literally, word for word. They do that because they believe God's word must be just as it reads and not interpreted. Unfortunately, that narrows its meaning down.

There's a level in the Bible which is quite different from everything we've said so far. This is its symbolism and how it is a description of things that go on in each and all of us. This is not a code, or magic; it's not artificial or weird. It is bringing our own inner personal things - issues, fears, needs, thoughts, emotions, hopes, beliefs and longings - out into readable narratives which shows us through stories and teachings what we are like in being human, and also about the giver of life who is God, and how God longs to help us to help ourselves see and accept who we are, what we're like, and importantly how we can choose.

So, in this way, we can talk about the Bible as our mirror. Swedenborg spent a lot of his spiritual writing in bringing out this 'deeper' personal meaning in the Bible. The best way to see it is to share some examples, using Bible words and incidents. And we'll work with three.

One of the easiest ones to see is when the Bible mentions sheep. You might know the story of the lost sheep which was looked for and found and brought back with joy. Sheep actually do that, wander off, or just don't go when the flock all moves on. Sheep aren't that bright but they do hang around together, one goes, the others follow, which is not that good. Another Bible sentence says 'All we like sheep have gone astray' which is simply telling us we get bad thoughts, or react to things or been full of self-pity or whatever. Sheep aren't bad like you could say a wolf is, but they are pretty foolish. This means they – really we – need the help and care of the shepherd and of the Good Shepherd. And interestingly, Jesus is called the Lamb of God. Where's the connection there...?

Next, we'll look at an incident in the long story of David, a shepherd! His people, the Israelites, had enemies called the Philistines who wanted to oppress them. These people had a fighter called Goliath, a giant, whose name nowadays gets used on huge cleaning cloths! Goliath boasted. David came to give food to his brothers, and chose to fight Goliath, and while their two people stood on two hills, the two of them came down to the valley, and faced each other, one-to-one. That is meaningful. We can talk for ages about good and bad, up on hilltops, but we must deal with our own goodness and badness in each particular instance, down in the valley of daily living.

And in the valley was a brook, from where David chose five smooth stones, rounded by long tossing-around in the brook. That's telling us about how we learn from life. But the stones are the truths and values we have picked up and made ours. When David flung his sling with the first stone in it, at Goliath, it sank into the giant's forehead and he fell dead. Such is the power of a truth we have learned by living it in our lives. This is a really rich story when we see it being about us.

For the last one let's choose something. Something near us. Let's think about salt. Salt gets used to add to food, just a bit, to bring out the food's own flavour, not the taste of salt. Jesus once said, "You are the salt of the earth". The you is each of us, especially the part of us that is open to values and even spiritual ideas. So if each of us is the salt of the earth, we are giving ourselves in the right way to help or let people feel good about life and our own life.

And curiously, a salt crystal - sodium chloride - is a perfect cube. Other crystals can be this or that, but salt is all equal. That's helping us see that every part of life, every aspect of life and every offering of our life can equally be useful, and be part of how God helps us all.