

## 2025 LENT DEVOTION Week 3 - *The Word*

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MONDAY, MARCH 17 | DEVOTION

Imagine your father died when you were young. For the sake of the analogy, imagine him as the best possible father. He loved you. He loved your mother and extended family. He was well respected and excelled in his work. The only “fault” in him was that he died while you were still young. But let’s also imagine that he left 66 letters telling you how he saw the world. The letters describe him: his thoughts, his plans, his understanding of good and bad. They also describe his plans for you: how he worked for you, loved you, and ultimately gave his life so that you could live.

Would you want to read those letters? Would you cherish them?

Christians often struggle to read God’s word regularly. Even though God has given us 66 books in the Bible that teach, train, exhort, encourage, correct, and guide us, we often make reading the Bible our last priority. Sometimes, we prefer to talk to God through prayer. And sometimes, we need to read the Bible with other people to fully understand what his words mean. But the truth is that without reading the Bible, we won’t fully understand God’s plan for us, the church, or this world. Not only should it be a priority, we need to understand that it is essential for abiding in Christ.

In the opening verses of John 15, Jesus explains that he is like a vine, and we are like branches. He says that his work, the vine’s work, is to save and redeem us - to give us life and support. Our work, as branches, is to receive the free gift of salvation, remain in Christ, and bear fruit in keeping with repentance. How do we do that? Jesus explains that we need to keep his word inside of us (John 15:7) and obey his commandments (John 15:14). We need to listen to what he says and do what he commands.

If we don’t read his word, or listen to it, or listen to others read it, we won’t hear what God has to say. If we don’t hear what God has to say, how are we supposed to know what he wants us to do? We can’t. We can’t expect to understand God’s plan for us if we aren’t willing to listen when he speaks. And he has spoken: from Genesis to Revelation. His words enable us to remain in him. His words enable us to have God before us at all times. By reading, studying, and meditating on his words, we can truly know and experience our Heavenly Father.

Over the rest of this week, let’s examine what it means to be devoted to the word of God. Try to practice what Jesus asks for, having his words remain in you while seeking to know God and his plan better. And take heart! Not only is the author of God’s word alive, he has gone to prepare a place for us so that we can live with him forever. Reading his word will prepare us for everlasting life with Jesus.

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TUESDAY, MARCH 18 | READ SCRIPTURE

Read the following passages slowly. Ask the Lord to help you understand each passage’s intent and to show you what he wants you to see.

### **Psalm 119:9-11**

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

### **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 complete, equipped for every good work.

### **Proverbs 3:19-26**

The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew. My son, do not lose sight of these— keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes, for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.

What relationships are described in these passages between God's word and his people? For example, Psalm 119 says that storing God's word in our heart can help to keep us from sin. What other ways do people and the word of God interact in these passages?

Think about all the ways you know to train for a task, a sport, or develop a skill. The passage from 2 Timothy says that the word of God is profitable for training in righteousness. Combine your understanding of training with this idea of using the Bible and reading God's word. What activities or practices could you do that would help you use the word of God to train in righteousness?

The Proverbs verses say that God's wisdom, found in his word, helps us walk securely, get sweet sleep, and avoid fear. This suggests that there are practical applications of God's word that lead to practical benefits. Reread the passages above and ask yourself: what practical actions could I take based on what these verses describe? And, what practical benefits might result from me acting in those ways?

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19 | REFLECT ON THE WORD AND YOUR LIFE

The passage from Psalm 119 you read yesterday is part of the longest psalm in the Bible. If you read the entire psalm, you will see multiple descriptions of the relationship we can and should have with God's word. Today, let's focus on the three verses you have already read to seek a deeper understanding of some of those relationships.

### **Psalm 119:9-11**

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

What does the Bible say about walking in a 'pure way'? Describe both a pure or wise path and a wicked or foolish one. Get help with your answer by reading Psalm 1 and Proverbs 3:1-12.

Using Psalm 1 and Proverbs 3, what tasks or activities might help us use the word of God to guard our path in life?

Why do you think the author of the psalm proclaims that they will seek God with their whole heart AND also prays that God keep them from wandering away from his commandments?

How, besides straight memorization, might we store God's word in our hearts?

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THURSDAY, MARCH 20 | PRAYER FOR WISDOM, INSIGHT, AND GRACE TO UNDERSTAND

Reading God's word, or hearing it, is essential for understanding who God is, who we are, and what God's plans are for us. But reading the word can be challenging. And it is not the only way we can talk to God. We need to pray as well. And it is good to pray about our time spent reading and studying the word of God.

Right now: Pray that God would help you be faithful in reading and studying his word. Ask him for help in understanding and applying what you read. Pray that he would provide insight, people to help you, and protection from the enemy who seeks to distract and discourage you.

Going forward: When you read the word, consider beginning with a section of Scripture. Consider using Psalm 119:18-19 Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me! Use passages like this to ask the Lord to help you clearly understand what you are about to read.

In community: It is important that we talk to God in prayer on a personal basis. But we also need to pray with others. Talking to God with other brothers and sisters helps us understand the whole body of Christ better. We see perspectives and gifts that we weren't aware of. We receive the help, encouragement, and accountability that we need. Look for opportunities to pray with other believers about using the word well while using Bible passages as a guide to encourage the whole body of Christ.

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#### FRIDAY, MARCH 21 | PRACTICE WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

It is good and helpful to read the word of God every day. Sometimes, this feels hard to accomplish. If that is true for you, Bible reading plans can be helpful. Many plans provide directions on which passages to read, when to read them, and so on. A common example is a Bible reading plan that guides you through the whole Bible in one year, with New Testament and Old Testament readings selected for each day. Another common approach is to use an app or devotional book to consider a different verse each day. Both of those approaches can be good.

Perhaps what is more important than having a Bible reading plan, though, is having a Bible reading plan that you will follow. For many people, reading the Bible all the way through in a year is too much. Sometimes, it feels like just reading a verse every day is too much. If the plan you have chosen feels like something you won't stick to, find a different plan.

Remember that the goal of walking in the Spirit through Bible reading is to develop a deeper relationship with God. We want to know God better. We want to understand his plans. Therefore, choose an approach to reading the Bible to help you grow closer to Jesus.

Today, write out two to three questions about God or his plan that you would like answers to. Here are some examples.

- Why does God allow pain and suffering?
- Is the creation story in the Bible about real events, or is it just a myth?
- What does following Jesus well as a woman/man/parent/child/professional mean?

Once you have your questions, build a plan to answer them by reading the Bible. You may need help from the index or study notes in your Bible. You can also read other books or talk to people with more experience. But the Bible is equipped to answer our questions about God and his plan. And those questions are important to us. They will likely motivate you more than an artificial requirement to read so many verses daily. Use that motivation to guide your Bible study.

Or, if you don't have many questions right now, choose a simple approach to build a good Bible-reading habit. That could look like reading one psalm every day for a month. You could also try reading the same chapter of one book multiple times in a week so that you can really build a deep understanding of the its message. But whatever you do, make a plan. Humans are easily distracted, and we need direction to faithfully pursue a deeper relationship with the Lord.