

III. THE WORD OF GOD

God Reveals His Thoughts

So far we have ascertained a handful of truths about the nature, character, and essence of who God is. We have seen that He is eternal, holy, self-existent, all-powerful, and beyond total comprehension. We saw that the reality of seeking God is futile unless God Himself *allows* Himself to “be found.” If this is true, and it most certainly is, how can we as finite people even *begin* to understand who this Trinitarian God is? Who is the Father, why is there a Son, what on earth is a ‘Holy Spirit,’ and what do They want with me? What are His thoughts, plans, desires, methods, ways, and will? Can I know these things, or am I just stuck in the dark hoping to find the way and hoping He won’t be too strict with me?

How Can We Know God?

Incredibly, this infinite God has desired to be known by His finite creation. From day one (or rather, from Day 6), He has chosen to have a personal relationship with us as a loving God and Father. Yet, as we will see in the coming chapters, sin created a separation, and God was “forced” to separate Himself from us and our sin, because of His holiness and for our own good (because His holiness would consume us in our sin). But this didn’t stop Him from acting upon His desires of making us His people and becoming our God. But how can we know what God’s desires really are? How can we know the mind of God?

We can’t even read each other’s minds, much less what is in the mind of God.

-John Stott

This statement by Stott is a profound one. I have been married to my wife since August 18, 2001. We live together, eat meals together, plan our life together, raise kids together, and take vacations together. Yet in all that time, we have never been able to read each other’s minds. I’m still not totally sure if she wants me to take the trash out when it gets full, and I’m not sure if she wants me to take it to the curb every Tuesday (or is it Wednesday?). If this is the case, and it seems like it should be such an easy case, then it must be asked again, how could we ever expect to know the mind of God?

As Stott has observed, our minds, and even more so the mind of God, can only be known when they are revealed to us. It is for this reason that God has chosen, by His love, grace, and mercy, to give us very special insight (or as we covered in the first chapter, one instance of *special revelation*⁹¹): His declared Word.

The Logos of God

Here is where we start finding out exactly how “special” this revelation of God’s Word is. In the Greek, the word used for “word” is the word *logos*. ♣ Logos is very rich word, as it goes beyond the typical definition of what we think of as a “word,” which is just a series of letters that spell something out. *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary* defines logos this way:

“the expression of thought’ – not the mere name of an object.”

It goes on to say that it is the embodying of a conception or idea, and states that when used specifically as “the Word [Logos] of the Lord,” it is in essence saying “the revealed will [mind, thoughts, desires] of God.”

So when we speak of God’s “Word,” we are not just speaking of mere words that come out of His mouth, but we should think of them as His will, desires, thoughts, plans, and mind being *revealed* as His Word, for the express purpose that *we could know Him!*

Thankfully, we *can* know the mind and desires of God (at least as much as He sees that we *need* to know), because *He has chosen* to reveal it to us, and He has done this by simply speaking to us. God has put His plans, ways, will, and desires into the form of His very own spoken Word. And He has revealed His Word so that we can know Him. He *wants* to be known, He *wants* to be sought, He *wants* to be found by us, His beloved children whom He has chosen! He

⁹¹ See pg. 5 of this study,

wants us to encounter Him, experience Him, enjoy Him, and worship Him! Consider this often quoted and concise statement from the Westminster Confession of Faith:

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

If you have ever wondered what your purpose is, what “God’s will for your life is,” or what the meaning of life is, *this is it!* “To glorify God and *enjoy Him forever!*” But guess what? *We cannot enjoy God if we don’t know anything about Him!* Therefore, the only way we can arrive at our “chief end” is by getting to know Him, and the good news is that we *can* do this because of His revealed Word! We can know the mind, heart, will, and desires of the one true and living God! This is so incredible, and something we typically take for granted far too often.

Here are a few ways God has revealed His Word to us:

- **Declarations:** these are the words that God spoke throughout the history of creation. When He created the heavens He spoke them into existence.⁹² We may not know exactly what all these words were (outside of, of course “let there be light,” etc.), but we know that He spoke them.
- **Scripture:** God also divinely revealed His Word to various men and women to write it down for us as His written Word. He allowed us to have His plan, purpose, desires, mind, and will take shape into human language so that we can know Him.
- **Jesus Christ:** God also divinely revealed His Logos (mind, will, desire, plan, and purpose) in Human form as Jesus Christ. This is a complex one to wrap our brains around, but as we will see in this and in the coming chapters, Jesus is the very thoughts, mind, and plan of God manifest into flesh and blood. Explicitly in **John 1.1-5, 14** and **Revelation 13.19**, the Word says, respectively, that “the Word was with God and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh,” and that “His Name [speaking of Jesus’ Name] is the Word of God.” We will learn more on this later, but we should note that the Man who is Jesus is the physical, manifestation of God’s Logos.

All of these manifestations of God’s Word are completely and equally God’s Word. As we will see, God’s Word is perfect, and it is complete. Therefore, for us to declare that any answer to prayer or decision or direction in life that we choose to take is truly God’s will in our life, we have to know that all these *must also agree with each other*, as there can be no contradiction.

⁹² Genesis 1.3, 24 // Psalm 33.6 // Hebrews 1.3

Who Wrote It?

That said, here are a few facts of how God used man to record His Word.

The bible was written...

- as a compilation of 66 books. 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.
- over a 1500 year span (from 1400 BC to 100 AD)
- over 40 generations
- over 40 authors from many walks of life (kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, scholars)
- in different places (wilderness, dungeon, palaces)
- at different times and moods (times of war, peace, slavery, and in tremendous joy, despair, etc)
- on three continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe)
- in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek)

How Reliable is It?

There is much evidence to be given to the “proof” that the Scriptures are reliable: facts of its continuity of theme and story despite multiple human scribes over thousands of years, its prophetic utterances coming to pass⁹³, its mention of certain scientific truths unknown at the time but validated in relatively recent times,⁹⁴ and the comparison of attention to detail in its preservation that far surpasses other ancient writings. Take a look at this short list.

Preservation:

- There are more than 5,600 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, over 10,000 in Latin and over 9,300 other early versions totaling 19,000+ manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today, ranking it first in manuscript evidence.
- Second place goes to *The Iliad*, by Homer with only 643 surviving manuscripts.⁹⁵
- The copy procedure has proven impeccable proof of preservation. When the two copies of **Isaiah** were discovered in the Qumran Cave within the Dead Sea Scrolls, even though they were 1,000 years older than the previously known oldest Isaiah manuscript, it was word for word in more than 95% of the writing. The questionable 5% “consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling. They do not affect the message of revelation in the slightest.”⁹⁶
- The time span between the original and a manuscript often has a bearing on how accurate the text can be expected to be accurate (when an original isn’t available). Once again, Homer’s *Iliad* has the shortest time span at 500 years (and once again, 643 copies) and those manuscripts are 95% accurate. Not too bad.⁹⁷
- The Greek New Testament copies (of which, again, there are 5,600, nine times more than *Iliad*) come as close as 100 years from the originals, and boast a 99.5% accuracy!⁹⁸
- For the record, Aristotle has a 1400 year span and 20 copies; Caesar has a 1000 year span and only 10 copies; Plato has a 1200 year span and only 7 copies.⁹⁹

In all this, we must remind ourselves that we have a faithful, powerful God who can, will, and has preserved His Word throughout the ages, even by using the agent of sinful humanity. Yet the fact of the matter is that He isn’t simply using corrupted, lying, deceitful sinners to guard the truth, but He is entrusting regenerated, new creations that are being led and convicted by the Holy Spirit!

⁹³ Such as some of the prophecies about Jesus: Isaiah 7.14 and Matthew 1.18-23, Micah 5.2 and Luke 2.1-7, Isaiah 50.6 and Matthew 26.67, etc.

⁹⁴ Some theologians would purport that verses like Psalm 19.6, Ecclesiastes 1.6 speak of jet streams; that Psalm 135.7, Jeremiah 10.13, Job 36.27-29, and Ecclesiastes 1.7 speak of hydro-atmospheric properties, and that Isaiah 55.8-11 speaks of evaporation as it mentions that water and snow fall from heaven, water the earth, and then return back to the heavens (as it relates to God’s Word coming to us, doing what it intends, and then returning to God); that Isaiah 4.22 speaks of a round earth; Deuteronomic Code speaks well of modernly proven sanitation, such as in Deuteronomy 23.12, 13, Leviticus 13.45, 46, and Numbers 19.11-19; that Leviticus 19.19 and Deuteronomy 22.9 has proven agricultural practices; that the Earth is suspended somehow in Job 26.7; that Jeremiah 31.35, 36 possibly speaks of the moon affecting the waves.

⁹⁵ <http://carm.org/manuscript-evidence>

⁹⁶ www.evidencetobelieve.net/reliability_of_the_bible.htm

⁹⁷ <http://carm.org/manuscript-evidence>

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

☪ The Bible: What is It? ☪

The Scriptures (which means “writings”) are different than any other writing, document, book, philosophy, or social or moral code that we’ve ever had in human history. Let’s look at one of the most profound verses about the characteristics of the Scriptures.

2 Timothy 3.16, 17

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Let’s explore a few key things about the Word which will give us some direction on how we should approach it.

1. It is Breathed Out by God

If there is anything that makes the bible most unique, it is this fact. The content contained in the bible is the Logos of the living and true God, given to us divinely through the prophets and apostles throughout the ages. It is not man’s opinion of God, nor is it a co-authored partnership with God, but it is God’s inspired message divinely and mysteriously penetrating into our meager life on earth.¹⁰⁰

We also realize that it wasn’t co-authored by man and God as a partnership, but we do know that men and women had an important role in the physical writing of this inspired gift. **2 Peter 1.21** even tells us “prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Additionally, **1 Thessalonians 2.13** has Paul thanking the Thessalonians for receiving the Word not as the word of men, but “as it actually is, the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

I love that. Knowing that the very mind, plan, and purpose of God, in the form of His Logos, is at work in our hearts; it is changing us, rebuking us, correcting us, and sanctifying us.

- **It is our final authority.**¹⁰¹

Many of us have had “God encounters,” “Holy Ghost goose bumps,” “moments of clarity,” “religious experiences,” and things like that. We often speak in ways where we “feel” God saying or doing this or that, we base our decisions based on “having peace” and choose certain paths for life based on “open doors,” and we often use these instances as our spiritual trump card and functional final authority. But these methods *on their own* produce lazy, unstable, lukewarm disciples driven by experience and emotionalism. It creates an immature, wishy-washy lifestyle where the believer is tossed back and forth by every wind of teaching.¹⁰²

When we believe that God gives us direction through other means (like giving us peace or through other people), there are factors involved that make those means suspect to fallibility and mistake. The problem we face is that the *interpreter* of this direction or unction is fallible. If someone gets what they would consider an “insight from the Lord” or “answer to prayer” in a time of prayer or meditation, they have a problem because they are dealing with their own sinful, fallen minds and hearts as the recipient and interpreter.

Jeremiah 17.9, 10

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? 10 I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”

Proverbs 21.2

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.

Proverbs 16.25

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

Proverbs 12.15

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.

¹⁰⁰ 2 Peter 1.19-21 // Ephesians 3.1-6 // 1 Corinthians 2.12, 13. Additionally, verses like Hebrews 3.7-11, 4.3, Acts 4.25, 26, say that the “Holy Spirit” or “God” says, rather than the name of the particular author of the quoted text. In one of the most remarkable verses about the authority of the New Testament, Paul quotes Luke’s written gospel when writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5.18 by calling it “Scripture.”

¹⁰¹ Psalm 138.2 // 1 Thessalonians 5.19-22

¹⁰² Ephesians 4.11-14

So we have a problem of knowing without a doubt that the choices we are making are truly the Lord's desires for us and interpreted correctly. Therefore, it needs to be tested, just as **1 Thessalonians 5.19-22** says to definitely not automatically despise it, but rather to "test all things." Make sure it is from the Lord! A sense of peace or an open door alone is not a good enough or trustworthy enough source for decision making and faith. After all, even Scripture warns us by saying in **2 Corinthians 11.14, 15** that it is "no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds."

It should be no surprise that "godly" advice or our own "godly" thoughts, feelings, and interpretation of prayer and fasting could actually be wrong.

Just because a door is opened doesn't mean we should walk through it.

So where should we get this ultimate "advice" as **Proverbs 12.15** speaks of? How exactly does the Lord weigh our heart, and how can we know if the peace was from the Lord or the open door is one we should walk through?

It is through the written Word of God.

Because we know that Scripture is eternal and alive, even though God has indeed chosen to reveal aspects of Himself to us in various other ways (e.g., through creation itself, through prayer and fasting, or in times of meditation and worship), it is *only* the written Word of God that is our final authority in testing all others.

Psalm 119.160 makes a bold claim that says "all Your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal." And also **Psalm 12.6** says "the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times." Even more explicitly God tells us in **Proverbs 30.5, 6** tells us that "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."

When we depend solely on other means, such as feelings of peace or visions, we are subject to a fallible interpreter: our own fallen and sinful heart and mind. It is very true that we have the Holy Spirit in us, but it is also very clear that we are not always submitted to and dependent on Him. After all, Jesus even told His disciples that the "Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."¹⁰³ Therefore, we need a "referee" to judge what is truly of the Spirit and what is of the flesh. Something has to help us discern the heart and mind, because they are corrupted with sin. Otherwise, we're prone to commit a personal foul.



This is precisely what the Word does for us.

Hebrews 4.12, 13

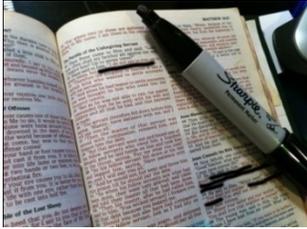
For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

The Scriptures, as we see, are different than the thoughts and feelings of peace we get. Though God used sinful man to write down the Word of God, He has also *assured us* that what was written, in His divine mercy and intercession, was passed through the mind, heart, hand, and pen of the Scripture's human scribes without being diminished by their own human reason, logic, opinion, or fallibility. We call this the *inerrancy*♣ of the bible. Additionally, we believe that the bible is *infallible*♣ or "without mistake."

Therefore, when we open the Word, we don't have to worry about whether or not it has been corrupted by the wickedness of human hearts and minds. So now, with the Word as our referee, we can rightly assess whether or not the feeling of peace or the open door is truly "from the Lord," because we *know for certain* that God would *never* contradict His own Word. And furthermore, it is not just that He *wouldn't* do, but that He *cannot* do it, because He is holy and perfect.

¹⁰³ Matthew 26.41

Now, this is *not* to say that the teaching of, interpreting of, or application of Scripture to our lives is infallible. This is where churches in the past, most notably (but definitely not solely) the Roman Catholic Church and their Magisterium have gone wrong, as they believe that the Pope and their Magisterium¹⁰⁴ is unable to make wrong interpretations in the matters of faith.



However, the truth of the matter is that *all humans are fallible* and can indeed *misinterpret* the Word and apply it poorly. Pastors can twist the Scriptures. Christians can omit what they don't like. We can engage in poor study skills and apply eisegesis rather than exegesis.¹⁰⁵ ♣ As Christians, we are all too commonly breaking out our black highlighters and going to town on our bibles, changing God's Word into something that is more pleasing or fitting to our lifestyle and ideals of who God is.

That said, our aim is to do good, objective studying of the Scriptures since we know that it is our final authority. As we get into this, the phrase *sola scriptura* ♣ becomes an important one. It is a phrase that was coined by the Reformers of the 16th century in an attempt to relegate spiritual authority back to the Scriptures, and particularly taking it from the sole possession of the Roman Catholic Magisterium.¹⁰⁶ Confusion sets in with this phrase, and some would call attention to the fact that the bible isn't the only place we get truthful information. Some would also purport that many things we do or practice in our faith aren't "in the bible," so therefore our claim to live by "Scripture alone" is hypocritical.

But *sola scriptura* doesn't mean that the bible is our *only* source for true information or applicable guides for life. The bible itself actually affirms that fact.¹⁰⁷ It is not meant to give us details on atomic structure or music lessons or tell us how to pick the right toothpaste to be in the elite group with the four out of five dentists. Rather, what *sola scriptura* means is that the bible is our *highest* authority that judges all other purported truth. Scripture is the lens by which we view our life and all that life has. Some things, like which toothpaste you choose, will be neutral, and so you can go ahead and trust in your dentist at that point.

God has clothed His thoughts in words, and there is no way to know Him except by knowing the Scriptures.

-John Stott

Going back to the first written words of God, the Ten Commandments,¹⁰⁸ God's written Word has been taken by believers as being perfect, and is therefore, as we read before, "God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."¹⁰⁹

The bottom line is that we can and should know for sure that the Scriptures are the infallible, written Word of God, but it is our duty as Christians to rightly handle it, study, and seek to know what the Lord wants to reveal to us through His Word.¹¹⁰ Every time we teach, preach, pray, or have a particular thought that we think is from God, these *must* be tested by the Scriptures. All of His (purported) Word outside of the Scriptures should be tested by the (guaranteed) Word within the Scriptures. *Even Jesus Himself* asked people to test His words

¹⁰⁴ The Magisterium is, in a nutshell, the governing authority of the Roman Catholic Church that translates the Scriptures and then hands it down to the Church and Church members. The Magisterium is the only authority allowed to interpret the Scriptures, and all Catholic Churches and Catholics must be in line with their teaching.

¹⁰⁵ "Exegesis" is a word used to describe a method of studying the bible. It means to "take out of." The idea is that we are taking out of the Word what God put there. The other wrong method, is called "eisegesis," which means to "put into." Using this method, we are putting into the Word thoughts, doctrines, and ideas that were not already there. This is common practice when people take Scripture out of context or read into it what they want.

¹⁰⁶ John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1.7.1. The main purpose was taking divine authority away from the Roman Catholic Church's Magisterium, which was, up to that point, the entity which "correctly" interpreted Scripture and also declared Holy Tradition as part of the necessity for a good Christian life. Also see the Westminster Confession of Faith.

¹⁰⁷ 1 and 2 Kings repeatedly speaks of the "book of the annals of the kings of Judah (1 Kings 15.7, 23, 31, 16.5, 14, 20, 27, 2 Kings 1.18, 8.23, 13.12, etc.). Even if this, and other books, aren't God's Word, they still have true things in them. The Word is truth which all other true things are judged by, yet the Word does not contain everything that is true (how to bake brownies, directions from San Diego to Los Angeles via the 405 freeway, and how many licks it takes to get to the center of a Tootsie Roll Pop, etc.).

¹⁰⁸ Exodus 20.1-17, 31.18 // Deuteronomy 9.10

¹⁰⁹ 2 Timothy 3.16, 17

¹¹⁰ 2 Timothy 2.15

with the Old Testament Scriptures to prove that it was His Father's Word alone that He was speaking!¹¹¹ So this shouldn't pose a problem for our pride if we believe that His Word (within or outside the Scriptures) never contradicts itself.

- **It is our daily bread.**

In **Matthew 6.11** Jesus tells us to ask of the Father to "give us today our daily bread." Earlier in the same gospel, in **Matthew 4.4**, He is faced with temptation after spending forty days fasting. He rebukes the enemy, who is tempting Him with food, by saying, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus associates His Word with something that is more important for life than daily bread, and in doing so puts a value on it as being not just something we glean from when we have time, but that it too, like bread, should be a daily devotion. Job apparently felt the same way, as he said in **Job 23.12**, "I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food."

Furthermore, in **Deuteronomy 17.19** it says, while speaking of the Scriptures, that "And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes..."

Additionally, the **Psalms** speak of the man who is blessed in his life as it speaks about the man's relationship with the Word of God when it says:

Psalm 1.1, 2

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 119:97

Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

The Scripture tells us that the blessed man should read the Word all the days of his life. Not every other day, not once per week, but all the days. Why? So we can learn to revere God and obey Him, and so we can avoid the counsel of the wicked. His Word will guide us daily if we give ourselves to it.

At first this is tough for us. It is a discipline. It is hard work, and sometimes not easy, and that is how the enemy would have it. But just like working out or trying a new sport, you have to push through. After a while, you get better at it, and it becomes a joy that you can't do without!

- **It is eternal and it is alive.**¹¹²

This is one of my favorite things about the Word of God. As I pour through the pages, I find myself feeling as if I've never read it before, even though I may have already studied a particular section countless times. To me it seems that as each time I read through a section I've read before, it's like those funny little Russian nesting dolls, where you open it up only to reveal another doll inside. It seems never ending (the very definition of eternal!) and always reveals new insights, convictions, challenges, and connections to other Scripture.

¹¹¹ John 14.10, 17.7, 17 // Matthew 21.42, 26.54

¹¹² John 1.1 // Hebrews 4.12 // Psalm 119.89, 160 // 1 Peter 1.23-25 // Mark 13.31

Additionally, though it reveals new insights and convictions every time we read it, I love that it is simultaneously never changing! Also akin to the Russian nesting dolls, though you may get a new insight or deeper perspective or understanding on a given verse, the verse or truth hasn't changed just as the nesting dolls' faces and design don't actually change, for as **Hebrews 13.8** says, "Jesus Christ [the Word made flesh] is the same yesterday, today, and forever."¹¹³ You can dig forever and never exhaust the treasure and truth found in His Word. It is so incredibly awesome!



- **If you want to get to know Jesus, you have to read His Word, because He is the Word.**¹¹⁴

So far we have seen that the Word of God is not just mere "words about God" or "stories about God" or a collection of writings about "the history of God," but that it is the Logos of God. It is the revealed mind, thoughts, desires, purposes, plan, and will of God brought forth in verbal form through words.

We also have seen that Jesus indeed, as part of the Triune God, is 100% God, not God, Jr. Most notably, we quickly looked at (and we will look at continuously through this study) the fact that the Word declares that *Jesus Himself* is the *Word* made into the form of a Man! What exactly does this mean?

Once again, it's no easy task to totally grasp, but we need to recognize that God the Father's thoughts, will, desires, and plans were not just formed into verbalized words, but that the very eternal and loving plan and desires of God was made known and seen as a Human! Jesus Himself is the walking, talking, living, and breathing thoughts, plan, will, mind, and Word of God! God's Word truly came alive, and it is still alive today only because *Jesus* is still alive!

B.I.B.L.E.- Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.

Cute, but wrong.

For this reason, we should *never* see the bible as simply a series of individual verses, quips, quotes, and anecdotes that are worthy to be put on bumper stickers or coffee mugs. It is not just a list of do's and don'ts, or little pieces of advice or "**Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.**"

Though I appreciate the sentiment, we have sadly reduced the bible to just that: an instruction manual. And the thing is, as a guy, often times I don't read the manual, because I like to figure things out myself. If the bible is a manual for life, it's more in my nature to skip the instructions and just figure it out on my own. It's a little something we call pride.

But the Scriptures are not just instructions for right living (though *believing* the Scriptures will *lead* to right living). Rather, the bible is one gigantic and singular prophetic revelation from beginning to end revealing God's character, nature, will, plan, mind, and desires. It is not just the words that God spoke, but it is the *Word*, singular, of God. It is the Logos of God.

With that in mind, we have to remember that everything in the Word points to God's glory in His plan to redeem mankind by enacting both His justice and mercy through the work and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When we see the Word as one complete "Word" of God, rather than a set of "basic instructions," we treat it differently.

We have to recognize that God, and Jesus even more explicitly, is intimately and eternally connected with His Word. We even see that Jesus Himself, in **Luke 24.27**, began "with Moses and all the Prophets, [and] he explained to [the disciples] what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are intrinsically connected to Their own Word. To know Their revealed Word is to know the revealed mind and heart of the Trinity. Consider these words from Spurgeon's "The Word a Sword":

¹¹⁴ John 1.1, 14 // Revelation 19.13

The Word of God, namely, this Revelation of Himself in Holy Scripture, is all it is here described to be, because Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, is in it. He does, as it were, incarnate Himself as the Divine Truth in this visible and manifest Revelation. And thus it becomes living and powerful, dividing and discerning.

As the Christ reveals God, so this Book reveals Christ, and therefore it partakes, as the Word of God, in all the attributes of the Incarnate Word. And we may say many of the same things of the written Word as of the embodied Word. In fact, they are now so linked together that it would be impossible to divide them. This I like to think of, because there are some nowadays who deny every doctrine of Revelation and yet, indeed, they praise the Christ. The Teacher is spoken of in the most flattering style and then His teaching is rejected, except so far as it may coincide with the philosophy of the moment.

Christ and His Word must go together. What is true of the Christ is here predicated both of Him and of His Word. It is only because Jesus is not dead that the Word becomes living and effectual, and sharper than any two-edged sword. [emphasis mine]

Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.

- St. Jerome

As we can clearly see, this isn't just a book of instructions. But it is the very mind, heart, desires, and plans of God; it is His revealed will and testimony. To know the Word is to know Christ, not a checklist of do's and don'ts. Even Jewish-turned-agnostic Albert Einstein said that "no one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life."

2. It is for Teaching

The second mention in **2 Timothy 3.16, 17** is that all that we need for a plentiful spiritual life on this earth is found in the Scriptures.¹¹⁵ It teaches us who God is,¹¹⁶ what His plan is,¹¹⁷ His character and attributes,¹¹⁸ and His heart for His glory to be maximized on this earth.¹¹⁹

- **Everything we need for godly living is in it.**¹²⁰

2 Peter 1.3, 4

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

From eradicating sin, to godly parenting and healthy marriages,¹²¹ the bible has "everything we need for life and godliness." It is an amazing thing to behold, that this is not just "good advice" from Oprah or your knucklehead friends, but that this is *God's Word*. He is the One who designed life, marriage, children, love, and relationships, and so He is the ultimate authority on all these things. The best part about it is that it is not only His wisdom in matters such as life, marriage, and parenting, but that He is the *original Author* of these actual matters to begin with! It is He who created life, created marriage, and created our children, and so He rightly knows how to teach us to live godly lives amid these issues.

This is what theologians call the *sufficiency of Scripture*.♣ What this means is really and precisely as **2 Peter 1.3, 4** says, that "everything we need" has *been given to us* through our knowledge of Him. Where have we been given our knowledge of Him? From His divinely revealed and given Scriptures.

¹¹⁵ 2 Peter 1.3

¹¹⁶ Romans 16.25-27

¹¹⁷ Romans 15.4 // Ephesians 3.5, 6 // Psalm 147.19, 20

¹¹⁸ Romans 1.17 // Psalm 98.1-3

¹¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 10.11 // Isaiah 43.8-13

¹²⁰ Luke 16.27-31 // 2 Timothy 2.22 // Ephesians 4.29.

¹²¹ Healthy marriage: Ephesians 5.22-24 // Colossians 3.18, 19 // Titus 2.3-8 // 1 Peter 3.1-7 // Proverbs 31; healthy parenting: Deuteronomy 6.5-9 // Ephesians 6.1-4 // 1 Timothy 3.4-6 // Proverbs 12.1, 13.24, 19.18, 22.6, 15, 23.13, 29.15 // Matthew 15.18 // Colossians 3.20, 21 // Hebrews 12.5-13

Here is how the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1.6) explains it:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

It should be noted that God most expressly warned and commanded us to never add to or take away from His written Word.¹²² Why? Because it's exactly enough. It is precisely all that we *need*. It is not to say that there isn't more that He could have revealed about Himself or speak about in other ways, but those ways are not necessary, and therefore have not been given. The written Word should *always* be our absolute norm for hearing and knowing God's will, ways, desires, and Word.

It is so important that we remember that the Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.¹²³ Are you headed on the path towards marriage? Towards divorce? Towards a job change? Towards sin? It is the Word that guides you in and through (and sometimes around) all of these things.

3. It is for Rebuking

It challenges our sin, particularly our worship of self. It rebukes humanity's desire to idolize and make gods out of ourselves by annihilating our pride. If we want to get rid of sin, we have to be in the Word.¹²⁴

- **It shines light into our dark hearts.**¹²⁵

We're really good at seeing the best in ourselves. Most people think a bit too highly of their own morality. We seem to love to play the comparison game, and when we do, we like to really rig the police line-up. In quoting the Old Testament¹²⁶ and echoing the words of Jesus,¹²⁷ **Romans 3.10-12** says that "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

The Word then goes on to say in **Romans 3.23** that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The fact of the matter, as we will see in the coming chapters, is that we, as sinful, unbelieving humans, have darkened and hardened hearts. We can only know the depth of it when it is compared next to a true standard, and that standard is the Word of God. As we read it and know it, by its own sovereign power it shows us how beautiful and holy God is. When we see how holy God is, we see how unholy we are. This, in turn, should cause us to repent as it rebukes our sin, humbling us before Him in worship.

- **It is a weapon that the Holy Spirit uses to confront our sin.**¹²⁸

In **1 Thessalonians 1.4, 5**, Paul testifies that "we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." The Holy Spirit works in concert with the Word. We also know from **John 4.24** that God is searching for worshippers who worship "in Spirit and in truth," and later in **John chapters 14-16** that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. And yet then John continues in **John 17.17** by quoting Jesus as saying "Your Word is truth" in speaking to His Father.

¹²² Deuteronomy 4.12, 12.32 // Matthew 15.1-9 // Galatians 1.8, 9 // Revelation 22.18, 19

¹²³ Psalm 119.105

¹²⁴ 2 Timothy 4.2 // Hebrews 12.5, 6

¹²⁵ 2 Peter 1.19-21, Psalm 119.105

¹²⁶ Psalm 14.1-3, 53.1-3 // Ecclesiastes 7:20

¹²⁷ Luke 18.19

¹²⁸ Hebrews 4.12 // Ephesians 6.17 // Jeremiah 17.9

Therefore, we again see that **Hebrews 4.12, 13** very powerfully states:

Hebrews 4.12, 13

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- **It is a weapon that Jesus used to combat temptation.**¹²⁹

Jesus seems to have “put His money where His mouth is” when we read the account of His temptation in the wilderness in **Matthew 4.1-11**. He not only instructs us to live by His Word and trust in it, but He too lived by it and trusted in it. And, of course, this again illustrates that Jesus is completely synonymous with His Word. John Frame calls it “somehow identical with Jesus Christ”¹³⁰ and calls it one of His attributes, which are also inseparable from God Himself.

**Scripture is like a lion. Who ever heard of defending a lion?
Just turn it loose; it will defend itself.**

– C.H. Spurgeon

4. It is for Correcting

It keeps us on the right path. When we veer to the left or to the right, it brings correction, sometimes gentle, sometimes more harshly.¹³¹ But its aim is always to correct back on the course towards God’s glory, presence, and fellowship. The Word of God always testifies of God’s holiness and glory, and so its correction keeps our eyes on the prize.¹³² Once again, as we already have seen that **Hebrews 4.12** says “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

- **It disciplines us so we can change.**¹³³

The great thing about the Word is that it doesn’t just point out the problem (our sin) and rebuke us, leaving us for shame and death, but it also gives us the direction and instruction for change. Real and proper discipline is not punishment, but it is correction.

We live in a day and age where there is a lot of sin, temptation, and easy access to the desires of our flesh. Credit cards, pornography, disposable marriages and the like are constantly enticing us. Whether Christian or not, when we want to abstain from these things, our usual line of defense is setting up barriers and boundaries. Now, please don’t get me wrong, barriers and boundaries are important. They keep us accountable and help keep us on a good path. However, we often think that boundaries and limitations can fix our problems.

Boundaries change actions, but the Word corrects the heart.

The problem with the belief that boundaries and rules fix us is that it just simply isn’t true. We end up making gods out of our boundaries. But the fact of the matter is that the problem isn’t with the actions themselves, the problem is the heart, and anything outside of God changing our hearts is simply putting a band-aid on a bullet hole. It is indeed God alone who can change our hearts, not boundaries.

Jesus said in **Matthew 15.18** that “what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person.” Here, Jesus is speaking something very plainly to us, that our heart is the source and is in need of change.

¹²⁹ Revelation 2.12, 16, 19.15-21

¹³⁰ *Salvation Belongs to the Lord*, pg. 49.

¹³¹ Proverbs 6.23 // Job 5.17, 18

¹³² Philippians 3.14 // 1 Corinthians 9.24

¹³³ Proverbs 6.23, 12.1



"Honey, I need the Drano again!"

John 1.5 speaks of the Word (specifically the incarnate Word (Jesus)), by saying that "In him (the Word) was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." When we fill our hearts with the Logos of God, as light it forces the darkness out.¹³⁴ It's like a big industrial strength bottle of Drano, it unclogs all the rottenness that Jesus describes. As the Word dwells in us, it takes root and expels the diseased, hardened cancer of sin.

I see this time and time again. Husbands and wives that are so focused on pointing the finger at the other's problems. In the best case scenario, the spouses will admit fault, and so then they set up boundaries and rules for each other, expecting some kind of miraculous change. They think that if their actions change, everything will be better. But this is legalism. Our righteousness does not come by "being good," but it comes by faith, and faith comes by what? Hearing the Word of Christ, just as **Romans 10.17** says. The bottom line is this:

Wherever you go, there you are.

This, however, is what we all tend to forget. No matter what boundaries we set up (which again, are good and oftentimes necessary), and no matter how "good" we get, we are not fixing a problem, but we are *at best* slowing the bleeding. You have maybe heard the saying, "guns don't kill people; people kill people." Regardless of your gun policy convictions, this is, theologically at least, a true statement. If it's not a gun, it will be something else, because as John Calvin rightfully says, "our hearts are idol factories."

Or maybe you've heard people declare that things like Facebook and the internet cause adultery. Though these may be the vehicle in which adultery is carried along by, the bottom line is that it is our sinful hearts and desires that cause adultery, not digital data.

What young men will be in all probability depends on what they are now, and they seem to forget this.

J.C. Ryle

It's for these reasons that we need to have our hearts sanctified and changed. It is futile to try to discard everything on earth that could be used for sin. As a matter of fact, it would be impossible, because *everything* can be used for sin. Money, women, men, kids, cars, relationships, husbands, wives, marriage, ministry, health, family, you name it. The good, the bad, and the ugly can all be used for idolatry.

The problem isn't the object of worship; it is our heart of worship.

- **It keeps us focused, with our eyes on Jesus, not on us.**¹³⁵

Self-worship is the most common form of worship in our society. We all too easily make life all about us, our problems, our desires, our needs, our wants, our comfort. But the Word is effective to take our worshipful eyes off of ourselves and refocus them onto the only true and worthy God.

Again, the problem is our heart, and the Word has a way of illuminating the Gospel of Jesus Christ, His worthiness, His holiness, His beauty, and His great and wonderful plan. When we are daily devoted to the Word, we can see and know and understand more and more the greatness of who He is. In light of who He is, our hearts are turned towards Him, and our worship rightly gets redirected from our own lives and onto Him.

¹³⁴ John 8.12 // Ephesians 5.8, 9 // 1 Thessalonians 5.5

¹³⁵ Psalm 119.92

5. It is for Training in Righteousness

The Word of God trains us,¹³⁶ reconditions us,¹³⁷ transforms us,¹³⁸ washes us,¹³⁹ and discerns us.¹⁴⁰ It changes who we are so that godly reactions and attitudes become second nature as it conforms us into the image of Christ. It keeps us sharp, focused, honest, and diligent. Along with the aforementioned **Hebrews 4.12** referencing it as a sword, **Ephesians 6.17** also calls it the “sword of the Spirit” as it is one of our main tools in both offense and defense in this spiritual battle.¹⁴¹

- **It is what can truly change our hearts, minds, attitudes, and desires.**¹⁴²

It is God alone who can change our hearts. But what does this look like practically and in the long run? When His Word is in us, we begin to hate our sin and become disgusted by it. We begin to love God and His statutes and decrees more than ever and more than anything (read through the entire chapter of **Psalms 119**, the longest chapter in the bible with 176 verses, nearly every single one of them mentioning God’s Word). On top of that, your actual desires change and you want different things. You want what God wants, not what you want.

- **It makes us holy.**¹⁴³

God says that we should be holy as He is holy.¹⁴⁴ This happens for us through sanctification, which means “to be made holy.” We will look at this more in later chapters, but we see this incredible truth in John’s Gospel where we find Jesus praying to His Father on our behalf:

John 17.17

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

It is the truth of God that changes us and sanctifies us, and most specifically His truth as conveyed in His Word.

6. So We can be Thoroughly Equipped for Every Good Work

As God’s breathed Word, when we learn it, let it confront us, correct us, and train us, it plays a critical role as we are being sanctified in Christ. It equips us as we walk out our salvation,¹⁴⁵ preparing us for the very good works that God had set before us.¹⁴⁶ It is a means to an effective, God glorifying, Jesus loving, Spirit empowered life of a devoted disciple.

Think about that phrase for a second: every good work. Does it say most good works? Or a few? Or just the big works? Or just the ministry related ones? Or just the “spiritual” ones? No. Every good work. This takes us back to the sufficiency of Scripture.

It also brings us back to the beginning of this study when we were talking about decision making and knowing God’s will, whether it’s for marriage, a job, or some other decision. When considering any decision (“every good work”), you should know that what equips you to make the right decision is God’s breathed Scriptures.

There is no substitute for biblical wisdom.

So often we want and seek a sign, an epiphany, a dream, some kind of confirmation, or a miracle to help us make the right decision. But God has already given us all that we need for every good work! We are too easily given to taking the easy, lazy way out by asking God to just drop an answer in our lap. We don’t want to put in the devotion, effort, work, passion, and love needed to invest in knowing His revealed mind and will that has been given to us in the Scriptures! It is truly a tragedy! If you know His will (Logos) you will know what to do!

¹³⁶ Hebrews 5.11-14, 12.11 // Ephesians 6.4 // Luke 6.40 // 2 Samuel 22.35-37

¹³⁷ 1 Timothy 4.6-8

¹³⁸ John 17.17 // 2 Corinthians 3.17, 18

¹³⁹ Romans 12.1, 2 // Ephesians 5.25-27

¹⁴⁰ Philippians 1.9, 10 // Ephesians 5.13, 14 // 1 Corinthians 4.5

¹⁴¹ Matthew 4.4

¹⁴² Philippians 1.9-11 // Romans 12.2

¹⁴³ John 17.17 // Colossians 3.10

¹⁴⁴ 1 Peter 1.15, 16 // Leviticus 11.44, 45, 19.2 // Revelation 22.11 // Hebrews 12.14 // 1 Corinthians 1.2

¹⁴⁵ John 17.17 // Psalm 119.11

¹⁴⁶ Ephesians 2.10

It is when we know and do God's will that we walk in the Spirit and by His power. This is what brings us freedom; after all, He is the Spirit of truth, and the Father's Word is truth!

**Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Where is the Spirit?
He's in the Word, because He spoke the Word, and the Word is Jesus.
The Word is the Sword of the Spirit.**

MORE ATTRIBUTES OF THE WORD

In addition to the truths we found from **Hebrews 4.12**, it becomes very interesting now that we have looked at the various characteristics of the Word of God that we notice quite a few very powerful attributes.

As we look even further, we find many more explicitly poignant attributes of the Word:

- Eternal¹⁴⁷
- Holy¹⁴⁸
- Pure and Perfect¹⁴⁹
- Truth¹⁵⁰
- Righteous¹⁵¹
- Living¹⁵²
- Wonderful¹⁵³
- Powerful¹⁵⁴
- Omniscient¹⁵⁵
- Omnipotent¹⁵⁶
- Omnipresent¹⁵⁷
- Sweeter than honey¹⁵⁸
- It strengthens us¹⁵⁹
- It keep us from sinning and keeps us pure¹⁶⁰
- To obey it brings life¹⁶¹
- They are to be fully obeyed¹⁶²
- To disobey it is sin and brings death¹⁶³
- Preserves our life¹⁶⁴
- It is our direction and it counsels us¹⁶⁵
- Brings salvation¹⁶⁶
- Unbreakable promise¹⁶⁷
- Brings freedom¹⁶⁸

¹⁴⁷ Psalm 119.89, 160 // 1 Peter 1.23-25 // John 1.1

¹⁴⁸ 2 Timothy 3.15 // Jeremiah 23.9 // Romans 7.12

¹⁴⁹ Psalm 12.6, 119.96

¹⁵⁰ Psalm 119.43, 128, 142, 160

¹⁵¹ Psalm 119.7, 62, 137

¹⁵² 1 Peter 1.23 // Hebrews 4.12

¹⁵³ Psalm 119.18

¹⁵⁴ Hebrews 4.12

¹⁵⁵ Hebrews 4.12

¹⁵⁶ John 1.1-5 // Hebrews 4.12 // Genesis 1.1 // Isaiah 55.10, 11

¹⁵⁷ John 11.-5

¹⁵⁸ Psalm 19.7, 119.103

¹⁵⁹ Psalm 119.28

¹⁶⁰ Psalm 119.8, 11, 29, 133, 165

¹⁶¹ Psalm 118.25, 50

¹⁶² Psalm 119.4, 34

¹⁶³ Psalm 119.102

¹⁶⁴ Psalm 119.25, 40, 50, 107

¹⁶⁵ Psalm 119.24, 52, 105

¹⁶⁶ Psalm 119.41

¹⁶⁷ Psalm 119.41

¹⁶⁸ Psalm 119.32, 45

- Sanctifies us¹⁶⁹
- Makes us wise¹⁷⁰
- Infallible¹⁷¹
- Perfect¹⁷²
- We are to put our hope and trust in it¹⁷³
- We should long for it¹⁷⁴
- We should love it¹⁷⁵
- We should sing about it¹⁷⁶
- It is worth more than anything else¹⁷⁷

Do you remember what we found out about the Name of God in **Chapter 2**? We realized that His Name is not just an ID badge or a “possession” of God’s, but that His Name is the culmination of who He is.

And now, as we look at the attributes of the Word of God, what do you notice? When you add up the sum total of all of this, it looks identical to God. But how can a “thing” be described this way? Because in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was indeed God!¹⁷⁸ It should begin to make sense to us as we realize that His Word is the very thoughts and desires of His mind. Why would His mind be any less holy or perfect than what He is? We have to remember that the Word is not a separate creation of God, nor is it a collection of external stories or words about Him, just as His Name is not a separate “thing” that simply describes or identifies God. Rather, both His Name and His Word are ever-present and eternal parts of His wholeness. So much so, that this Word indeed then even “became flesh” as our Lord Jesus Christ!

This brings us to our last insight that we get from **2 Timothy 3.15, 17**. The very fact that “All Scripture is breathed out by God” and that it possesses all of these “God alone” attributes tells us this:

- **It is to be praised.**¹⁷⁹

Just as we saw that God’s Name is being worthy of praise, at first glance it may have seemed odd, but as we looked at precisely *what* His Name really entailed, we saw that it was a culmination of all of His attributes, desires, character, and essence. We realized that it was worthy of worship because it was completely inseparable from God Himself. It wasn’t just a label or nametag, but it is who He is.

Look at this incredible verse speaking of both His Name and His Word

Psalm 138.2

I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things *your name and your word*. [emphasis mine]

Here in the **Psalms**, the psalmist declares praise for His Name and that it is exalted above *all things* (declaring its worthiness of worship). He then he makes yet another striking statement: that sitting right next to His worship-worthy Name is His Word! To add clarity, the psalmist also says:

Psalm 56.3, 4, 10, 11

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. 4 In God, *whose word I praise*, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? ...10 In God, *whose word I praise*, in the LORD, *whose word I praise*— 11 in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? [emphasis mine]

¹⁶⁹ John 17.17

¹⁷⁰ Psalm 19.7, 119.98-100, 104, 169 //

¹⁷¹ Proverbs 30.5, 6 // Psalm 119.151, 160

¹⁷² Proverbs 30:5, 6 // Psalm 12.6, 119.160, 96

¹⁷³ Psalm 119.42, 43, 74, 81, 114, 147

¹⁷⁴ Psalm 119.20, 45, 70

¹⁷⁵ Psalm 119.47, 48, 167

¹⁷⁶ Psalm 119.54

¹⁷⁷ Psalm 119.72, 127

¹⁷⁸ John 1.1-5, 14

¹⁷⁹ Psalm 56.3, 4, 10, 119.171, 172, 138.2

Here, the psalmist specifically gives praise to God's Word. But how can this be? Well as we have seen, God's Name is the culmination of who He is and is therefore inseparable from God Himself. We also now see that His Word is the very decree or expression of who He is, and is therefore also *inseparable* from God Himself.

We have to remember that as humans, we can say one thing and do another. I can kiss up to someone and as they walk away curse them in my mind and gossip about them later. My well-crafted words don't necessarily reveal what my true character is (well, in some ways, they actually do, because if I bless someone and then curse them later, it shows that I am two-faced).

But God is different. As we saw before, He is unchanging. And not just over a course of time is He unchanging, but even simply from the transfer of His thoughts being made into His Word there is no changing. There is no "Telephone Game" with God. He doesn't think one thing and then communicate it poorly or differently. When we know His Word, we should know that we are knowing God Himself.

Look again at this incredible passage in **John 1.1-5, 14** as we consider an unbelievably synonymous connection between God and His Word, seeing that Jesus Himself is God's Word in the form of a Human:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Also in **Revelation 19.13** is specifically says that "His Name is the Word of God." So as we see, as **Psalms 138.2** has told us, His Name dwells alongside His Word.

Where His Word is, there His Name is; where His Name is, there His Word is. Where Jesus is, there His Word is; where His Word is, there Jesus is.

God's Name, and even specifically the Name of Jesus is the culmination of His character and essence, and therefore His Name is worthy of worship as the Name above all names,¹⁸⁰ and we praise His Word because He is His Word. **Philippians 2.6-11** says:

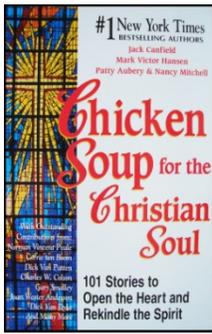
Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And so since both the Name of God and the Word of God exalted above all things next to each other, they are both worthy of worship because they are mutually inclusive and synonymous with God Himself. If we are to bow ourselves to the Name of God, we are to bow ourselves to the Word of God.

Now to be clear, I'm not talking about building a glass case or an altar in your house where you keep your bible and bow down to it throughout the day. Your bible is paper and ink, and that would be, in fact, idolatry. But the words and thoughts and desires and plans that it contains are not just words *about* God, but that the Scriptures are the very Word of God.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ 2 Samuel 22.50 // 1 Chronicles 16.53 // Nehemiah 9.5 // Job 1.21 // Psalm 18.49, 30.4, 44.8, 66.2-4, 96.2, 113.2 // Isaiah 25.1 // Romans 15.9

¹⁸¹ 1 Thessalonians 2.13



His Word isn't just sound, godly advice or little story times with Jesus for bedtime. It isn't *Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul*. His Word is eternal, holy, powerful, righteous, and is not just true, but it is truth. Things that are true are gauged against some higher truth. But this is the truth by which all other things are judged.

For this reason, we shouldn't see the worship and praise of His Word and His Name as idolatry or as a fourth and fifth member of the Trinity. Both God's Name and His Word are completely and intimately inseparable from God Himself (when we think of His Word as His thoughts, mind, and plans and the Scriptures as part of those thoughts and plans as included but simply in written form), and they are shared in totality with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As a matter of fact, we see that each Person of the Trinity has a unique connection to the Word of God. It is the Father who sends forth His Word,¹⁸² it is Jesus who is the Word,¹⁸³ and it is the Spirit who is the Spirit of truth, wields the Word as His sword, and that also carries it along.¹⁸⁴

Again, like with His Name, one thing that throws us, I believe, is that we refer to the Word as "it" and also see it as something possessed as we call it "God's Word" or "His Word." This isn't an incorrect way of speaking of the Word, of course, but we are simply not used to understanding a "thing" as being synonymous and inseparable from a "person." But as the previous list shows, His Word is not just any simple or common "thing," "possession," or "object." This is not *only* an exterior tool or weapon of God, but the very manifestation, decree, power, mind, and culmination of Him manifest by His divine self-expressive voice and words. Therefore we can agree with the psalmist who gives praise to His Word.

How Can I Understand It?

However, all this to say, as much as the apologetics and facts shown for the Word can be helpful to the doubtful, at the end of the day, the power, nature, and eternally living truths of the perfect Word can only be truly embraced when we are being indwelt by the Holy Spirit as He testifies of the truth¹⁸⁵ and confirms the very words we are reading. It is by His power, grace, and infinite wisdom that He opens our eyes to the truth of the Word, makes it come alive to the reader, and He then teaches us those deep, profound truths of the Holy Scriptures as it pertains to our life in Christ.¹⁸⁶ It is His ability to divinely reveal and teach us those truths, and it is His divine nature of love that causes Him to be faithful to do so.

ILLUMINATION BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647) says: "our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our heart (I. 5)." Now, this may sound like a bit of a cop-out, and unfortunately for the super logically minded, it would be hard to argue that it absolutely wasn't one (or at least that it can't be practically perceived as one).

This is where, as believers, it is a somewhat unexplainable, mysterious thing that the Holy Spirit indeed enlightens our darkened hearts and minds with the light of God's revelatory grace and testifies of His Word.¹⁸⁷ The Reformers called this the Holy Spirit's action of *illuminating* the truth of God's Word.¹⁸⁸ It is like explaining to someone how much you love your wife or children. At some point, the listener simply has to either take your word for it or choose to deny the validity of your claim until they themselves experience the joy of marriage or parenting. Sometimes, no discussion, apologetics, or rational claim will shed any light on the subject.

¹⁸² John 14.24

¹⁸³ John 1.1-5, 14

¹⁸⁴ Ephesians 6.17

¹⁸⁵ 1 John 5.6 // John 15.26

¹⁸⁶ Romans 8.16

¹⁸⁷ Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1.7.5. Also, Colossians 1.9, Ephesians 3.2-5, 1 Corinthians 2.10-16, John 15.26, 1 John 5.6, 7

¹⁸⁸ See also Glossary for this Chapter.

**It doesn't matter if you are not very book smart.
In all your days in school you never had the author of any of your textbooks sitting
next to you giving you the answers.
But the Author of the bible dwells *in* you and will teach you all things.**

This is the beauty of all of this. You may have said to yourself or to others, "I'm just not very book smart" or "I don't really like to read." Maybe you didn't get good grades in school and the idea of study is really stressful or overwhelming. Maybe it even sounds boring. But here is the thing about the Word, as we have seen, that this is unlike any other book out there. In school, you may have failed at American Literature or World History, but in all the tests you took for those subjects, you never had the advantage of the author sitting next to you in class, *let alone* living inside of you.

But the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Scriptures, dwells in us! We need not worry about comprehending or have fear that we won't (or can't) understand it. That's okay! Because the Holy Spirit, who is known as "the Helper" (ESV, NASB, and NKJV says "Helper," NIV says "Counselor," KJV says "Comforter," and NRSV says "Advocate")¹⁸⁹ is here to do that exact thing: Help us! If you lack the study skills or comprehension, don't worry, you have a Helper, the Author of this great writing, and He *will* teach you all things that you need, provided you step out in faith and put the time in. This is an incredible truth!

¹⁸⁹ John 14.16, 17 // John 14.26 // John 15.26

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

Why KNOWING GOD'S WORD IS IMPORTANT

In the little letter of **2 Timothy 2.15**, Paul encourages his young loyal friend Timothy to “rightly divide” or “handle” the “Word of truth.” The phrase “rightly divide” means to “cut straight” in the Greek. Right doctrine keeps us walking straight, focused on the goal, playing by the rules, and working hard as disciples.¹⁹⁰ When we are given to the study of the Word of God, aiming to rightly handle/divide/cut straight the Word through the teaching handed down from the Apostles and testified and taught by the Holy Spirit directly to us, we stay on course, being in a place of continual worship and conformation to the image of Christ.¹⁹¹

As we see in the passage of **2 Timothy 2.15-19**, “cutting straight” the Word of truth helps us to, firstly, avoid false teachings and thinking that leads us astray off of the straight path, and secondly cleanse us and equip us for a life of glorifying God. Let’s look at these results a little more in depth.

Result #1: It Helps us Recognize False Teaching: 2 Timothy 2.16-19

To recognize the counterfeit, you first must know the authentic.

Before the age of highly advanced technology, bankers were taught how to spot counterfeit bills in a very simple, but efficient way. They were given stacks of real bills, told to “handle” them, and eventually got a feel and keen eyesight for the real thing. Then the trainer would slip a counterfeit in, a good one even, but as the new banker was “rightly handling” the real bills, as soon as the counterfeit came up (even if they were thumbing through the stack of bills quickly), they could instantly spot the phony. Something about it caught their attention. The feel, the look, the sound...something wasn’t right. But this is only the case to the “workman who rightly handles” the real deal.

“Gangrene,” or “cancer” as mentioned in this verse doesn’t just spread, but it spreads decay and death, not life. We see in **2 Timothy 2.18** that Hymenaeus and Philetus “wandered [off the path]” from the truth because they didn’t “cut straight” the path of truth. This cancer starts very small, and starts beneath the surface, unnoticed even by its host. But cancer, being invasive, spreads, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, and sometimes so large and still yet unnoticed that it is often too late for the body to recover (thankfully, though false teaching can take us quite off the straight path of the truth, even if we don’t “recover” from cancerous teachings, we are assured in **verse 19** that God still knows “those that are His”).

Cancerous teaching is quite the opposite of “healthy” doctrine. In a world of permissiveness, relative truth, “politically correct” ideology, tolerance (not in the biblical sense of love and acceptance but the tolerance of sin and rebellion against God’s decrees), and “I’ll sue you if you offend me” living, we must, as good soldiers, athletes, and workmen, stay focused, competing by the rules, and working hard to rightly handle the truth, not fearing man but fearing God.¹⁹²

Again quoting Spurgeon once again from his “The Word a Sword”:

They talk much about Jesus, while that which is the real Jesus, namely, His Gospel and His inspired Word, they cast away. I believe I do but correctly describe them when I say that, like Judas, they betray the Son of Man with a kiss. They even go so far as to cry up the names of the doctrines, though they use them in a different sense that they may deceive. They talk of loyalty to Christ and reverence for the Sermon on the Mount but they use vain words. I am charged with sowing suspicion. I do sow it and desire to sow it. Too many Christian people are content to hear anything so long as it is put forth by a clever man, in a taking manner.

¹⁹⁰ 2 Timothy 2.1-7

¹⁹¹ John 7.16-19 // Acts 2.42 // 1 Timothy 1.3, 4, 4.6-8, 13-16 // Titus 2.1, 7, 8 // John 8.32

¹⁹² Acts 5.29 // Psalm 56.9-11, 118.6

There are countless “brands” of Christianity today. I call it Christianity hesitantly, because the very nature of many of these teachings disqualifies it from being truly Christ-like. Nonetheless, it has become the cool thing to do, and rather trendy, to come up with some “new revelations,” “teachings,” “way to do things” or “new way to look at faith or Jesus.” But the test, the only test, must be the Word of God.¹⁹³

**To be effective preachers you must be sound theologians;
those who do away with Christian doctrine are, whether they know it or not,
the worst enemies of Christian living.**

– C.H. Spurgeon

1 Timothy 6.3-5

If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5 and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

2 Timothy 4.3-5

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Romans 16.17-19

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. 19 Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

Result #2: It Helps us Recognize False Thinking: 2 Timothy 2.15, 16

We all too easy make decisions and come to conclusions that start with “I think” or “I feel.” God has indeed given us minds to reason and think, but our minds have been corrupted by sin.¹⁹⁴ The good news, however, is that *as disciples* our thoughts and mind, our whole self, is being sanctified as it was purchased through Christ’s work on the cross and by the power, working, and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the seal of our redemption. Therefore, as our minds are being renewed and transformed on a daily basis,¹⁹⁵ these minds must be checked and aligned with the truth, which we can know by knowing Him through His Word, through prayer, and through His people.

All this to say, that the more we give ourselves to the Word and are led by the Spirit, the phrase “I think” becomes synonymous with the phrase “God says” or “the bible says.” In other words, when you give advice to a friend, you perhaps used to say “I think you should do this,” but as the Word becomes a greater part of your thoughts and lifestyle, your answer becomes “the Word says that we should do this.” As we guard the good deposit, hold fast to sound teaching, and commit to the Scriptures, from our mouths flow torrents of living water,¹⁹⁶ the very wisdom and truth of God, rather than the opinions and musings of a corrupted mind.

2 Corinthians 11.3, 4

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4 For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

¹⁹³ 1 Timothy 4.1-8, 6.3-5 // 2 Timothy 1.13, 14 // Hebrews 13.8, 9 // 2 Peter 2.1-22

¹⁹⁴ Jeremiah 17.9, 10 // Proverbs 12.15, 16.25 // Ephesians 4.22-24

¹⁹⁵ Romans 12.1, 2

¹⁹⁶ John 7.38

Ephesians 4.14

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

Result #3: It Purifies Our Lives for Discipleship: 2 Timothy 2.20-23

The bible that is falling apart has an owner who isn't.

- C.H. Spurgeon

I once met with someone for coffee who told me he was a “train wreck.” On the table was his bible, which he had for only two years, but it looked like it had done two tours in Iraq. As it was evident that the Holy Spirit was in his heart at work and giving him a desire to know the Word of God (the inside of his bible looked like a tie-dye art project with all the highlights and scribbles), I assuredly told him that he wasn't falling apart as he may feel, but that the Holy Spirit is indeed putting him back together. The Word washes and sanctifies us.¹⁹⁷

Matthew 6.33 is a verse that will come up a lot in our lives as Christians. It's one of those “get back to the basics” reminder verses. It's a good habit to constantly remind ourselves, “seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you.” In our lives as disciples, it is terribly easy for us to focus on our shortcomings, problems, and struggles. Though there is, of course, some need to mind these things, our biggest offensive measure in our battle against sin is to fix our eyes on Jesus,¹⁹⁸ to seek first His kingdom,¹⁹⁹ and to effectively transfer our worship from a false god (namely, us) onto the living and true God.²⁰⁰ This is real, lifelong transformation. It comes as we seek to walk out **Romans 12.1, 2** by being a living sacrifice to God. However, this call to be a living sacrifice must be preceded by a critical step we must take first.

We have to step down off the throne before we lay down on the altar.

In other words, we have to see ourselves as sinners, incapable of living apart from Christ, and ready to let Him lead and guide us according to His will. Too often I will say, even enthusiastically and genuinely, “Lord, take my all, I want to be submitted to You!” Yet, in all practicality, I am comfortably still sitting on the throne, ruling my own life. I want my cake and I want to eat it, too. I want the blessings of God and the world.²⁰¹

But this is not the call of holiness and sanctification that God has called us to.²⁰² We have to humbly, with a broken and contrite spirit,²⁰³ step down off the throne before we lay down on the altar. We must see God for who He truly is, and we must see ourselves, in our sin, in light of that glory. This divine revelation comes by giving ourselves to His Word, for it is in His Word, as we have already seen, where we get all we need. Consider **2 Peter 1.3, 4**: “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

Do you see what that verse is saying? His divine power gives us everything *through our knowledge of Him!* Where do we find this knowledge of Him from the Holy Spirit? In His Word! For it was the Holy Spirit Himself who inspired the Word, it was through Him! His Word is where we find His “very great and precious promises” so that we can be conformed and transformed, sanctified by Him as we are washed in His Word, so that we can “participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” It is a glorious thing that we have this powerful, double edged sword as a weapon of warfare²⁰⁴ in this dark world we live in!

¹⁹⁷ John 17.17

¹⁹⁸ Hebrews 12.1-6

¹⁹⁹ Matthew 6.33, 34

²⁰⁰ Colossians 3.5

²⁰¹ Matthew 19.16-24 // James 4.4

²⁰² Leviticus 11.44, 45 // 1 Peter 1.14-16

²⁰³ Isaiah 66.2 // Isaiah 57.15 // Psalm 51.17

²⁰⁴ Hebrews 4.12 // Ephesians 6.17 // Revelation 1.16, 2.16, 19.15, 21

PRACTICAL TOOLS

♣ Definition of Terms ♣

Logos: Logos is the Greek word that the bible uses for the word “word.” But rather than just seeing it as the simple term used to describe a series of letters that make a single word, logos is used to describe words that are more or less the manifestation of thoughts, desires, and plans that come from one’s mind. Specifically as we think of God’s Word, we should know that they are not just words that describe Him or His character, but that they are words that come from the very mind of God to reveal His ways, will, desires, plan, and purposes.

Sola Scriptura: This is a phrase coined by the Reformers of the 16th century to put the authority of our faith back in the hands of the Word of God. It was largely due to the unbalance that was seen in the Roman Catholic Church, who had what is called a Magisterium who dictated *how* the bible was to be translated and applied, as well as Holy Tradition. Of course, human teachers and traditions aren’t bad, but what the phrase *sola scriptura* communicates is that those things are not on par with Scripture, but that they are submitted to the Scriptures. In today’s day and age, most non-Catholic Christians, particularly in the West, may not have issue with seeing anything other than the Word being authoritative in *concept*, but no doubt, we have *plenty* of other sources that do dictate our faith, be it feelings, emotions, social concepts, Oprah, politics, Hollywood, etc.

Inerrant: This word speaks of the Scriptures as being without anything untruthful or contrary to fact. What it does *not* mean is that the bible is without normal literary or grammatical language usages. For instance, the bible says “when the sun rose.” But we know that the sun doesn’t technically rise. We also see that Jesus “fed the 5,000.” Now, sure, there may have been exactly 5,000 people there that day, but there was probably more *around* 5,000. It is not a “false statement” or a “lie” if there were 4,787 people there.

Exegesis: This is a word used to describe a method of studying the bible. It means to “take out of.” The idea is that we are taking out of the Word what God put there.

Eisegesis: This is the wrong way to study the Word, which means to “put into.” Using this method, we are putting into the Word thoughts, doctrines, and ideas that were not already there. This is common practice when people take Scripture out of context or read into it what they want.

Infallible: This is different than inerrancy, in that it states that the truth stated in the Word is truth that transcends human sinfulness; that even though sinful men wrote out God’s plan for mankind’s salvation, their own corruption or misunderstanding didn’t get woven into the theological or doctrinal fabric.

Reformed: Reformed theology, the Reformation, and Reformers come from the 16th century in our church history. For over a thousand years, the Roman Catholic way of teaching Scripture along with their Holy Tradition dominated Christian life. In the 16th Century, however, a “reformation” of how we approach our faith came about. It was a bit of a Christian revolution.

Modernly, this term, though definitely helping narrow down and focus on a particular lens of seeing Christian doctrine, does not quite do justice in pinpointing that lens either. Amidst the reformed churches, there are many nuances that are discussed and disagreed on. It would be wise for us to not jump to conclusions when we hear the term, but in generality, also know roughly from about where these believers are coming from. This is hard to do, as various reformed Christians do hold to varying values and convictions.

Sufficiency of Scripture: This is a term used to explain how the divinely inspired and given Scriptures are all that God has declared were *necessary* and needed for us to live a God glorifying and worshipfully obedient life. It *doesn’t* mean that this is *all* that we will ever get. God does give other gifts from time to time by His own will and desire; however, nothing is *needed* to be added to what we have already been given by and through the Scriptures.

Orthodox: Orthodox is a conservative view of Christian doctrine. It maintains that we aren’t trying to “reinvent the wheel” or “find new truth,” but that whatever is in the Word and has been revealed by God has always been there. We’re not trying to start a new way to believe or see God, but are relying on the original intent of God to reveal Himself in Scripture.

Illuminate: Illumination is a term used to describe one of the activities of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts and minds. For when we are spiritually dead, the spiritual truths in the Word don't quite make themselves known. However, upon being regenerated by the Holy Spirit, our spiritual eyes and ears are opened by Him and our minds are now able to perceive that the words are not just true but are truth. The Holy Spirit essentially, as the word 'illuminate' implies, shines a flashlight into a dark room so that we can see clearly what is right in front of us.

Recommended Resources

Theology Books

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem. Chapters 1-8, various aspects covering theology and the Word.

Doctrine by Mark Driscoll. Chapter 2

Salvation Belongs to the Lord by John M. Frame. Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Great chapters on the Word of God in here.

Books

Knowing Scripture by R.C. Sproul.

Living by the Book by Howard Hendricks and William Hendricks.

How to Study the Bible by Kay Arthur.

Sermons

www.marshillchurch.org Type in “the Word.” Choose from a few sermons:

- “Revelation: God Speaks” from their Doctrine Series week 2. They have an hour version, a 40 minute abridged version, and a 10 minute “clip.” Also watch “The Trinity and the Gospel,” a 6 minute clip on God’s revealing Word.
- “Jesus the Word” from the gospel of John. Connecting the Word as Jesus Christ. This is an incredible section of Scripture and worth the time trying to understand.
- “Delight in the Word” from **Psalm 1**, a sermon by Tim Smith, their Worship Pastor.
- “Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth,” a message on **2 Timothy 2.14-26**.

Then type in “Scripture” and choose from the following:

- “Trial and Scripture” from their **1 Peter** series.
- “Moralizing: How to Destroy Scripture,” a 2 minute clip from their Luke series.
- “**2 Timothy 3.10-17**,” a sermon from, of course, **2 Timothy**, speaking of the Scriptures.

www.christianessentialsbc.com/messages Go to the sermons on Chapter 1-8, August 21, 2005 to February 19, 2006.

www.lifemissionchurch.com Go to the sermons page and find the sermons from:

- **Anchored to the Gospel Sermon Series, “How the Word Keeps Us Anchored.”** From January 6, 2014.
- **Foundation (1 Peter) Sermon Series, “The Living and Abiding Word.”** From March 4, 2013.

Web Articles

www.gty.org. This is John MacArthur’s ministry. Type “Scripture” in the search engine and read:

- Article: “The Clarity of Scripture, Parts 1-4.”
- Sermon: “How to Study Scripture.” A free transcript of a sermon.
- Sermon: “Inspiration of Scripture.” A free transcript of a sermon.
- Q&A: “Is all Scripture inspired by God?”
- Sermon: “Doctrine of Scripture.” A free transcript of a sermon.
- Sermon: “God’s Own Defense of Scripture.” A free transcript of a sermon.
- Many more...

www.desiringgod.org. This is John Piper’s ministry. Type “the Word” in the search field and click on a few articles:

- “The Ministry of the Word.” A challenging and convicting message on the ministry of the Word.
- “The Word of God: Living, Active, Sharp.” An audio sermon and transcript on **Hebrews 4.12, 13**.

fm.thevillagechurch.net. This is the church where Matt Chandler, a gifted teacher, is the Teaching Pastor at. Go here, click on "Resource Library," select "Articles and Position Papers," and scroll down to the article "What is Scripture." Click on the PDF link.

The Word a Sword by Charles Spurgeon. Look this up online and take the time to go through and read it. Incredible thoughts on the Word of God.

Additionally, take the time to read through all of Psalm 119. Every verse has a mention of God's Word, be it His law, decrees, etc.