

Sharing *the* Word



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Ps. 119:105, Jer. 23:29, Heb. 1:1–3, 2 Tim. 3:14–17, 1 John 1:7–9, Eccles. 3:1, 2 Tim. 4:2.*

Memory Text: “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (*Isaiah 55:11, NKJV*).

When we witness, we speak of Jesus. But what would we know about Jesus without the Bible? In fact, how much would we know about the great controversy, the love of God, and the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, and return of our Lord if we did not have the Scriptures?

Although nature reveals the majesty and power of God, it doesn’t reveal the plan of salvation. Jesus, through the Person of the Holy Spirit, is the “true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (*John 1:9, NKJV*). Still, without the Word of God to explain divine truth fully, the Holy Spirit’s revelation to our hearts is limited. The Written Word of God is the clearest and fullest revelation of Jesus, the Living Word.

Although the religious leaders studied the Word of God, many missed its primary message. Jesus said: “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (*John 5:39, NKJV*). Rightly understood, every teaching of the Bible reflects the beauty of Jesus’ character. When we share the Word of God, our primary goal is not to prove that we are right and that the other person is wrong; it is to reveal Jesus in each facet of the truth we share.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 15.

Symbols of God's Word

Read Psalm 119:105, Jeremiah 23:29, Luke 8:11, and Matthew 4:4. What five symbols are used to describe the Word of God in these passages? Why do you think these five symbols were chosen to represent the Word of God?

The varied symbols used in these passages describe some of the primary functions of the Word of God. When we share the Scriptures with others, it is like a light that illuminates life. Jesus, “the light of the world,” breaks through the darkness of their misunderstanding about who God is and the nature of His character. Minds darkened with a misunderstanding of God are illuminated by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.

According to Jeremiah, the Word of God is like a fire and a hammer. It consumes the dross of sin in our lives and breaks our hard hearts. When we help people see in Scripture the glory of Jesus, their hard hearts are broken, and the fire of His love consumes the dross of selfishness, greed, lust, and self-centeredness.

The Word of God also is likened to seed. The key characteristic of seed is that it is life-giving. Seed takes time to grow. Not all seeds germinate at the same time. Not all plants grow at the same rate. But under the right conditions, the life in the seed bursts forth through the soil into new life. When we plant the seed of the Word of God in the hearts and minds of others, we will not always see immediate results; but silently the seed is growing, and in God's own time, if they respond to the Holy Spirit's promptings, it will produce a harvest for God's kingdom.

Jesus likens His Word to nourishing bread. As many of us know, there are few things as satisfying as a good loaf of bread. The Word of God satisfies the hunger of the soul and nourishes our inner spiritual longings. As you share the promises of the Word with others and help them discover that Jesus is the Word, their lives will be transformed by His goodness, charmed by His love, amazed at His grace, and satisfied in His presence.

Again, think about the truths that we know only from the Bible. What should this tell us about how much we should treasure what it teaches us?

The Creative Power of God's Word

Compare Hebrews 1:1–3; Hebrews 4:12; and Psalm 33:6, 9. What do these passages tell us about the power of the Word of God?

The Word of God is the Living Word. It carries with it the power to accomplish the things that it declares. Human words can speak of what is, but God speaks of things that are not yet done and then creates them by the power of His Word. The Word of God is a creative Word. The audible word that proceeds from His mouth has the power to create everything that it proclaims.

In the Creation story of Genesis 1, the expression “God said” is used repeatedly (*Gen. 1:3, 6, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29*). God’s declarative words had such power that when He spoke, dry land appeared, plants sprouted, flowers blossomed, fruit trees flourished, and animals sprang forth.

There is a fascinating Hebrew word used in Genesis 1 for the creative activity of God. It is the word *bara*. In this particular form, it is used of God’s activity to create something from nothing. The verb is used only when God is the subject. That is, God alone can *bara*, and He does so through the power of His spoken word.

God not only created this world through the power of His word, but He also sustains and upholds it through His word. The same power that is in the spoken word of God is in the Written Word of God. The same Holy Spirit that was active in Creation was active in inspiring Scripture. He is present when we read the Bible or share it with others. There is life-giving, life-changing, creative power in the Word of God. “The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 126.

As we personally grasp the promises found in the Word of God, our lives are changed, and as we help others to grasp these amazing promises, the Holy Spirit will change their lives too.

Imagine: *God spoke and it was.* How can we grasp what this means? What does this amazing reality tell us about His power? Why should this truth about God’s creative power be comforting to us?

The Benefits of Studying God’s Word

There are multiple benefits to studying the Word of God. The apostle Peter tells us that through the promises of Scripture we become “partakers of the divine nature” (*2 Pet. 1:4*). James speaks of the “implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (*James 1:21, NKJV*). Paul adds that “the word of His grace . . . is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (*Acts 20:32, NKJV*). The Bible has a redemptive purpose. Seeing Jesus in all of Scripture, we are changed. By beholding Him in His Word, we become like Him (*2 Cor. 3:18*). “It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 555.

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17 and John 17:14–17. What additional benefits come from studying the Word of God?

Writing to his young companion Timothy, the apostle Paul urges him to be faithful to Scripture and shares the benefits of studying the inspired Word. According to Paul, the Bible is “profitable for doctrine.” It reveals truth and exposes error. It outlines God’s plan for the human race. It reproves our sins, corrects our erroneous thinking, and instructs us in righteousness. The Scriptures reveal the righteousness of Christ. They lead us from the folly of our own sinfulness to the beauty of His righteousness. When we see Jesus’ unselfish love in contrast to our self-centeredness, we stand amazed. As we behold in Scripture the depth of His compassion and caring, our lives are changed. When we share His Word with others, they, too, are radically transformed. Beholding Jesus in His Word, we become more like Him. Witnessing is not about sharing what we think or even what we believe. It is all about sharing the eternal truths found in the Word of God. When the Word of God has incredibly blessed our lives, we have the credibility to tell others how it can bless their lives too.

Think about a time of difficulty that you personally faced and how the Word of God proved to be a strength to you. What did you learn from that experience?

Applying God's Word

Someone has counted more than three thousand promises in the Word of God. Each of these promises comes from the heart of a loving God who “is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (*Eph. 3:20, NKJV*). The promises of God are commitments that He makes to each one of us. As we claim these promises by faith and teach other people to claim them, the blessings of heaven flow into our lives. The apostle Paul emphasizes this divine reality in Romans 8: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (*Rom. 8:32, NKJV*). The apostle Peter clarifies this promise, declaring that “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (*2 Pet. 1:3, NKJV*). Through Christ’s death on the cross, and His victory over Satan and the principalities and powers of hell, He has provided everything necessary for us to live a godly, spiritual life. He also promises to provide for our basic physical needs.

Compare 1 John 1:7–9 and Philippians 4:13, 19. Although these promises are quite different, what do they teach us about the character of God? How have these promises impacted your life?

The promises that we have read in these passages each speak of something different, but the picture of God they give us is very similar. They reveal a God of loving forgiveness, infinite power, and full of care for our basic needs. They give us the assurance that God cares deeply for us.

Read Hebrews 3:19, Hebrews 4:1–3, and Matthew 13:58. What do these verses tell us about the need for faith?

There are so many wonderful promises of God in the Bible, and when by faith we claim the promises of the Word of God and believe them because Christ has promised, the blessings of those promises become ours. It is a lack of faith in God’s ability to do what He has promised in His Word that limits the fulfillment of God’s promises in our lives. Pray that God will lead you this week to someone who needs the hopeful promises found in the Word of God.

Sharing the Word

Good news is for sharing. Think about the times in your life that you have been delighted with good news. It may have been the day you were engaged to be married, the birth of a child, a new job, or the purchase of a new car or home. You were so excited that you could not wait to share it.

It is wonderful to share our joy with others, but the best news in the entire universe is the story of Jesus. When we discover new insights in His Word about the salvation that there is in Christ, our hearts overflow with joy, and we long to tell someone else. When the religious authorities tried to stop the preaching of the apostles, Peter declared, “ ‘For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard’ ” (*Acts 4:20*).

“No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus; the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. If we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and are filled with the joy of His indwelling Spirit, we shall not be able to hold our peace.” —Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 78.

In Romans 1:14–16, Paul wrote: “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

The apostle Paul never tired of telling his conversion story. His heart overflowed with joy in Jesus. For him, good news was for sharing, and he could not be quiet.

What vital principles about sharing the Word of God do Isaiah 50:4, Ecclesiastes 3:1, and 2 Timothy 4:2 give us?

As we surrender our lives to Christ and His service, He will open doors of opportunity for us to “speak a word in season,” or at the right time to those whose hearts He has opened. In all of our witnessing, we must keep three biblical principles in mind: *what we say*, *how we say it*, and *when we say it*.

Who are some people with whom you are in contact, and how can you be a better witness to them?

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “A Knowledge of God,” pp. 87–91, in *Steps to Christ*; “Bible Readings With Families,” pp. 192, 193, in *Gospel Workers*; and “Bible Work Techniques,” pp. 481–486, in *Evangelism*.

God is working on hearts all around us. If we have the spiritual discernment to see where God already is working, we will regularly observe opportunities to share His Word with others. As God prepares the soil of the heart, we have the opportunity to sow the seed of the gospel. The Holy Spirit prepared the hearts of Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the woman with the issue of blood, the thief on the cross, the Roman centurion, and many others to receive His Word before Jesus ever met them. Through the circumstances of their lives and the impressions of the Holy Spirit, they were prepared to receive Christ’s message.

We may have a natural hesitancy to ask people if we can pray with them, share a Bible promise, or give them a piece of literature. More often than not, when we feel impressed to share our faith with someone else, it is because the Holy Spirit who has impressed us already has impressed that person to receive our witness.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 If someone should come to you feeling terribly guilty over something and in need of forgiveness from God, what counsel would you give, and what Bible texts would you share? What has been your own experience with guilt and the power of God’s forgiveness in your own life?
- 2 Sometimes God brings people into our lives because He longs for them to know His truth. How can we be sensitive to God’s leading?
- 3 Dwell more on the power of God and the Word of God as revealed in the Creation story and in creation itself. We can barely grasp the concept of the universe itself because it is so big and so vast. *To think that the God who created it must be even greater than what He created.* How can we draw comfort from knowing that the God we serve is so powerful? And not only is He powerful, but He also loves us. What great hope can we take from knowing these things about God? How can this knowledge help us be better witnesses to others about Him?

New Heart for Alex

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Alex was diagnosed with congenital heart disease, or a hole in the heart, as a baby in Finland. Doctors hoped that the heart would heal itself, but it didn't. So when he was eight, doctors performed open-heart surgery. Afterward, Mother looked at the small boy lying in the recovery ward and thought, *For some reason God allowed this to happen. He has a purpose for our lives.*

Mother wrote about the experience on Facebook. Many Finns began to follow her Facebook page, allowing her to speak about God with people who otherwise would not listen. Alex was becoming a missionary.

The boy recuperated quickly from the operation and returned home after only five days. It was a miracle. The devil had tried to snatch away Alex, but Jesus had given him a new heart.

The summer, however, turned out to be hot. One evening, Alex complained about a pain in his chest. At the hospital, doctors saw that his heart had swelled to double its normal size (see photo below). Alex was rushed into emergency surgery. Hours later, doctors called the operation a success. The devil had tried to snatch away Alex, but Jesus had given him a new heart.

Alex acted unusual when he returned home. Usually kind and quiet, he became aggressive and loud, especially toward Father. One evening, Alex was particularly angry, yelling unkind words and tossing his eyeglasses on the floor.

"Why are you acting this way?" Father asked, placing a hand on Alex's head to pray. This was something Father had done many times to pray.

But this time Alex refused prayer. "Take your hand away!" he yelled.

He turned to Father with a look of pure hatred in his eyes. Father had never seen such an expression on his face before. He went to the kitchen, where Mother was preparing supper.

"This is not normal," he said. "This is not our Alex. We need to pray."

Father and Mother walked over to Alex. Without saying a word, Father placed a hand on Alex's head. Mother placed her hand on the boy's forehead.

"In the name of Jesus, we command you, evil spirit, to leave Alex," Father said. "We have given Alex to God, and you have no place in his life."

After the prayer, Alex returned to his normal self. He smiled and laughed like nothing had happened.



The devil had tried to snatch away Alex, but Jesus had given him a new heart. Mother hopes that Alex grows up to have a heart for mission and that his story will change hearts.

"I have given his life to God," Mother said. "We feel that Alex has a special relationship with God. His life has been difficult, but we believe that God will do something wonderful with him."

Key Text: *2 Timothy 3:14–17*

Study Focus: *Psalm 119:105, Luke 8:11, Mark 4:26–29, Hebrews 4:12, Hebrews 3:19, Hebrews 4:1, Isaiah 50:4.*

Part I: Overview

The inspired Word of God contains life-giving principles. When the Christ-centered teachings of Scripture are accepted by faith, our lives are transformed. The creative power of the Word of God illuminates our darkness. It changes us. Jesus is the great Miracle Worker. He is the Life Changer. He is at the center of all scriptural teaching, as the apostle Paul states so clearly, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (*2 Cor. 5:17, NKJV*). Jesus adds, “ ‘The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life’ ” (*John 6:63, NKJV*).

The Bible is not merely a to-do manual on how to construct a Christian life. It is the Living Word of God that transforms our lives. In this week’s study, we will explore the transforming power of God’s Word. We will study symbols of the Word such as light, fire, a hammer, seed, and bread. These varied images have one thing in common. They reveal the power of God’s Word to change our lives. When you share the Word of God with the people in your sphere of influence, it is like light that guides them through the dark valleys of their lives. It is like a fire that burns within their soul. It is like a hammer that breaks their hard hearts. It is like seed that silently grows and produces the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. It is like bread that nourishes their spiritual hunger. In this week’s lesson, we will discover the transforming power of God’s Word.

Part II: Commentary

The psalmist David declares, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (*Ps. 119:105, NKJV*). He also adds, “The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple” (*Ps. 119:130, NKJV*). Light always involves the removal of darkness. If you were on a dark path at night without a light, you might easily veer off the path. It would not be uncommon to stumble and fall into a deep ravine without a light. A powerful flashlight would make all the difference. The Word of God lights the pathway of the followers of Christ. It guides us home. Jesus is the “light of the world” (*John 8:12, NKJV*), who lights up our darkness

through His Word. When we share the Word of God with others, it dispels the darkness in which Satan has enshrouded their lives and lightens their pathway to the kingdom of God.

In Jeremiah 23:29, God's Word is compared to both fire and a hammer. It is compared to fire because it consumes. When we share the Word of God with others, the fire of God's Word burns within their soul, consuming error. God's Word also is like a hammer. The term "hammer" may seem like an unusual term to use to describe the Bible. Hammers nail things together. They also smash things. The hammer of God's Word smashes hard hearts to pieces. Think of the dramatic changes that took place in the lives of the demoniacs, the Roman centurion, the thief on the cross, and a host of others throughout the New Testament. The Word of God pounded away at their hard hearts until they were broken by the hammer of love.

In one of the more common symbols in Scripture, the Bible is compared to "seed." In Luke 8:11, Jesus states, " 'The seed is the word of God.' " There is life in a tiny seed. When the seed of God's Word is planted in the soil of the mind, it produces an abundant harvest in the life. Jesus often used the symbolism of seed to describe the growth of His kingdom. The Word of God scattered like seed throughout the world would produce a bountiful harvest. "And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how' " (*Mark 4:26, 27, NKJV*). Bible commentator Matthew Henry, commenting on this passage, makes this insightful statement: "It [the seed] will come up though it seem lost and buried under the clods, it will find or make its way through them. The seed cast into the ground will spring [forth]. Let but the word of Christ have the place it ought to have in a soul and it will show itself, as the wisdom from above doth in a good conversation."—*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 5, p. 383. Matthew Henry's point is clear. The Word of God may seem buried someplace within the mind. It may seem to be covered under the clods of sin, but if it is cherished, it will spring forth into new life. It will radically change our attitudes, our conversation, our habits, and our lifestyle. Seed is life-giving.

The Bible also uses the term *bread* to describe the Word of God. Jesus said, " 'I am the bread of life' " (*John 6:35*). He adds, " 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God' " (*Matt. 4:4, NKJV*).

Bread was the staff of life throughout the ancient world and one of our planet's basic foods. It is an essential dietary item. An individual can survive a long time on only bread and water. By using the illustration of bread, Jesus is declaring that He is essential for life.

Following the miracle of the feeding of five thousand in His well-known, bread-of-life sermon, Jesus declares, " 'Whoever eats My flesh

and drinks My blood has eternal life' ” (*John 6:54, NKJV*). This seems like a very strange statement. What could Jesus possibly be talking about? Obviously, He was not talking about literally eating His flesh and drinking His blood. By feasting on His Word, His teachings become part of our lives. This is what Jeremiah meant when he joyfully declared, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts” (*Jer. 15:16, NKJV*).

There is nothing as satisfying as the discovery of the truth about Jesus in every teaching of Scripture. Encourage your class to share the wonderful truths of Jesus and the encouraging promises of His Word with others around them.

Illustration

When people are going through a transition in their lives, they are more likely to be open to the gospel. They may be facing health challenges, a job crisis, a relationship issue, or some other difficulty in their lives. Ask God to help you to be sensitive to people around you and give you the wisdom to discern their openness to the Word of God.

Jan had just moved to a new city. Her husband died, and she was becoming disillusioned with her faith. A Bible study interest card arrived at her door. Although she might not have been interested in an in-depth study of God’s Word a year or so before the card arrived, she was going through a transition in her life at that moment and was looking for something more. She had a hidden hunger that could not be satisfied with a superficial faith. She responded to the mailing, sent in the Bible study interest card, studied the Bible lessons, and today is rejoicing in the truth of God’s Word.

Additional Commentary

The amazing thing about God’s Word is that it carries with it the power to accomplish what it declares. God’s Word is a living Word. Other books may be inspiring, but the Bible is inspired and contains the power of the Life-Giver. It does not merely contain truth; it is truth in its very essence. The living truths of the Bible not only declare what is so, but they also accomplish what they declare in the lives of those who believe. (*See Heb. 3:19 and Heb. 4:12.*)

Throughout Scripture, passages like 2 Peter 1:4, James 1:21, and Acts 20:32 assure us that through the Word of God we become “partakers of the divine nature,” save our souls through “the implanted word” (*NKJV*), and will receive “an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” When

by faith we accept the Word of God as the living Word of Christ, everything Jesus has promised us becomes ours. His Word is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Your primary goal as the teacher in this class is to share with class members an exalted view of the inspired Word of God and encourage them to share the promises and teachings of the Word with others. Our role is not to convert people. That’s the Holy Spirit’s role. Our role is to share the life-changing teachings of God’s Word and allow the Holy Spirit to deeply impress these teachings on the lives of others.

Part III: Life Application

The promises of God’s Word are like traveler’s checks. At times when people go on vacation to a foreign country and do not want to risk taking cash, they purchase traveler’s checks from the bank. These traveler’s checks are risk-free. If you lose one or they are stolen, they are backed up by the bank. When you purchase the checks, you sign them; and then when you cash them you sign them again. God’s promises are backed up by all of His riches in glory. Heaven’s exhaustless riches never run out. Best of all, their benefits already have been purchased for us on the cross. All we do is accept the provisions of His promises by faith, and even faith itself is a gift He gives us. This week invite your class to do the following:

1. **Memorize the following five promises of God’s Word: 1 John 1:9; 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 4:13; Phil. 4:19; 1 John 5:17, 18.**
2. **Write each promise on an index card and read them over each day.**
3. **Ask God to bring someone into your life to share one of these promises with. Pray for spiritual discernment to recognize where God already is working on someone’s heart.**
4. **Be ready to share in next week’s class how God has used you this week.**

Notes
