

The Nature of the Bible

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Scripture to Memorize

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand basic concepts related to the nature of the Bible as the living and authoritative Word of God.

Real-Life Scenario

It's in the Book

A young man approached a pastor to challenge him about the Bible. The young man snapped, “How can an old, dusty book like the Bible be relevant for me today?” The pastor responded, “See that old sun up there? It’s very old, but you still feel its warmth and see its light. So it is with the Bible. It may be old, but God’s Word still speaks to us today.”

Why do Christians believe the Bible to be the Word of God? And if it is the Word of God, how is it relevant for us today?

The Living and Active Word of God Read Hebrew 4:12–13 out loud.

Studying the Passage, v. 12 Verse 12. the word of God. Note the origin of the Bible. The writer of Hebrews emphasized that the Bible is not merely the words of men but the word that came forth from God. God is the ultimate Author of Scripture. He used men to communicate His Word. This fact makes the Bible unique and special. **living and active.** God’s Word is not like any other book. It is “living and active” because the Holy Spirit speaks and works through it. No other book can claim this important truth.

Verse 12. sharper than any two-edged sword. Scripture is compared to a sharp sword, similar to a surgeon’s knife. **piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit . . . joints and marrow.** Unlike the surgeon’s knife, the Word of God penetrates spiritually and not merely physically. The phrase “joints and marrow” was given to illustrate the spiritual division of “soul and spirit.” God’s Word is so sharp and exact that it divides between soul and spirit, just as a sharp sword can physically cut clean through a bone’s joint, revealing the marrow within it.

Verse 12. able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The Word of God penetrates our hearts and reveals what is there. The Holy Spirit speaks to us not in an audible voice, but through His Word as He reveals what we need to change in order to grow. In other words, the Bible reads us as we read it.

Discussion Question

When has God used Scripture to accomplish in your life what He intended to—by convicting you, encouraging you, or giving you direction you needed?

Studying the Passage, Hebrews 4:13 Verse 13. there is no creature hidden from His sight. Because God is omniscient (“all knowing”), omnipresent (“everywhere present”), and omnipotent (“all powerful”), nothing escapes His gaze. **all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.** Because of God’s perfect knowledge of all things, in all places, and at all times, we stand naked before the God who is our Judge.

Notice the close connection between God's Word that is "able to judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (v. 12) and the God who will judge all people "with whom we have to do" (v. 13). Though this should strike fear into our hearts, the comforting truth is that even though God knows all our sinful thoughts and deeds even better than we do, He loves and forgives us through Jesus Christ.

The Authority of the Bible Read Deuteronomy 18:18–21 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 18–19 Verse 18. I will raise up a prophet. God promised Israel through His servant Moses that He would raise up prophets to be His mouthpieces. These prophets would be God's chosen mediators (or "go-betweens") who would speak His Word directly to His people. **I will put My words in his mouth.** God said He would place His words into the mouths of His prophets. This is significant because the words of the prophets are God's, not theirs. **he shall speak to them all that I command him.** The prophet was to speak everything God commanded him to speak. He was not to add or take away from the divine message.

Verse. 19. whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name. Again, notice that God equates the words being spoken by the prophets as being "My words" because the prophets speak on God's behalf. **I Myself will require it of him.** God's Word, spoken or written by the prophets, has authority because it originates with God Himself. All are held responsible and accountable to His Word.

Discussion Questions

1. How are Hebrews 4:12–13 and Deuteronomy 18:18–19 related to each other with regard to the authority of God's Word?
2. Does authority also imply responsibility? God has spoken through His Word, and His Word is "living and active" today. Therefore, do we as His people need to obey His Word? Explain how this is true.
3. From your knowledge of the Bible, what are some things God commands us to do today?
4. How do we understand commands that don't seem to apply anymore?

At Home: Nail It Down

Hebrews 4:12–13 declares that the Word of God is "living and active." Therefore, the Bible is not simply a static book with black words written on a white page. It is alive because God's Holy Spirit works in and through the Word that He inspired in order to accomplish what He commanded it to do. According to Isaiah 55:9–11, God's Word does not return to Him empty like human words, but His Word always fulfills whatever task He intends for it. You will recall from Hebrews 4:12–13 some of the following ways the Spirit uses His Word in our lives:

1. His Word penetrates to the core of our being, "dividing soul and spirit."
2. His Word judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts.
3. The Holy Spirit uncovers and lays bare our lives before Him.
4. To Him we must give account of all the things we have done and thought, based on what He has revealed in and through His Word. These are important truths because the Bible is not meant to be read for the sake of knowledge alone. The Bible is read so we might become more like Jesus every day. Our thoughts and our deeds will reflect the thoughts and deeds of our King.

Deuteronomy 18:18–19 declares that the words God gave to His prophets were authoritative and binding. Why? Because whatever the prophets spoke originated from God, and the people were to treat them as if they had come out of the mouth of God. In verse 19, God said He would punish every person who did not obey the Word that was spoken through His prophets. This principle explicitly reveals the awesome authority and weight the words of Scripture possess. The living and active Word is an authoritative Word. For the glory of King Jesus and for the coming of His kingdom on earth, that Word must be obeyed and given full control of our lives. Meditate on this awesome truth.