

# The Word *in* Our Lives



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Pss. 19:7-11; 119:105; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 2:24.*

**Memory Text:** “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (*Hebrews 4:12, NIV*).

**Key Thought:** The Bible must change how we live our lives.

Sam Tannyhill was sentenced to death for murder. While in prison he was visited by two Seventh-day Adventists who gave him a Bible. Sam, angry, threw it against the wall. But one night, filled with guilt, fear, and bitterness, he wanted something to divert his thoughts, and so he picked up the Bible. At first, not understanding what he read, he tore it apart. But then he started reading again, and the more he read the more he came to know the Christ of the Bible. Sam found Jesus Christ as his Savior in a lonely prison cell as he read the Scriptures. His life completely turned around, right there in jail. The bitterness and anger that dogged him his whole life left. Sam knelt and sobbed. He said, “God, if You’ll have me, I’m Yours. Tonight I come. I want Your forgiveness, Your peace, Your power. Lord, change me.” He did, and Sam went with peace and assurance to his death.

What is it about the Bible that can so change even the worst among us? Maybe not all stories are so dramatic, but millions can testify to the impact that this Book has had in turning around their lives.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 19.*

## The Bible, Agent of Change

**Read** 2 Corinthians 5:17. How have you experienced the promise found in that text?

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The Bible paints a pretty dim picture of human nature in general (*Isa. 59:2-4; Jer. 13:23; Rom. 3:10-12*). And though that view often comes under attack by critics of the Bible, even the most cursory review of history proves the assertion right. Even worse, so often well-meaning attempts to improve our lot fail. Many of the great “isms” of the past few centuries, often predicated on the idea of changing humanity for the better, make things worse.

But there is hope, hope for us as individuals, hope for anyone who wants to be changed. And that’s because the Bible points us to Jesus Christ, our Creator and Redeemer, and in Him we have been given wonderful life-changing promises.

By studying the Bible, a sinner can get acquainted with Jesus, who is the Truth and who has the creative and redemptive and healing power to change us.

**Read** Psalm 19:7, John 17:17, Romans 6:4, Ephesians 4:24, Hebrews 4:12, and 1 Peter 2:24. What promises are found in here for us?

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There’s no question: God’s Word can change our lives. Scripture pours out a flood of light on us, pushing back spiritual darkness and revealing to the world the truth about a loving, powerful God who seeks to transform the lives of all who come to Him in faith. Millions of people can testify to the power of the Word of God and what it has done to their lives. All who surrender themselves in faith and obedience to the God revealed in the Bible will experience for themselves just what a dramatic change can be wrought, even in the worst of sinners.

**Pick one specific area in which your life has been changed through reading the Word. What is that area, what changes have come, and what changes are you still hoping to see?**

## *I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .*

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▶ **Key Text:** *2 Timothy 3:16*

▶ **Teach the Class to:**

**Know:** God's Word is truth.

**Feel:** The need to apply Bible principles to everyday living.

**Do:** Live a life of example based on Bible guidelines.

▶ **Lesson Outline:**

### **I. The Word of God Brings About Change** (*Ps. 19:7*)

**A** How does Bible study produce change?

**B** Discuss how the Bible reveals the transforming power of God.

### **II. Obedience to God's Word** (*Heb. 4:12*)

**A** We must study the Bible with an open heart and a teachable spirit.

**B** We should study the Word of God with the willingness to obey.

### **III. The Word of Truth** (*Ps. 119:105*)

**A** The Bible will guide us into all truth.

**B** The Bible gives principles for daily living.

▶ **Summary:** The Bible serves as a guide for instructing the church as a whole. It also gives principles for a Christian living day by day.

## *Learning Cycle*

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▶ **STEP 1—Motivate!**

**Just for Teachers:** **Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners' experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?**

Sin placed a barrier between God and humanity. Satan tries to outsmart God's communication with us by providing us with misinformation. Invite class members to discuss how God overcame Satan's roadblocks. How does He communicate His love and salvation to us? How does He communicate His plan for your life to you? What has He asked you to do as His disciple?

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## Doers of the Word

Who of us hasn't, at one time or another, echoed the words of Paul: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (*Rom. 7:24, NIV*). Fortunately, in the next verse, Paul provides the answer: Jesus Christ alone will rescue us.

Jesus is the Source of our salvation. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (*Eph. 2:8, 9, NIV*). And though faith is a gift of God, how do we receive it?

**Read Romans 10:17.** What role does the Bible have in the way we receive faith?

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The more we read the Bible, the more we know Jesus and the more faith we shall have. The more we listen to the Words of God, the more our faith in Him will increase and the more we will experience the power of God to change our lives.

Many, though, read the Bible, and it does nothing for them. Some scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' time were well versed in Scripture, but what good did it do them?

**Read John 5:39, 40.** What important spiritual principle is seen here? *See also James 1:22.*

Knowledge, even of biblical truth, doesn't automatically change us for the good. A teachable spirit and a heart open to the leading of the Holy Spirit are crucial in the study of the Scriptures. It's not more information we need, not even more information about the Bible; it's instead a willingness to obey the Bible's teaching. It is not those who hear the Word of God who will be blessed but those who follow it (*Matt. 7:24-29*). We need to approach the Bible with a desire to apply it to our lives and to adjust our lives according to its teaching. If we come to the Scriptures with humility and the desire to do His will, God will give us a life-changing faith that will permeate all that we do.

**Do you pick up the Bible with a humble and teachable heart or with a critical eye, an attitude of resistance, or a lack of trust? If the latter, why not begin right now, opening the Word with a prayerful heart, pleading for the Lord to reveal to you His will and to give you faith and power to follow it? That's the only way your life will change for the better.**

*Learning Cycle* CONTINUED► **STEP 2—Explore!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, **What do I need to know from God’s Word?**

## Bible Commentary

### Consider These Stories:

**1** Rahab was a harlot living in a home on the walls of Jericho (*Josh. 2:1-21*). She and her people had heard about Israel’s conquest of the Promised Land. Rahab voiced the feelings of the people of Canaan as Israel advanced under God’s direction, “ ‘I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you’ ” (*Josh. 2:9, NKJV*).

As a class discuss why the people of Canaan were defeated. Together read Hebrews 11:3 and James 2:25. How did Rahab find faith in Israel’s God?

**2** Ruth was a Moabitess maiden, who became the wife of an Israelite refugee and part of Christ’s family heritage (*see Ruth 1:1-16, 4:17*). Her journey of faith through caring for her mother-in-law is a testimony of honoring a parent, although not her own except through marriage.

As a class discuss why this unlikely candidate became part of Jesus’ genealogy (*Matt. 1:6*). Why did God not find a godly woman in Israel to fill this role? (*Read Ruth 1:16 together.*) What about Ruth’s life and faith prepared her for this responsibility?

**3** The Pharisees were a conservative religious party of Judaism during the time of Christ. They were Israel’s religious leaders. Their position could have allowed them to bear a positive role in proclaiming the Messiah. Instead the testimony in Scripture spoken by Jesus is “ ‘But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in’ ” (*Matt. 23:13, NKJV*).

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## Principles of Life

**Read** Psalms 19:7-11; 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. What promises are found here regarding how the Bible should guide how we live?

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Every day we are confronted with difficult decisions on how to live. How do we know how to make the right choices, especially when so many moral theories exist? One ethicist even has developed a morality urging that we kill old people who have become a burden, even though he also argues against killing animals for food!

God, though, has given us His Word as a guide for how we should live. Whether sacred biographies, the life and teachings of Jesus, or specific direct biblical instructions—the Word gives us principles to guide our lives.

**Read** Genesis 39:7-14; John 8:3-11; and Philippians 2:3, 4. How might one take the principles found in these texts and apply them to real-life situations today? Be prepared to share your answers in class on Sabbath.

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Though the Bible does not pretend to give instruction on every problem known to humanity, it does give us wonderful principles that we can apply to our daily lives. Using these principles, along with sanctified common sense and guided by the Holy Spirit, we can learn to walk in the Spirit and be sensitive to the leading of God. Learning the example of biblical heroes or following the guidelines of the Bible will change our lives.

We must see the Bible as more than a compilation of historical or even spiritual facts. We need to see it as the will of God, who desires the best for our lives. For that reason the Bible can educate our ethics and tell us what God expects us to do. God has shown us in His Word how to live. When we follow divine guidance for our happiness, our lives will be changed by His divine power.

Learning Cycle CONTINUED**Compare and Contrast the Response in These Stories:**

Why are such starkly different stories recorded in Scripture? How do the stories of Rahab, Ruth, and the Pharisees reflect the options we have in the choices we can make for or against God?

“The advancing hosts of Israel found that knowledge of the mighty workings of the God of the Hebrews had gone before them, and that some among the heathen were learning that He alone was the true God. In wicked Jericho the testimony of a heathen woman was, ‘The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.’ Joshua 2:11. The knowledge of Jehovah that had thus come to her, proved her salvation.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 369.

Read Matthew 5:20, 12:38, 22:15, and Luke 7:30 together as a class. What do these passages tell you about the Pharisees’ choices in comparison with God’s purpose for them? How can our own life stories become testimonies of faith like those of Rahab and Ruth? What life decisions and practices can prevent us from becoming stumbling blocks to others like the Pharisees were?

List and discuss other stories in the Bible that have impacted the lives of your class members in terms of choosing to have faith in God.

**► STEP 3—Practice!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, **How can I practice the information I just learned?**

**Thought Questions:**

- 1 If your teacher in grade school gave you an English assignment to write a paragraph using the words *living* and *active*, what would you use as the subject of those two adjectives?
- 2 Hebrews 5:12 uses the words *living* and *active* to describe the Word of God. (Review Ps. 33:6, 9; 51:10; John 1:4, 12; 5:26; 1 Pet. 1:23.) In what way has the Bible been a motivating force in your life?

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## What Saith the Word of God?

Yesterday we looked at some Bible texts that offered principles on how the Lord would have us live. Today let's look at situations people might find themselves in and ask, What help does the Bible offer, if any, in these situations? Which texts could you use to give guidance in the following scenarios?

**A fellow co-worker**, in desperate straits, is stealing money from the place where you both work. What should you do? Ignore it? Turn the person in? What saith the Word of God?

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**A young woman**, unmarried, gets pregnant. She and her boyfriend are unable to take care of the child even if they were to marry, which she wants to do. He wants her to get an abortion. What saith the Word of God?

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**A beggar** stands on the sidewalk and holds out his hand for money. What saith the Word of God?

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**A person** you are witnessing to invites you over for a meal and places pork on the table before you. What saith the Word of God?

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**An elderly parent** is comatose, kept alive only through very expensive medical procedures that are draining the family income. Should she be kept alive as long as possible, or do you pull the plug? What saith the Word of God?

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How easy did you find these things to answer? Was the Bible very clear in providing answers for all the situations? Also, if you didn't have the Bible as your guide, how different might your answers have been? Be prepared to share your answers in class on Sabbath.

*Learning Cycle* CONTINUED**Application Questions:**

Has anyone said to you, “That really gets to the heart of the matter”? What did they mean? What does it take to get to the essence of a situation in a way that makes the next steps clear? Hebrews 4:12 (*NIV*) also describes God’s Word as “sharper than any double-edged sword.” Divide your class into groups of not more than three or four people. Have the groups read Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17; and Isaiah 30:21; 46:9, 10; 55:10, 11. Their task will be to use these passages as the basis of a skit about the Bible that could be used as a sermon illustration about the effectiveness of God’s Word.

**Consider This:** As you think about the potential benefit of allowing Scripture to guide in your life, why is it so difficult to schedule time for personal devotion?

**Witnessing**

Think of a time when a passage of Scripture impacted a decision you had to make or in some other way had a direct influence leading to a positive, unexpected outcome. Plan to share that experience with a friend or neighbor in a way that would cause them to look at the Bible as a resource for valuable information.

**► STEP 4—Apply!**

**Just for Teachers:** In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: **With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?**

First Peter 2:22-25, *NIV*, uses two thought-provoking phrases, “for you were like sheep going astray” (*vs.* 25) and “by His wounds you have been healed” (*vs.* 24). The Godhead created everything. When we turned our backs on our Creator, God sent His Son to pay the price to turn us around. Given this short synopsis of our sordid history, why do we turn our backs on the *owner’s manual* that makes possible an abundant future?

Schedule an hour during your most creative and productive time of the day. Take your Bible, a tablet of paper, and a pen or pencil to a quiet place. Ask God to help you visualize your normal weekly schedule to discern distractions that take you away from Him. Make two lists. First list those

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## Revival and Reformation

So far we've been looking at the power of God's Word to work in our individual lives. But what about us as a church? What should the Word of God do for us corporately?

**Read 2 Kings 22:8–23:25. What happened here? What role did the Bible have in the unfolding of this story?**

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There was a great reformation in Judah based on the Word of God. It was a corporate experience, something that impacted the entire nation.

“Thus Josiah, from his earliest manhood, had endeavored to take advantage of his position as king to exalt the principles of God's holy law. And now, while Shaphan the scribe was reading to him out of the book of the law, the king discerned in this volume a treasure of knowledge, a powerful ally, in the work of reform he so much desired to see wrought in the land. He resolved to walk in the light of its counsels, and also to do all in his power to acquaint his people with its teachings and to lead them, if possible, to cultivate reverence and love for the law of heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 398.

Another example can be found in the time of King Jehoshaphat, who sent Bible teachers to teach the law of God. “And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people” (2 Chron. 17:9). Although the Bible doesn't say which specific book or books were used, the point is that the Written Word, the Scriptures, was at the basis of this revival and reformation.

Jehoshaphat himself brought about the judicial reforms in harmony with the moral values expressed in the Bible. By studying 2 Chronicles 19:4-11, we can see the reformation being made in the judicial system of Jehoshaphat: “Consider carefully what you do” (2 Chron. 19:6, NIV), “judge carefully” (vs. 7, NIV), “no injustice or partiality or bribery” (vs. 7, NIV), “serve faithfully” (vs. 9, NIV), “warn them not to sin against the Lord” (vs. 10, NIV), and “act with courage” (vs. 11, NIV). All these principles are found in the Bible.

**How easily apostasy from God's Word can come to the church as a whole! What can we do to protect our church from making the same mistakes as ancient Israel did?**

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

distractions (example: TV, computer games) on the left side of the paper. On the right side of the paper next to the distractions, write a promise from the Bible that will help you rearrange your priorities to allow time in God's Word. Consider Lamentations 3:20-24. Keep this paper in the front of your Bible as a reminder of God's willingness to redirect your life into a more intentional relationship with Him.

**Consider This:** Identify a person in your class who would function as an accountability partner. Ask that person to help you be more intentional about spending time in God's Word and in prayer by calling you each week to ask two questions: "What did you learn about God from His Word this week?" and "With whom have you shared this new discovery?"

**Further Study:** Ellen G. White, “Jehoshaphat,” pp. 190–203; “Hezekiah,” pp. 331–339, in *Prophets and Kings*; “Revival and Reformation,” pp. 119–152, in *Selected Messages*, book 1.

“When the heart is brought into harmony with the word, a new life will spring up within you, a new light will shine upon every line of the word, and it will become the voice of God to your soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 183.

“In the Bible are found the only safe principles of action. It is a transcript of the will of God, an expression of divine wisdom. It opens to man’s understanding the great problems of life, and to all who heed its precepts it will prove an unerring guide, keeping them from wasting their lives in misdirected effort.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 506.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1** Knowing the importance of studying the Bible in order to bring change to our lives and to promote revival and reformation among God’s people, how can we renew our emphasis on Bible study? How can we bring the revival and reformation that we need as individuals and as a church?
- 2** As a class go over the questions presented in Tuesday’s and Wednesday’s lesson. How similar were your answers to the others? How different? What can we learn from one another’s responses?
- 3** Do you sense a need for the Word of God to have a greater impact in our lives, not just as individuals, but as a church? As a class, put together a midweek Bible study and invite as many members as possible.
- 4** Let members of the class give a testimony to the power of the Word and what it has done in each of their lives.
- 5** How can you help someone who seeks to have the Bible change their life and yet nothing seems to be happening? What counsel would you give?