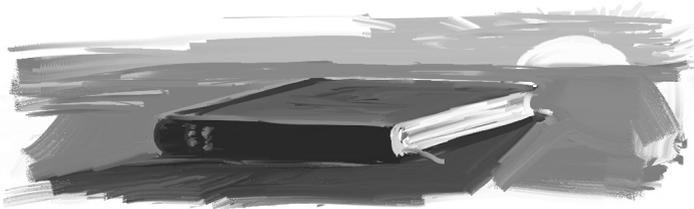


The Word *of* God Endures



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Mic. 6:8, John 3:14-17, 10:10, Rom. 4:21, Eph. 2:8, Phil. 4:7, 2 Pet. 3:9.*

Memory Text: “ ‘All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.’ ” (*1 Peter 1:24, 25, NIV*).

Key Thought: The relevance of the Bible is for us today.

Many ancient texts are still in existence, everything from the Egyptian Book of the Dead to the Ugaritic legend of Keret to the writings of Aristotle, Epictetus, and Julius Caesar. But none of these command the kind of influence, power, and authority that the Bible has had and still continues to have today.

Yes, the Word of God endures, even in a world of space shuttles, high-definition television, cell phones, and laptops. And that's because, regardless of the many advances in science and technology, and art and culture, we are still human beings struggling with the same issues that humans have struggled with from the beginning. Issues about life, death, happiness, health, morals, family—these remain essentially unchanged across time. And the Bible's answers to them remains essentially unchanged, as well.

This week, our final week in this quarter, we'll look more at why the Word of God endures.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 30.*

The Word of God Today

For many people, the Bible has no relevance now. Their reasons, though varied, can be boiled down to (1) the Book is so old; (2) the Book came from a relatively small group of people, the Jews; (3) the world is so different today than in the days that the Book was written that it can't possibly be relevant anymore.

How would you answer those objections?

The problem with those arguments can be boiled down to one thing: the premise upon which they are founded. If one believes that the Bible is merely a human book, a book composed only by humans expressing their own cultural ideas, then the argument would be valid.

However, as Christians, we reject that premise. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God; we believe that God, the Creator, has spoken to us through the Bible. We believe that He has revealed His will to all humanity through the Book. That it was written long ago or written by a small group of people or written in a world vastly different from today—all these things make no difference if we believe that God has spoken to us through the Bible.

Below are some texts that address issues found in the Bible. As you read these texts, ask yourself: (1) What issues are being addressed? (2) How relevant are those issues to us today?

Mic. 6:8

John 10:10

John 17:3

Acts 17:31

Phil. 4:7

Think about each of the topics listed above; if we didn't have the Bible, what answers would we have to these issues? Think how different your life would be were you left without the guidance, hope, and promises offered us in the Bible. Meanwhile, what can you do to help make what the Bible offers you more real for yourself?

I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

► **Key Text:** *Deuteronomy 6:1, 2*

► **Teach the Class to:**

Know: That the Word of the Lord is applicable in each generation.

Feel: Assured that God’s Word will never fail.

Do: What it takes to remember the promises of God and share them with others.

► **Lesson Outline:**

I. Salvation to All Generations (*Ps. 33:11*)

A Discuss ways in which God’s Word is still relevant for Christians today.

B Consider the news headlines of the past week. How can the Bible bring inner peace and the knowledge of the truth for the present time despite all the turmoil?

C God does not change. How can that truth make a difference in today’s world?

II. Precious Promises (*2 Pet. 1:4*)

A God has revealed His promises of salvation through His Word. Which promises mean the most to your class members, and why?

B Which promises can apply to specific areas of life?

III. Enduring Promises (*Isa. 40:8*)

A Why are all of God’s promises appropriate for all generations?

B What do you think God’s promises will mean to us once we are with Him in heaven?

► **Summary:** God’s Word is from everlasting to everlasting. It will endure through all generations. We can be assured that whatever the Lord has said in His Word, He is also able to accomplish.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate!**

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the

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God's Everlasting Plan

“But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations” (Ps. 33:11, NIV).

What important principle found in that text helps us understand the relevancy of the Bible today?

What are the purposes of God's heart? See *John 3:14-17, 1 Tim. 2:4, 2 Pet. 3:9.*

The Bible is relevant today because the plans of God are revealed in it; the plan of salvation has been made known to us through the Word, and that salvation is to be for all people in every generation. “Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails” (*Prov. 19:21, NIV*).

God is an eternal God (*Deut. 33:27*); He has an eternal kingdom (*Dan. 2:44*); His will for us as expressed in the Bible has not changed with the passing of time, for He never changes: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (*Heb. 13:8, NIV*). “ ‘You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end’ ” (*Heb. 1:12, NIV*).

Sure, times change, cultures change, attitudes change, and people change. Change is a fact of life; we see it all around us. But God Himself and His purposes for us remain the same.

Hence, it makes no difference that the Bible was written many centuries ago, or in a different culture; what matters is that God's love for us, and His desire for our salvation, remains the same, all through the ages.

This, then, is the secret of the Bible: It's relevant today because the God revealed in its pages is relevant today.

Think about all the changes that take place, either in your own life or in the world around you or both. Look at how much instability there is everywhere. Amid all this, what does it mean to you that the Lord's love for us and plan for our salvation never changes? What hope and assurance can you draw from this important truth?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

learners' experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?

As you study the last lesson on the Word of God, help your class members to focus on the eternal relevance of the Bible to one's life.

“My conscience is subject to the Word of God.” So said Martin Luther in his defense against accusations that he was preaching heresy and rebelling against the Catholic Church. His teachings were under attack. His life was at peril. But the great reformer found his faith and his future secure in God's Word. He not only stood firm in preaching the good news of God's salvation as found in the Bible but translated the Bible for the first time into German and made it available to common people. When people read the Word for themselves, they were amazed at its relevance for their lives. The world would never be the same again.

Consider This: Ask your class members, Of all the books written in the world, why is the Bible, whose first book was written some four thousand years ago, still relevant today?

► **STEP 2—Explore!**

Just for Teachers: This lesson is both a review of what we have studied thus far and a challenge to reaffirm the Bible's importance in our spiritual lives. Explore with the class members the question, Why is the Bible so enduring?

Bible Commentary

Life exists in relationship: parent and child, husband and wife, brother and sister, friend and friend, etc. Relationship is sustained through communication and conversation. How long would a relationship between husband and wife remain fruitful if they didn't talk or write to each other, and they hardly took time to be in each other's company?

Likewise, Christian life also demands that we maintain our relationship with God through faithful communication. We speak to God through prayer and praise, singing and worship. God speaks to us

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The Eternal Cross

Perhaps the most significant reason the Bible is so relevant today is that it is God's chosen means of revealing to us the most important truth we can ever know: Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the grave. As long as this great truth is taught to us, what does it matter how old the Bible is or who wrote it or under what circumstances? What matters is that through it God has revealed to us the great truth of salvation through Jesus, a truth that will endure through all eternity, long after this old earth has vanished and a new one created. Thus, as long as the Word of God reveals to us Christ and Him crucified, its relevance for our fallen world will never end.

Look up the following texts. What messages do they have for us? As you read them, ask yourself, "Were it not for the Bible, where else could I have learned the truths taught here?"

Isa. 65:17

Matt. 24:30

1 Cor. 6:3

2 Cor. 5:21

Eph. 2:8

1 Thess. 4:16

1 Tim. 1:15

Titus 1:2

Heb. 2:14

Rev. 20:14

Rev. 21:4

Going over the texts listed above, write out the scenario presented to us here. Look at what has been revealed to us in the Bible. These are the promises we have been given. Why should this mean so much to each of us? Share your response with your class on Sabbath.

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

through many ways, but the most immediate way is through the Scriptures. We hear His voice, we receive His counsel, we learn of His plan whenever we read the Bible. “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (*Ps. 119:18, NKJV*) is a prayer we can all pray.

I. What the Bible Is

Although the Bible’s 66 books were written by some forty men over a period of 16 centuries, it stakes its eternal worth on the basis that it is the revealed Word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,” says the apostle (*2 Tim. 3:16*). The Greek word for “inspiration” literally means “breathed-out”—as if to suggest that the Scriptures are God’s breath, and the Bible has the origin in the mind of God. “The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 126.

Consider these passages: *Matt. 4:1-11, Rom. 15:4, 2 Pet. 1:19-21. What do these passages say about the divine origin of the Bible?*

II. Why the Bible Endures and Remains Relevant

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (*Isa. 40:8, NKJV*). Peter agrees with Isaiah in affirming the relevance of Scripture (*1 Pet. 1:23-25*). Jesus adds, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (*Matt. 24:35, NKJV; see also Matt. 5:18*). It cannot be otherwise, because the Word is of God; as God is ever relevant and ever needed to make our life complete, so is His Word. Consider what the Bible means to our everyday living.

Without the Bible, our understanding of God would be incomplete and limited. “In the beginning God . . .” (*Gen. 1:1*). The Bible directs us to God as the ultimate reality, the cause and designer of all life. The Bible shows that His activities have structure, purpose, and order. In saying that “God is love” (*1 John 4:8*) and that “God so loved the world” (*John 3:16*), the Bible presents Him as intimate, warm, per-

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Unbroken Promises

“Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses” (1 Kings 8:56, NIV).

The Word of God exists forever because His promises never fail. Unlike human promises that are frequently broken, God always keeps His.

Read Romans 4:21. What hope is found in there for us? How have you experienced the reality of this text?

Read John 16:33. What special promise is here for all of us? How have you experienced the reality of that promise in your own life?

Read Matthew 28:20. How have you experienced the reality of this promise?

God also has given us His promises for everlasting life (*John 3:15*), answers to prayer (*Matt. 7:7*), unlimited blessings (*Mark 9:23*), removal of obstacles (*Luke 17:6*), spiritual fullness (*John 6:35*), salvation (*Rom. 1:16*), help with temptation (*Heb. 2:18*), and victory (*James 4:7*). “It is in these promises that Christ communicates to us His grace and power. They are leaves from the tree that is ‘for the healing of the nations.’ Rev. 22:2. Received, assimilated, they are to be the strength of the character, the inspiration and sustenance of the life. Nothing else can have such healing power.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 122.

What promises are you still waiting for to see fulfilled? How can you cling to the Lord in hope and trust in the meantime?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

sonal, and intensely interested in our life and in our salvation. Other religious and philosophic systems may say that God is some distant, impersonal, absolute force or idea or principle. But the Bible presents God as our Creator—One who loves, cares, and saves (*John 1:1-3, 14*).

Without the Bible, we would not know who we are. The Bible tells us that we are created by God in His own image (*Gen. 1:26, 27*). We are not a cosmic accident or some evolutionary arrangement. Rather, we are God’s “workmanship” (*Eph. 2:10*). Says the psalmist, “Know that the Lord, He is God, / It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; / We are His people and the sheep of His pasture” (*Ps. 100:3, NKJV*). Further, the Bible tells us that because we have been enslaved to sin (*Rom. 3:23*), we are subject to death (*Rom. 5:12, 6:23*), but that we are not left helpless. God, through His incarnate Son Jesus, has reconciled us to Himself (*2 Cor. 5:19*), redeemed us from the curse of sin (*Rom. 5:8, 9; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 2:7, 8*), made us His sons and daughters (*Rom. 8:14*), and given us hope for a place in His eternal kingdom (*Isa. 65:17, John 14:1-3, Rev. 21:1-4*). Thus the Bible provides enduring and satisfying answers to humanity’s persistent questions: Who am I? What am I doing here? Where am I going?

Without the Bible, we would not know about Jesus. The Bible is Jesus’ book. He authored it (*John 1:1-3, 14; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17*). He lived by it (*Matt. 4:1-11, 5:17*), and His life is a fulfillment of its promises (*John 5:46, 47; 7:16; 12:49, 50*). The gospel of salvation that He brought to this world, the Cross by which He made salvation possible, and the promise of eternal life He offers are known to us only through God’s Word (*Gen. 3:15, Isa. 53:4-6, John 20:31, Eph. 1:18-23, Phil. 2:6-8*).

Exchanging light for our darkness, strength for our weakness, courage for our faintheartedness, comfort for our sorrows, and hope for our despair, the Bible stands as God’s great guide to human beings.

Consider This: The theme of this quarter’s study was “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (*Ps. 119:105, NKJV*). Ask your class members to mention other areas of life, especially spiritual life, about which we would be ignorant if it were not for the Bible. Example: the Holy Spirit and its work, our spiritual gifts and responsibilities, etc.

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The Bible Endures . . .

Throughout history people have made predictions about the inevitable demise of the Bible, that it would soon fade into obscurity and be seen as nothing but an interesting historical relic of a bygone era, and on and on . . .

How wrong those predictions have been!

Read Matthew 24:35. How, in a sense, did these words of Jesus predict, many centuries ago, that the Bible would be around even to the last days?

Besides all the attempts to destroy the Bible through violence, the enemy of souls has tried to use science, philosophy, and higher criticism to eradicate the influence of the Bible. And yet, today, millions and millions of people believe in the Bible as God's Word and seek to claim its promises and live by its commands. Should this be a surprise? Of course not! After all, as we have been told: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (*Isa. 40:8*).

Meanwhile, according to the United Bible Societies: "At the start of the nineteenth century, Scriptures were available in just 68 languages. Today, Scriptures are available in no less than 2,303 languages, with the complete Bible having been translated into at least 405 languages, and the New Testament into some 1,034. In addition, portions of the Bible have been made available in some 864 languages." (*See www.biblesociety.org.*)

Read 1 Peter 1:24, 25. Consider that these words were written about nearly two thousand years ago. What message is here for us, today? How should these words help us trust in the Bible, in its promises and in its warnings?

The Bible endures, now and forever. The question is, What has it done in our lives? The Word can be on our shelves, on our desks, and even in our minds, but unless we allow it into our hearts, what good does it do? Look at your life. What does it say about how you relate to the enduring Word?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED► **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 Question:

With your class members, review the story of Jonah. Two times the word of the Lord came to him (*Jon. 1:1, 3:1*). Both times, the message was the same, but the results were different because Jonah's response was different. What does this show about the need to obey God's Word?

Application Questions:

1 Jesus charged the religious leaders, “ ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God’ ” (*Matt. 22:29, NKJV*). Ask your class: How do you relate the power of God and the Word of God? (*Refer to Ps. 33:5-9, Rom. 1:16.*)

2 The Bible is called the Word of God. Jesus is also known as the Word (*John 1:1-3*). In what sense can you apply the term *Word* to the Bible and to Jesus? What does this mean to your daily life?

Witnessing

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void” (*Isa. 55:11, NKJV*). Ask the class to compare this promise to the great commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 and to share how this promise is an encouragement to witnessing.

► **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?**

Encourage your class members to respond to the lessons learned during this quarter. What difference would it make in one's life?

The Word of God is compared to food (*see Deut. 8:3, Jer. 15:16, Matt. 4:4*). What are some of the things you need to do to eat the Word of God, digest it, and assimilate it in your system?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “The Scriptures a Safeguard,” pp. 593–602, in *The Great Controversy*.

“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

“The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father’s face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary’s cross. That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe.”—Page 651.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** As a class, go over your responses to Tuesday’s final question. What can you learn from each other?
- 2** As a church family, what areas do you need to apply with more rigor the principles found in the Bible? How can you as a class help the church realize where it’s falling short and then help it reach a higher standard?
- 3** Talk about the question of Bible promises that have yet to be fulfilled, or that look as if they can’t be fulfilled, at least as we would like. For example: Someone prayed for a sick friend or spouse or child who didn’t recover. How do we help each other grapple with these situations in light of the Word of God and the promises that we have in it?