

Spending Time With God’s Word, the Bible



SABBATH—APRIL 18

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Lamentations 3:22, 23; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; John 17:17; Psalm 119:11; 1 Corinthians 2:14.

MEMORY VERSE: “God’s message [the Bible] to us is alive and powerful. It is like [the same as] a sword that has two sharp edges. Even more than a sword, God’s message goes very deep into us. It cuts between our soul [the breath of life] and our spirit. It is like a sharp knife that can cut deep into our body between our bones. God’s message shows what we are really thinking. It shows what we really want” (Hebrews 4:12, **EASY**).



The best thing you can do is spend time every day praying, reading the Bible, and following its teachings.

THE BIBLE. How many copies do you own? At least one, maybe more, right? All through history, people made copies of the Bible in secret. Some governments outlawed the Bible. The Bible is the most printed book on earth in any language. Also, the Bible is one of the oldest books. People died to keep the Bible safe from men who wanted to destroy it.

How important is the Bible in your life? Do you read it? Or does it sit next to your bed or on a bookcase collecting dust? Are you too busy or tired to study it?

God’s Word, the Bible, is living and powerful. God wants you to let His Word talk to your heart. The Bible can encourage you, change you, lead you, and give you hope. The Bible isn’t just a collection of old stories. The Bible is a beautiful record about God’s love. The Bible tells us that God wants to be close to our hearts. Do you want to grow in your relationship with God? Then the best thing to do is spend time every day praying, reading the Bible, and following its teachings.

THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON (Lamentations 3:22, 23)

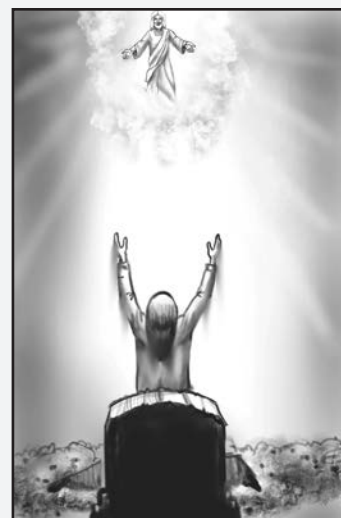
We will explore why the Bible is so important. We also will learn how to improve our Bible study skills. Before we do, we first must understand an important Bible truth: Satan will do everything he can to stop us from spending time with God in His Word, the Bible. Satan keeps people away from their Bibles in many ways. Satan keeps us busy with work and other things. So, we feel too tired to study. Or we stop caring about reading the Bible. Then Satan fills our minds with doubts.

We are warned: “Satan uses everything he can to keep people from learning Bible truth. The Bible plainly shows us Satan’s tricks and lies.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 593, adapted. Satan knows that the Bible is powerful. God’s powerful Word makes Satan powerless. Satan knows that prayer and Bible study are the most powerful weapons we can use against him (Ephesians 6:17, 18; Hebrews 4:12). So, Satan does everything he can to stop us from reading and praying. Satan knows that God’s words are powerful. With His words, God made the skies and the earth (Psalm 33:6). With His words, God can wake up the dead (John 11:41–44). God’s words can give us strength to win the fight against sin (Matthew 4:1–11).

So, Satan wants to keep God’s people away from their Bibles. He knows that when we don’t read our Bibles, our relationship with God will grow weak. Our relationships with other people will suffer, too. We will have problems in our marriages. We will yell at our kids. We won’t be patient with our friends and with people at work. Our lives will get so busy. We will feel pressure from all the heavy loads we carry in life. We will feel as if we cannot escape them. We often don’t take the time to understand what is really happening. We may think we’re close to God in our hearts. But the longer we go without opening our Bibles, the more we will grow weak every day.

But Lamentations 3:22, 23 tells us that we always can depend on God. How dependable are you compared to God?

Lucifer was the covering angel before he sinned (Ezekiel 28:14–17). Lucifer heard God’s words and knew their power. Now Lucifer hates God’s words. No wonder our hearts grow hard when we don’t choose to read God’s words and live them in our daily lives.



With His words, God can wake up the dead (John 11:41–44).

THE BIBLE: GOD’S POWERFUL WORD
(2 Timothy 3:15–17)

Read and copy 2 Timothy 3:15–17. What do these verses tell you about the Bible and what it can do?



We can read what God said to Enoch, Abraham, and Job.

We must be careful not to use the Bible to prove our ideas. Our ideas are not always the same as God’s ideas. God is not a puppet that we control. We must not expect Him to do whatever we want. God’s ways and thoughts are holy and beyond our understanding (Isaiah 55:9). So, we should not try to control God’s words to us. We also must not pick and choose to study the parts of the Bible that we like the best or already know. So, don’t just read the verses that are easy to understand and pay no attention to the more difficult verses. If we want God to talk with us in the Bible, we must study the whole Bible carefully. We must trust that God will show us what we need when we need it most.

Also, Jesus Himself says, “ ‘You should love the Lord your God completely: Love him with all your mind. Love him with all that you are. Love him in all that you think’ ” (Matthew 22:37, EASY). God wants us to educate our minds with Bible truth. We can read many Bible stories about God’s conversations with people. We can read what God said to Enoch, Abraham, and Job. We can read what Jesus said to people, too. These conversations show that God pays attention to our questions. He cares about what we think. He invites us to compare every idea and teaching with Bible truth to understand how He plans to save us.

Our ideas and thoughts are not perfect. We can make mistakes. We can try to work things out on our own without God. When we do that, we are in danger. We are making self and our own thinking more important than God. People also must be careful to study the Bible with the right spirit. We must be careful not to think we know everything or that we have nothing new to learn. When we feel important and that we don’t need any help, we depend on our own limited knowledge. We forget about our relationship with God. Then we trust in our own thinking.

GETTING WHAT WE ASK FOR (John 17:17)

Some Bible thinkers in the 1960s tried to remove God from the study of religion! In 2017, a story in *Time* magazine was named “Is Truth Dead?” Today, many people think so. Few people really know what truth is anymore. But Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. The only way to the Father is through [with the help of] me” (John 14:6, ERV). The Bible says that Jesus is the truth.

Read the following three verses slowly. Then read them again a second time. What messages do they teach?

John 17:17 _____

Proverbs 30:5, 6 _____

Psalm 12:6 _____

The Bible says that basic truth (Jesus) doesn't change (Hebrews 13:8). At the same time, while we read the Bible, our understanding about God and His truth grow. We are promised, “We can discover much more Bible truth that we don't already know. But we must search for it with all our hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, page 704, adapted. When Ellen G. White talks about “truth,” she always means Bible truth. We can search for more truth in the Bible. The Bible doesn't disagree with itself. New Bible truth always will build on or agree with past Bible truth.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Psalm 33:4, 5; and Ephesians 1:13. What is the message in these verses?

In the end, the Bible, and the Bible only, must be the support for everything we understand and accept as truth. We must compare every idea and thought with the Bible. If an idea or thought agrees with the Bible, then we can accept it as truth.

Some people say there is no truth. What is wrong with this idea? If they say there is no truth, how can anything they say be true? But let's say that we accept as true their idea that there is no truth. If we do, then aren't we really disagreeing with everything they just said?



We must compare every idea and thought with the Bible.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ITSELF (Psalm 119:11)

What if you went to the Bible for advice or help with big decisions, relationship problems, or other troubles? What do you think would change in your home or at church?

Bible writers knew that the words of the Bible were very important. No other book can change your life the way the Bible can. We want God's words to do more than just fill the pages in our Bibles. We want God's words to fill our hearts. So, the question we must ask is, "How can we keep God's words in our hearts?"

Read David's advice in Psalm 119:11. What is David's advice? How can you follow it? (Also read Hebrews 4:12.)

One of the promises the Bible makes about itself is in Hebrews 4:12. The Bible is the same as a sword. A sword with two sharp edges is powerful. So the Bible is very powerful and helps us become better people. The Bible also tells us that its words are alive. Maybe you wondered how this teaching is possible. Jesus said, " 'The words I speak to you are spirit and life' " (John 6:63, NLV). Is your heart broken? Is your life falling apart? Jesus can heal you. He can change your life for the better and give you hope. The Old Testament says that God's words do what He wants them to do. God's words make things happen (read Isaiah 55:11). David thought about how God's words changed his life. Then David wrote, "When I have trouble, your promise gives me peace in my mind. It makes my life strong again" (Psalm 119:50, EASY).

Maybe you felt very hungry at some time in your life. Doesn't food taste wonderful after you've been hungry? In the same way, the Bible is 'food' for our spirits.

Does your spirit feel empty or hungry? Open the Living Word of God, the Bible. Read Jeremiah 15:16; 1 Peter 2:2; and Matthew 4:4. God's words 'taste' wonderful to our minds and hearts. When we read His words, they will fill us and keep us alive, just as God promised.

The words in our Bible come from God Himself. God sent them to all of us. So, we must read them and pray over them. They will change our lives and give us hope.

What problems in life can the Bible help you with right now? Why must you not let your selfish feelings stop you from doing what the Bible tells you to do?



**Is your life falling apart?
Jesus can heal you.**

**COMING TO GOD WITH OPEN MINDS AND HEARTS
(1 Corinthians 2:14)**

Do you want to learn from the Bible (Job 22:22)? You must first have an open mind and heart when you talk with God. How does 1 Corinthians 2:14 help explain this idea?

God wants us to be wise. He wants us to have spiritual understanding. So, we must open our minds and hearts when we come to Him. Then He can teach us what the Bible says. If we aren't willing to learn, we won't have a good experience reading the Bible. Or, if we think the Bible is silly, we won't look for truth in its pages.

We must believe that the Bible has something wonderful to teach us. We must come to the Bible willing to learn. Then we can grow in our relationship with God. How does Paul explain this idea in 1 Thessalonians 2:13?

God's Word, the Bible, works in us when we believe. When you open your Bible, you must believe that God wants to say something to you with the words on the pages. Then God really will talk to you and work in your life. But so much depends on your faith and what you expect to get from your experience. The good news is that if your faith is small, God can help it grow (Mark 9:24). God can help your faith even if it's tiny like a mustard seed (Luke 17:6).

The Bible tells us the truth about our lives and our relationship with God. The Bible tells us how to make our relationship with God grow strong. So, empty your heart of all pride. Let the Holy Spirit fill your heart. When you do, you will always come away changed as you read the Bible. You may not see the changes in your life each day. That's because these changes and growth are often small. But if we refuse to give up sin, Bible study can't help us very much. When we study the Bible, the Holy Spirit moves on our hearts to come closer to Jesus. Do we really want to come closer to Him? If yes, we will become "truly wise. You understand that God saves you because you believe in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15, EASY).

What is in my mind and heart as I open my Bible? Am I studying the Bible to prove my own ideas? Or am I coming ready to learn what God wants to tell me today? Why is this answer so important?



God can help your faith even if it's tiny like a mustard seed (Luke 17:6).



God's Word, the Bible, talks about His love for us. We can read about this love any time we want.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Think about the words you said in the past 24 hours. Were they loving, kind, and joyful? Or were they angry, mean, and nasty? Jesus said, “‘When you speak, your words show what is in your mind’ ” (Matthew 12:34, EASY). Angry, mean, and nasty words come from angry, mean, nasty thoughts and feelings. These thoughts and feelings are the same as junk. When we have ‘junk’ in our hearts and minds, this ‘junk’ comes out in our words.

When we feel tired or sad, we say things that show what we’re feeling. (Later, we often feel bad about what we said.) When our hearts are filled with love for someone, that love fills our words. In the same way, God’s Word, the Bible, talks about His love for us. We can read about this love any time we want. What a wonderful thought!

“Many people believe the Bible is filled with good advice and wisdom. These people follow the advice that agrees with their lives and the popular beliefs of the day. But this idea is not the same thing as accepting the Bible as the Word of the living God. This Word is our life. The Bible must control our actions, words, and thoughts. If Christians believe that the Bible is not God’s Word, they really reject it. Their rejecting it is the biggest reason that the youth don’t believe in the Bible and aren’t loyal to God.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 260, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What are all the reasons you have for your faith? (Maybe a lot more than you thought, right?)
- ② How can you make sure that your relationship with God starts with Bible study and prayer? Can you have a relationship with God without them? Explain.
- ③ If someone wanted to grow his relationship with God, what book of the Bible would you tell him to start reading?
- ④ How can you live “on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 8:3, NIV)? How can you show this Bible truth in your life?
- ⑤ Read Hebrews 11:3; Psalm 33:6; Matthew 11:4, 5; 1 Thesalonians 4:16; Ephesians 6:17; and James 1:21. What do these verses tell us about God’s words?

JAIL TIME

How would you feel if someone threw you in a cold, dark jail for sharing the Good News about Jesus? Many Global Mission pioneers in Southern Asia go to jail for sharing their faith. Pioneers serve God in countries in Southern Asia and other places worldwide where people do not know Jesus.

Chong is a pioneer in Southern Asia. We must keep Chong's real name and the country where he works a secret to protect him. Peter is a church worker who went with Chong to visit members of a new church in the north part of the country.

Chong and Peter learned from the church members that three families wanted to give their lives to Jesus. Chong was excited to learn the families were ready to burn their spirit-worship things. Chong decided to visit the families that night.

Chong, Peter, and some of the church members walked on the dark road to the families' homes. One member told Chong that he wanted his family to hear about Jesus. So, the group stopped at the member's house to tell them about Jesus.

Finally, late at night, the group arrived at the homes of the three families. The air was cold. But the people's smiling faces warmed Chong's heart. As everyone sat around a fire, Peter introduced Chong. Peter said that Chong came to help the families give their lives fully to Jesus.

But the leader of the families said, "We are ready to give our hearts to Jesus now. We serve Him. Not the spirits."

While Chong talked with the families, a man came to the house. The man said that Chong must come to the home of the village leader. Chong left with the man. Peter and the church members went back to the church to wait for news about Chong. Many hours passed. Everyone became worried about Chong. His meeting with the village leader took a long time. Finally, they learned that Chong was locked up in the village leader's home.

During the night, the church members prayed for God to protect Chong. The church leaders tried to get the village leader to let Chong go free. The village leader refused.

Later, Peter and the church members learned what happened. The village leader worked with the police to arrest Chong. The police took Chong to jail. Four days later, the police let Chong go free. The village where Chong spent time in jail now has more than 100 people who are Seventh-day Adventist Christians! Jail didn't stop Chong from sharing Jesus. Chong wants to serve God more! Many people try to stop God's work in this country. But God's work continues to grow. Please pray for our Global Mission pioneers whose lives are in danger because they start new churches for Jesus. Your offerings help support their work.

INSIDE
Story
by CAROL DE OLIVEIRA



The leader of the families said, "We are ready to give our hearts to Jesus now. We serve Him. Not the spirits."