

# The Word *in* Our Lives



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Pss. 19:7-11; 119:105; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 2:24.*

**Memory Text:** “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (*Hebrews 4:12, NIV*)

**Key Thought:** The Bible must change how we live our lives.

Sam Tannyhill was sentenced to death for murder. While in prison he was visited by two Seventh-day Adventists who gave him a Bible. Sam, angry, threw it against the wall. But one night, filled with guilt, fear, and bitterness, he wanted something to divert his thoughts, and so he picked up the Bible. At first, not understanding what he read, he tore it apart. But then he started reading again, and the more he read the more he came to know the Christ of the Bible. Sam found Jesus Christ as his Savior in a lonely prison cell as he read the Scriptures. His life completely turned around, right there in jail. The bitterness and anger that dogged him his whole life left. Sam knelt and sobbed. He said, “God, if You’ll have me, I’m Yours. Tonight I come. I want Your forgiveness, Your peace, Your power. Lord, change me.” He did, and Sam went with peace and assurance to his death.

What is it about the Bible that can so change even the worst among us? Maybe not all stories are so dramatic, but millions can testify to the impact that this Book has had in turning around their lives.

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 19.*

## The Bible, Agent of Change

**Read** 2 Corinthians 5:17. How have you experienced the promise found in that text?

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The Bible paints a pretty dim picture of human nature in general (*Isa. 59:2-4; Jer. 13:23; Rom. 3:10-12*). And though that view often comes under attack by critics of the Bible, even the most cursory review of history proves the assertion right. Even worse, so often well-meaning attempts to improve our lot fail. Many of the great “isms” of the past few centuries, often predicated on the idea of changing humanity for the better, make things worse.

But there is hope, hope for us as individuals, hope for anyone who wants to be changed. And that’s because the Bible points us to Jesus Christ, our Creator and Redeemer, and in Him we have been given wonderful life-changing promises.

By studying the Bible, a sinner can get acquainted with Jesus, who is the Truth and who has the creative and redemptive and healing power to change us.

**Read** Psalm 19:7, John 17:17, Romans 6:4, Ephesians 4:24, Hebrews 4:12, and 1 Peter 2:24. What promises are found in here for us?

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There’s no question: God’s Word can change our lives. Scripture pours out a flood of light on us, pushing back spiritual darkness and revealing to the world the truth about a loving, powerful God who seeks to transform the lives of all who come to Him in faith. Millions of people can testify to the power of the Word of God and what it has done to their lives. All who surrender themselves in faith and obedience to the God revealed in the Bible will experience for themselves just what a dramatic change can be wrought, even in the worst of sinners.

**Pick one specific area in which your life has been changed through reading the Word. What is that area, what changes have come, and what changes are you still hoping to see?**

## Doers of the Word

Who of us hasn't, at one time or another, echoed the words of Paul: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (*Rom. 7:24, NIV*). Fortunately, in the next verse, Paul provides the answer: Jesus Christ alone will rescue us.

Jesus is the Source of our salvation. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (*Eph. 2:8, 9, NIV*). And though faith is a gift of God, how do we receive it?

**Read Romans 10:17.** What role does the Bible have in the way we receive faith?

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The more we read the Bible, the more we know Jesus and the more faith we shall have. The more we listen to the Words of God, the more our faith in Him will increase and the more we will experience the power of God to change our lives.

Many, though, read the Bible, and it does nothing for them. Some scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' time were well versed in Scripture, but what good did it do them?

**Read John 5:39, 40.** What important spiritual principle is seen here? See also *James 1:22*.

Knowledge, even of biblical truth, doesn't automatically change us for the good. A teachable spirit and a heart open to the leading of the Holy Spirit are crucial in the study of the Scriptures. It's not more information we need, not even more information about the Bible; it's instead a willingness to obey the Bible's teaching. It is not those who hear the Word of God who will be blessed but those who follow it (*Matt. 7:24-29*). We need to approach the Bible with a desire to apply it to our lives and to adjust our lives according to its teaching. If we come to the Scriptures with humility and the desire to do His will, God will give us a life-changing faith that will permeate all that we do.

**Do you pick up the Bible with a humble and teachable heart or with a critical eye, an attitude of resistance, or a lack of trust? If the latter, why not begin right now, opening the Word with a prayerful heart, pleading for the Lord to reveal to you His will and to give you faith and power to follow it? That's the only way your life will change for the better.**

## Principles of Life

**Read** Psalms 19:7-11; 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. What promises are found here regarding how the Bible should guide how we live?

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Every day we are confronted with difficult decisions on how to live. How do we know how to make the right choices, especially when so many moral theories exist? One ethicist even has developed a morality urging that we kill old people who have become a burden, even though he also argues against killing animals for food!

God, though, has given us His Word as a guide for how we should live. Whether sacred biographies, the life and teachings of Jesus, or specific direct biblical instructions—the Word gives us principles to guide our lives.

**Read** Genesis 39:7-14; John 8:3-11; and Philippians 2:3, 4. How might one take the principles found in these texts and apply them to real-life situations today? Be prepared to share your answers in class on Sabbath.

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Though the Bible does not pretend to give instruction on every problem known to humanity, it does give us wonderful principles that we can apply to our daily lives. Using these principles, along with sanctified common sense and guided by the Holy Spirit, we can learn to walk in the Spirit and be sensitive to the leading of God. Learning the example of biblical heroes or following the guidelines of the Bible will change our lives.

We must see the Bible as more than a compilation of historical or even spiritual facts. We need to see it as the will of God, who desires the best for our lives. For that reason the Bible can educate our ethics and tell us what God expects us to do. God has shown us in His Word how to live. When we follow divine guidance for our happiness, our lives will be changed by His divine power.

## What Saith the Word of God?

Yesterday we looked at some Bible texts that offered principles on how the Lord would have us live. Today let's look at situations people might find themselves in and ask, What help does the Bible offer, if any, in these situations? Which texts could you use to give guidance in the following scenarios?

**A fellow co-worker**, in desperate straits, is stealing money from the place where you both work. What should you do? Ignore it? Turn the person in? What saith the Word of God?

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**A young woman**, unmarried, gets pregnant. She and her boyfriend are unable to take care of the child even if they were to marry, which she wants to do. He wants her to get an abortion. What saith the Word of God?

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**A beggar** stands on the sidewalk and holds out his hand for money. What saith the Word of God?

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**A person** you are witnessing to invites you over for a meal and places pork on the table before you. What saith the Word of God?

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**An elderly parent** is comatose, kept alive only through very expensive medical procedures that are draining the family income. Should she be kept alive as long as possible, or do you pull the plug? What saith the Word of God?

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How easy did you find these things to answer? Was the Bible very clear in providing answers for all the situations? Also, if you didn't have the Bible as your guide, how different might your answers have been? Be prepared to share your answers in class on Sabbath.

## Revival and Reformation

So far we've been looking at the power of God's Word to work in our individual lives. But what about us as a church? What should the Word of God do for us corporately?

**Read 2 Kings 22:8–23:25. What happened here? What role did the Bible have in the unfolding of this story?**

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There was a great reformation in Judah based on the Word of God. It was a corporate experience, something that impacted the entire nation.

“Thus Josiah, from his earliest manhood, had endeavored to take advantage of his position as king to exalt the principles of God's holy law. And now, while Shaphan the scribe was reading to him out of the book of the law, the king discerned in this volume a treasure of knowledge, a powerful ally, in the work of reform he so much desired to see wrought in the land. He resolved to walk in the light of its counsels, and also to do all in his power to acquaint his people with its teachings and to lead them, if possible, to cultivate reverence and love for the law of heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 398.

Another example can be found in the time of King Jehoshaphat, who sent Bible teachers to teach the law of God. “And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people” (2 *Chron.* 17:9). Although the Bible doesn't say which specific book or books were used, the point is that the Written Word, the Scriptures, was at the basis of this revival and reformation.

Jehoshaphat himself brought about the judicial reforms in harmony with the moral values expressed in the Bible. By studying 2 Chronicles 19:4-11, we can see the reformation being made in the judicial system of Jehoshaphat: “‘Consider carefully what you do’” (2 *Chron.* 19:6, *NIV*), “‘judge carefully’” (vs. 7, *NIV*), “‘no injustice or partiality or bribery’” (vs. 7, *NIV*), “‘serve faithfully’” (vs. 9, *NIV*), “‘warn them not to sin against the Lord’” (vs. 10, *NIV*), and “‘act with courage’” (vs. 11, *NIV*). All these principles are found in the Bible.

**How easily apostasy from God's Word can come to the church as a whole! What can we do to protect our church from making the same mistakes as ancient Israel did?**

**Further Study:** Ellen G. White, “Jehoshaphat,” pp. 190–203; “Hezekiah,” pp. 331–339 in *Prophets and Kings*; “Revival and Reformation,” pp. 119–152 in *Selected Messages*, book 1.

“When the heart is brought into harmony with the word, a new life will spring up within you, a new light will shine upon every line of the word, and it will become the voice of God to your soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 183.

“In the Bible are found the only safe principles of action. It is a transcript of the will of God, an expression of divine wisdom. It opens to man’s understanding the great problems of life, and to all who heed its precepts it will prove an unerring guide, keeping them from wasting their lives in misdirected effort.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 506.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1** Knowing the importance of studying the Bible in order to bring change to our lives and to promote revival and reformation among God’s people, how can we renew our emphasis on Bible study? How can we bring the revival and reformation that we need as individuals and as a church?
- 2** As a class go over the questions presented in Tuesday’s and Wednesday’s lesson. How similar were your answers to the others? How different? What can we learn from one another’s responses?
- 3** Do you sense a need for the Word of God to have a greater impact in our lives, not just as individuals, but as a church? As a class, put together a midweek Bible study and invite as many members as possible.
- 4** Let members of the class give a testimony to the power of the Word and what it has done in each of their lives.
- 5** How can you help someone who seeks to have the Bible change their life and yet nothing seems to be happening? What counsel would you give?

# My Faithful Son: Part 1

by GANTULGA TSEDEN

A few years ago life in Mongolia was simple—difficult, but simple. Then our country was flooded with new ideas, new activities. Young people, such as my son, Enkhtaivan [ENK-tai-van], discovered video games. He spent hours playing these games with his friends. But I feared the changes that these new ideas would bring to our country. I saw my sweet teenage son begin to stay out very late playing video games with his friends, and I worried.

Then someone gave my son a book about a man called Jesus. Then a friend invited him to a Christian church meeting, and he went. One day he told me that he had become a Christian.

I knew little about the Christian God and nothing about the church he was attending. But I had seen a story in the newspaper about some people who called themselves Christians who were doing crazy things such as jumping off a high building. I was frightened. Had my son joined a group such as this?

I began seeing changes in my son. He no longer stayed out late with his friends, but came home early. He obeyed and became so good to me! Christianity could not be all bad, I thought.

Then he invited me to go to church with him. “It will be good for you, Mother,” he said. “You need to change some things in your life, and God will help you do that.” I thought I was fine and didn’t need to change anything, so I resisted his invitations for several months. But finally I went with him. He was so excited!

The church met in a rented room, but that did not matter. I was touched by the speaker’s message. After church the speaker invited me to a small group Bible study that week. I finished my work early so I could go. I went to the health expo and evangelistic meetings that followed, and I enjoyed it all. As we prayed and studied the Bible together, I realized that Christianity was not just a story; Jesus died for me! Several months later I was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was just in time, for some terrible trials were heading our way.



(Continued next week)

*GANTULGA TSEDEN (left) and her family live in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.*