

THE WORD — *and* — THE SPIRIT

Discover How the Power of Scripture and
the Holy Spirit Work Together in Your Life

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chapter one

THE WORD

FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS ALIVE AND POWERFUL. IT IS SHARPER THAN THE SHARPEST TWO-EDGED SWORD, CUTTING BETWEEN SOUL AND SPIRIT, BETWEEN JOINT AND MARROW. IT EXPOSES OUR INNERMOST THOUGHTS AND DESIRES.

HEBREWS 4:12

I was fortunate to grow up in church. My earliest memories of learning about the Bible are attached to cute little songs that a few of you may know (e.g., “The B-I-B-L-E . . . yes, that’s the Book for me . . .”). We would go on to sing about how we “stand alone on the Word of God,” and then we would spell the word “Bible” again . . . for some reason. Apparently, spelling out words makes them more I-M-P-O-R-T-A-N-T. I realize that some of you reading this guide can count on one hand the number of times you’ve been to church. Some of you are exploring Christianity but have questions. Know that you’re not alone. According to a recent

study, one-third of people in the United States under the age of thirty have no religious affiliation today.

For me, I began hearing about the Bible when I was young. The content was usually boiled down to Bible stories I heard during the Sunday school hour:

- Jonah being swallowed by a big fish and making it out alive (the lesson here being, “Don’t run from God unless you’re a fan of deadly storms and cool with spending three nights in the belly of a fish”).
- Young David killing a giant warrior named Goliath (“Be brave and carry a slingshot with you everywhere you go”).
- Daniel being saved from some hungry lions (“Pray even if it kills you . . . or something like that”).



Describe your first memories of reading or learning about the Bible.



Growing up, describe some of your ideas about church or going to church.

As I got older, I learned the Bible wasn't just amazing stories that could be nicely illustrated on a felt board (you may need to Google "felt board"!). The Bible also had much to say about the things I was supposed to do, but mostly the things I was *not* supposed to do.



List some things the Bible says you should and shouldn't do.

Does the Bible seem like just a bunch of rules to you? I confess that as I grew older, I didn't like the Bible as much as I did back when I was singing catchy tunes about it and admiring Bible heroes like David and Joseph! Actually, I only read my Bible when I felt guilty about not reading it enough. I learned to like certain parts of the Bible and avoid other parts: the boring parts, the confusing parts, and the parts that told me I couldn't do the things I wanted to do. I thought the Bible set the rules for life; I didn't see God's Word as something that *gave* life. I was wrong!

Read John 6:63 below:

“The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”



What does Jesus say about His words? Why does He want you to know this?

The Bible is the all-time bestselling book. When it comes to its impact on the hearts of people and the course of history, it stands alone. No other book has been more read, scrutinized, discussed, debated, loved, or hated. Whether or not you grew up like I did (in church, learning about the Bible), you probably have some strong opinions about it.

ACCORDING TO THE GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS, "THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORLD'S BESTSELLING AND MOST WIDELY DISTRIBUTED BOOK."¹ CURRENT ESTIMATES INDICATE THAT MORE THAN 5 BILLION COPIES HAVE BEEN PRINTED.

In case you've ever wondered if the Bible is true and reliable (I know I have), the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—all four chronicle Jesus' life and ministry) give us reasons why we can trust the Bible as truth. In his book, *The Reason for God*, author and pastor Tim Keller shares several insights on the veracity of Scripture.² I've summarized a few here:

1. **The timing.** It takes hundreds of years to create a legend. The Gospels were circulated, read, and accepted while people who saw Jesus were still alive. These four books of the Bible were written forty to sixty years after Jesus' death while Paul wrote his letters just fifteen to twenty-five years

after Jesus' death. Luke's gospel even claims he got his account of Jesus' life from eyewitnesses who were still alive: "Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write a careful account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught" (Luke 1:1–4).

2. **The counterproductive content.** The Gospels often make the disciples look foolish. There's no way they would make up this stuff, especially the crucifixion, when they were trying to advance a movement. The people they talked to would automatically have suspected that anyone who had been crucified was a criminal. Even details like the women being the first to the tomb would never have been included unless it actually happened because at that time in history, women weren't seen as reliable witnesses. The only credible reason for all these incidents to be included in the Gospel accounts is that they actually happened.
3. **The impact on the apostles.** Look at the lives and deaths of the apostles. They spent their lives proclaiming the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and building the church. All of the original

twelve disciples (except Judas) were persecuted and/or killed because they were followers of Christ. They were sawed, burned, impaled by a spear, beheaded, and crucified—all for the sake of the One they had followed, watched die, and witnessed His resurrection three days later. You just don't commit your life (and death) to some sort of urban legend.

4. **The details reported in the Gospels.** The literary form of the Gospels is too detailed to be legend. Ancient fiction is not like today's modern fiction that includes details and dialogue. Back then, fictional stories had few details. The Gospels are loaded with details—so much so that the only explanation for those details is that eyewitnesses recorded them. They weren't fiction.

We can be grateful for such attention to detail!

Christian authors called “apologists”—thought leaders and Bible scholars who defend or support their faith—provide extensive evidence about the reliability of God's existence and the Bible. If you want more information, check out the following books:

- *The Reason for God* by Tim Keller (Dutton)
- *God's Not Dead: Evidence for God in an Age of Uncertainty* by Rice Broocks (Thomas Nelson)
- *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* by Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek (Crossway)

- *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel (Zondervan)
- *Can Man Live Without God?* by Ravi Zacharias (Thomas Nelson)
- *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell (Thomas Nelson)

If you saw the movie *God's Not Dead*, you know there's growing skepticism concerning the reality of God and the Bible. Chances are, people in your life and around you may call themselves atheists. According to *Newsweek*, one of the fastest-growing segments of belief among youth today is atheism. Knowing what you believe and why you believe it is important. Jesus' disciple, Peter, wrote, "If someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it" (1 Peter 3:15).



How is Scripture relevant to your life?



How does Scripture influence the way you relate to your friends and family? How does it help you get through your day?

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God *wakes* you, *warns* you, and *wins* you. In the next three chapters, we'll take a look at each of these areas. Chapter 2 discusses how the Bible wakes us up and calls us out of the false identities we live out and the false realities we live in. Chapter 3 addresses our need for wisdom and how God's Word warns us. Chapter 4 helps us consider how God's commands can cause our hearts to be filled with true joy. His Word wins us!

At the end of this section on God's Word, I've provided thirty-one days of selected Bible passages for you to read and apply this Bible study model to. As you study the Scriptures, I encourage you to share what you're learning with a youth leader, family member, or friend.

My prayer is that you will grow to love and long for the B-I-B-L-E.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Since February 2011, David Hertweck has served the New York Assemblies of God as the director of youth ministry. Previously, he served as a youth pastor for twelve years in upstate New York. David graduated from Elim Bible Institute where he majored in biblical studies with a focus in worship leadership. He is currently completing graduate work at Northeastern Seminary for his MA in transformational leadership.

David is passionate about helping local church youth workers create and sustain disciple-making environments marked by gospel fluency, Spirit dependency and biblical community. His new book, *Good Kids, Big Events, and Matching T-Shirts: Changing the Conversation on Health in Youth Ministry*, releases spring 2015.

David is married to Erin and they have three daughters: Lilia, Caraline, and Madelaine. David loves his girls, his family, good music, good food, his Weber grill, his Taylor guitar, Liverpool Football Club, the Yankees, and the gospel.

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