

The Nature of the Bible

By John J. Yeo

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Isaiah 55:9-11. Prepare to share the kind of imagery Isaiah the prophet used to describe God's Word.

Assignment Two

Study the comments related to Hebrews 4:12-13 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: How is the Bible utterly unique and unlike any other book in the world? Because the Bible is "living and active," what sorts of things does it do? According to these verses, how does God still use His Word to speak to us today?

Assignment Three

Study the comments regarding Deuteronomy 18:18-19 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Who does God use in order to deliver His Word to His people? When inspired by God, does the prophet speak his own words or the words of God? Because the words spoken by the prophet originate from God, what quality do the words have? Are the words binding in the sense that they must be obeyed? What will God do if they are not obeyed?

Scripture to Memorize

"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 marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Hebrews 4:12

Session Goal

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

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

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

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

The Living and Active Word of God

Read Hebrew 4:12-13 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 12. the word of God. Note the origin of the Bible. The writer of Hebrews emphasized that the Bible is not merely the words of men but the word that came forth from God. God is the ultimate Author of Scripture. He used men to communicate His Word. This fact makes the Bible unique and special. **living and active.** God's Word is not like any other book. It is "living and active" because the Holy Spirit speaks and works through it. No other book can claim this important truth. **sharper than any two-edged sword.** Scripture is compared to a sharp sword, similar to a surgeon's knife. **piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow.** Unlike the surgeon's knife, the Word of God penetrates spiritually and not merely physically. The phrase "joints and marrow" was given to illustrate the spiritual division of "soul and spirit." God's Word is so sharp and exact that it divides between soul and spirit, just as a sharp sword can physically cut clean through a bone's joint, revealing the marrow within it. **discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.** The Word of God penetrates our hearts and reveals what is there. The Holy Spirit speaks to us not in an audible voice, but through His Word as He reveals what we need to change in order to grow. In other words, the Bible reads us as we read it.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on the significance of the imagery Isaiah used to describe the Word of God in Isaiah 55:9- 11.

Discussion Question

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

On Your Own

In the space below, present the imagery Isaiah the prophet uses in Isaiah 55:9-11 in order to describe God's Word:

	Imagery (Comparison)	Significance (Meaning)
v9		
vv10-11		

Studying the Passage, Hebrews 4:13

Verse 13. no creature is hidden from His sight. Because God is omniscient ("all knowing"), omnipresent ("everywhere present") and omnipotent ("all powerful"), nothing escapes His gaze. **all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.** Because of God's perfect knowledge of all things, in all places and at all times, we stand naked before the God who is our Judge.

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

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now report on the three questions regarding the living Word of God in Hebrews 4:12-13.

The Authority of the Bible

Read Deuteronomy 18:18-21 out loud.

Studying the Passage

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

Verse. 19. whoever will not listen to My words that he shall speak in My name.

Again, notice that God equates the words being spoken by the prophets as being “My words” because the prophets speak on God’s behalf. **I Myself will require it of him.** God’s Word, spoken or written by the prophets, has authority because it originates with God Himself. All are held responsible and accountable to His Word.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now report on the five questions regarding the authority of God’s Word in Deuteronomy 18:18-19.

On Your Own

Look up the following verses: Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6 and Revelation 22:18-19. What do these passages have in common, and how do they relate to Deuteronomy 18:18-19? Why does God place these restrictions on His Word? What sorts of curses are attached to these verses regarding God’s Word? Does God take His Word seriously? In the space below, write your answers:

Discussion Questions

1. How are Hebrews 4:12-13 and Deuteronomy 18:18-19 related to each other with regard to the authority of God’s Word?
2. Does authority also imply responsibility? God has spoken through His Word and His Word is “living and active” today. Therefore, do we as His people need to obey His Word? Explain how this is true.
3. From your knowledge of the Bible, what are some things God commands us to do today?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share that with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue, I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Hebrews 4:12-13 declares that the Word of God is “living and active.” Therefore, the Bible is not simply a static book with black words written on a white page. It is alive because God’s Holy Spirit works in and through the Word that He inspired in order to accomplish what He commanded it to do.

According to Isaiah 55:9-11, God’s Word does not return to Him empty like human words, but His Word always fulfills whatever task He intends for it. You will recall from Hebrews 4:12-13 some of the following ways the Spirit uses His Word in our lives:

1. His Word penetrates to the core of our being, “dividing soul and spirit.”
2. His Word judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts.
3. The Holy Spirit uncovers and lays bare our lives before Him.
4. We must give account to Him of all the things we have done and thought, based on what He has revealed in and through His Word.

These are important truths because the Bible is not meant to be read for the sake of knowledge alone. The Bible is read so we might become more like Jesus every day. Our thoughts and our deeds, more and more, will reflect the thoughts and deeds of Jesus.

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 declares that the words God gave to His prophets were authoritative and binding. Why? Because whatever the prophets spoke originated from God and the people were to treat them as if they had come out of the mouth of God. In verse 19 God said He would punish every person who did not obey the Word that was spoken through His prophets. This principle explicitly reveals the awesome authority and weight the words of Scripture possess.

The living and active Word is an authoritative Word. For the glory of Jesus, that Word must be obeyed and given full control of our lives. Meditate on this awesome truth.

Follow-Up Question

Why does God say His written Word is “living and active”?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.