

## THE LIVING, POWERFUL, PIERCING WORD

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### Hebrews 4:11-16

- Whenever you are a young man and become a home owner, you automatically view yourself as a handyman. Even if you have had ZERO experience being a handyman, or if you have ever been handy with anything in your life!
- But I began this journey back in 2016, when I bought my first house. And I felt like such a grown up, just going back and forth to Lowe's and home dept. Borrowing a truck every chance that I got.
- I began to talk to other people about house projects, like I was a seasoned veteran. You know how it goes....
- But normally now, in my wiser older, mid 30's I have an order of process whenever it comes to housing projects that need to be done. I try and figure it out for myself, if I hit a snag I go to

Youtube, and if I still can't figure it out I call Gene Henry.

- I remember back when we first bought our house here, I was tackling all of the new projects, you know changing light fixtures, spackling holes in the walls that may or may not had been caused by myself, things of that nature.
- And at one point, I was changing out the ceiling fan in the master bedroom, and I came across something I hadn't seen before. It was the double switch. One for the light, the other for the ceiling fan. There were different color wires than I had seen before, I couldn't figure out which one went where!
  - I was looking at youtube videos, but they I was getting so many different instructions, the people in the videos had different colored wires than I had, they had different brands of ceiling fan that I had, and I couldn't figure out which ones I was supposed to follow, so I resorted to step #3, call Gene...

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- At this point I don't just call him, I get him on FaceTime. I show him all of the wires and walk him through all of the due diligence I had been doing. I show him how this is the most confusing ceiling fan of all time that only an expert could figure out....
  - And you know what Gene asked me? “Well, did you look at the instructions?”.....Welllll, that's a valid question Gene!
- But normally I don't want to look at the instructions. It's just so much words, on pages, illustrations are never accurate...you know??
  - So I would rather watch a youtube video! I would rather watch someone do it! I would rather just have someone tell me what I'm supposed to do.
  - But really, the truth is, no one could really tell how to do it better than the manufacturer that actually MADE and designed the product, right?
- I think that is how way too many of us Christian go throughout this walk of faith

though. We treat and think about the Bible, the same way that I treat and think about those instruction manuals.

- They're just words on words on words...I would rather someone else just tell me what it means, rather than looking through it for myself.
- How many times do we miss exactly what God is wanting to speak to us right now through His Word, because we're just listening or reading something that was given at a different time to different people?
  - *I would rather listen to a sermon from someone 12 states away than just mediate on the Word itself*
  - *I would rather read a devotional that gives me 1 verse and then 3 paragraphs of someone else's interpretation of that verse rather than allowing that verse to soak into my heart*
  - *I would rather spend more time reading commentaries and scholarly articles rather*

*than just praying through the Scriptures themselves.*

- Now commentaries, online sermons, devotionals, are all great things! They are incredible tools that God has blessed and used to bless many of our lives. We shouldn't throw those things away!
- However, we cannot afford to fall more in love with the interpretation of the Word, than the actual Word itself.
- God has given us His Word as a tool for Him to speak to us, into our exact situation, at this precise moment in time because no one can instruct us better than the Manufacturer, the Creator Himself.
- In Hebrews chapter 4, the writer tells us where to find the instruction manual for entering the rest that we have been talking about.
  - We talked about last week how we as believers have Rest for Today, we have confidence and security by believing the Promises of God.
- In verse 11, he says to strive to enter the rest, so that we won't fall into the same disobedience and unbelief that the Israelites did back in the wilderness during Moses' time.
- And that is possible for our lives! We don't have to fall into unbelief. Our hearts don't have to be hardened. It's possible to take hold of the rest that God offers for our lives BECAUSE
- ***“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” -Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)***
- It is impossible to have a consistent relationship with the Word of God and not have rest in your life.
  - Why? Because the Scriptures, along with the Holy Spirit, are the means by which we know the Promises of God and can rest in the Promises of God.

- There is a reason why John said, in the beginning was the Word. The Logos. And the same word is used in reference to the Scriptures as well.
  - Me and my dad were talking about this passage on the phone earlier this week and he pointed out, *“God does not want us to divorce the Scriptures from His Person.”*
- If we use the Scriptures for anything else other than a means to connect with God personally, we will miss out on the beauty of this Word and all that it offers.
  - This is why Jesus, when challenged by the Pharisees on some doctrinal issues in Matthew 22, He told these Pharisees, (who have read and memorized more scripture than you and I put together ever will), He told them that they were in error, and did not *know* the scriptures or the power of God.
  - And in verse 31, he tells them *“You have not read what was spoken to you by God...”* and

then goes on to quote a very familiar verse to them.

- Of course they had read that verse before, they had lead their eyes on that verse, but that word *“Read”* that He uses literally means, *“To know accurately, to acknowledge.”*
- You see, it is possible to read scripture, but not have a relationship with the scripture.
  - We can read the word on the pages, but not allow it to accurately work on our hearts or acknowledge the true power of them.
  - And that happens when we do not use the scripture primarily as a means for connecting and communicating with God.
    - *When we use the scripture as ammunition to demonize someone else or win an argument, or push an agenda we miss out on His Heart*

- *When we use Scripture as a means of pride to seem more intellectual than other Christians, we miss out on His Person*
- *When we use the Scripture as merely a means of checking off a box to feel better about ourselves, we can miss out on the Power of what He's really trying to teach us*
- We cannot afford to take for granted this wonderful tool that God graciously preserved for us throughout thousands of years despite various attempts to destroy the bible altogether
  - In 303 AD under the Rule of Roman Emperor Diocletian, he made it his mission to destroy Christianity completely.
    - He ordered every church to be burned and all Christians who weren't willing to deny their faith to be killed.
    - This was not the first time this happened, the writer of Hebrews is writing to a group of people that are experiencing that kind of persecution 200 years earlier
  - However, this was the first time that the Scriptures specifically were the main target of attack
  - Diocletian ordered that all copies of scripture were to be burned, if anyone was found in possession of a Bible, they were to be brutally tortured and killed to make sure other people wouldn't attempt to hide their copies.
    - After this decree being in full force for 2 years, Diocletian was so confident that he had succeeded that he famously boasted, *"I have completely exterminated the Christian writings from the face of the earth!"*
  - However the very next year, when Constantine, the first Emperor in Rome's history to become a Christian, offered a reward to anyone who could bring Him a copy of the Bible. And within a 24 hours, 50 different copies from different sources, all containing the same texts were brought to

him. And the Bible was able to begin circulating again.

- There had been other attempts, even the Roman Catholic Church in the middle ages had thousands and thousands of copies of scripture burned in the attempt to keep it out of the hands of the people
- There was a French philosopher, Voltaire in the 1700's who led the charge in the Bible being completely rejected by France as a nation.
  - If they were to find a copy of Scripture anywhere they would tie it to the tail of a donkey and drag it into the streets to be ceremoniously burned.
  - He was so confident in his attempts to destroy and discredit Scripture that he boldly predicted that within 100 years of his death, the Bible would be completely obsolete
  - However, the irony of it is that in that 100 years after his death, his old type writer was actually used in the production of more copies of Scripture and his old house

became the headquarters of the Geneva Bible Society

- Now I could go on and on with more examples of those who have attempted and still attempt to destroy and discredit the validity of Scripture, I could give you all of the statistics of how it is the most historically accurate and best selling book of all time
- But the overwhelming truth of the matter is as Peter says, ***“All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.” -1 Peter 1:24-25a (NKJV)***
- Jesus said in Matthew 24, ***“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words will not pass away.” -Matthew 24:35 (ESV)***
  - *However, even with that being said, these Scriptures will not change your life and lead you to Connect with the God who wrote it unless you approach it with faith.*

- Again, not just to read the scriptures, but to have a consistent relationship with the Scriptures
- Now that might seem like a strange way to put it. You might be thinking, “How can you have a relationship with a book?”
- But we can because this is so much more than just a book. Nothing has ever been written or will be written that is anything like this book.
- And the writer of Hebrews tells us just how different this book is than any other piece of literature in history.
- First he says:

#### **- THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING**

- This is how you can have a relationship with the Word, because it’s a Living Word
- And once again, like my dad said, we cannot divorce the Scripture from God’s Person
- Furthermore, this word for living, is the same exact word that Jesus used when speaking

to the woman at the well when he told her,  
**“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” -John 4:10 (NKJV)**

- The same Living water that Jesus offered that woman at the well through His presence and relationship He offers us today through the scriptures as well.
- Because the truth of the matter is, this book is not just a set of historical accounts or out dated stories, it is a look into the very heart and Character of God.
  - And the more you come to accurately know the Heart of God the more you received life and life abundantly.
- I also love the Bible being referred to in this context of life because it takes me back to creation, when in Genesis we read, **“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the**

***breath of life; and man became a living being.” -Genesis 2:7 (NKJV)***

- And then of course the breath of life was compromised in mankind whenever sin entered into the world.
  - But God had a plan to restore the breath of life within us.
- He foreshadowed how He would do this, in Ezekiel 37 whenever He took the prophet to the valley of dry bones, and told Him to prophecy over all of these skeletons.
- And as Ezekiel prophesied, the bones began to attach, ligaments and skin formed on the bodies...but he said, there was no breath in them.
  - So God told him to prophecy specifically to the breath so that they would live.
- Then in verse 10, it says ***“So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their***

***feet, an exceedingly great army.” -Ezekiel 37:10 (NKJV)***

- God tells Ezekiel that this is an illustration of what the people of Israel were like. Just dry bones, with no real life within them. But He tells them that there will come a day when that Breath is restored
- And He says that on that day, ***“I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live...” -Ezekiel 37:14a***
- And we see that prophecy come to fruition in John chapter 20, after the resurrection, Jesus appears to His disciples. He says Peace to you, just as the father sent me so I am sending you, and in John 20:22 it says, ***“And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”- John 20:22 (NKJV)***
- So whatever God breathes His Spirit into, truly comes alive.



- And how does this apply to what we're talking about today? Because Paul tells Timothy, ***“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” -2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV)***
  - So because God breathed life into these Scriptures, this book is life-giving in teaching us what we need to know when we need to know it
  - This book is life-giving in rebuking and correcting the areas of our lives that need to be rebuked and corrected
  - This book is life-giving as an instruction manual of living a life that is Right with God
- This Word is alive.
- And the writer also says:
  - **THE WORD OF GOD IS POWERFUL**
    - This word Powerful is the greek word “energēs” - where we get the word energy
    - Some translations say effective, or active.
  - To emphasize that this Living Word of God is here to move powerfully in our lives.
- Now, common thought when we read the phrase, “Word of God” in the N.T., we think that the writers must be referring to only the O.T.
- However, that is not the case. We already showed John referring to Jesus as the Word of God.
  - In the opening of this book, the writer clarifies that in the earlier days God spoke through the Prophets but in these Last Days, He has spoken to us through His Son.
- So in reality, the Word of God consists of 5 different components: God’s divine decrees, God’s speaking through prophets, Jesus Christ Himself, God personally speaking to people, and the written Word of God
- However, of those 5, the only one that we can corporately study together today is what we have in the written Word.

- Also, without the written Word today, we would never understand the other 4.
- And the writer is not just referring to O.T. scriptures, because even the N.T. writers were still seen as giving the Word of God even before the collection of scripture was canonized.
- In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter talks about how some of the teachings of Paul are hard to understand, and there are people trying to twist his teaching, AS they do with the REST of scripture.
- So even Peter recognizes Paul's letters to the churches as Scripture
- Furthermore, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and said, ***“And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the Word of God, which is at work in you believers.” -1 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)***
- So this Word is at work in us. And it's a powerful work.
- And we see throughout Scripture the power that it has in our lives.
- We see that the Word of God has the Power to Save:
  - ***“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.” -Romans 10:17 (ESV)***
  - ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”- Romans 1:16 (ESV)***
  - ***“You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God” -1 Peter 1:23 (ESV)***
- The word of God has the power to save our souls and it has the power transform our lives from the inside out.

- We need this every day because there are many times whenever we feel completely powerless in our lives.
  - We feel powerless to change
  - We feel powerless to do good
  - We feel powerless to help others
  - We feel powerless to make it through the pain and frustration that this life throws at us.
- But the truth of the matter is, we ARE powerless. And we need a power source. So God gives us His presence, He give us His word as our source of Power
- That's why the Proverb says, ***“Every Word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.” -Proverbs 30:5 (ESV)***
- Also Jesus said, ***“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The Words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” -John 6:63 (ESV)***
- Even when it doesn't make sense to the rest of the world or the people around us, Paul says, ***“For the Word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” -1 Corinthians 1:18 (ESV)***
- If there has ever been a time where we need the Power of the Word of God in our lives...it's today
- We need the Word to transform us, to guide us. That's why David said, ***“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” -Psalm 119:105 (ESV)***
- We need the Word to light the paths we need to take in this chaotic, confusing world.
  - We need the Word to shine in our lives for comfort, for encouragement, and also for conviction.
- The Word of God puts a brutal mirror up to us to show us the aspects of our lives that need

to change. And it can be a seemingly brutal process.

- That's why the writer says, ***"The word of God is...sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*** -Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)

- Here, we see: **THE WORD OF GOD IS PIERCING**

- Me and brother Kevin were talking about the power of conviction the other week after church
- And about how if we are truly reading a preaching scripture it's impossible not to get stung every once in a while.
  - If we don't feel a little step on the toes or a little punch to the gut, we're probably not fully preaching the scripture!

- I love the symbolism of the sword here, because it's not the only time we see that in scripture
- In Ephesians 6 when Paul is listing the armor of God he refers to the Word of God as the SWORD of the Spirit
- And I love that reminder because again, you cannot separate the scripture from God's person and the Holy Spirit is an aspect of His person

- But so many Christians try to make it one or the other. You have almost a Bible vs. The Spirit type rivalry between some denominations and theological camps

- However you cannot separate the two!

- *You will never understand the Scripture without the help of the Spirit and you will never understand a movement of the Spirit without the help of Scripture*

- That is also why Jesus told us that it was the Spirit that would lead us into all truth

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- So when the Holy Spirit is enlightening us to the truth of Scripture, that is when it becomes alive powerful to us! And we love that part! We love the idea of that!
- However, we don't love so much the idea of it piercing us.
- *My friend Dave Colbert at church this past week reminded me, "We don't read the scriptures merely for information, but for transformation"*
  - For us to be transformed, God needs to cut some things out of our lives. And that process is not always a pleasant one!
  - Whenever we are confronted with the truth of Scripture, the truth cuts through all of the justifications and excuses that we make for ourselves, clinging on to habits or attitudes we might have that we know are not Christ-like
- And God does so out of His love and Grace because Romans tells us that it is the Goodness of God that leads us to repentance.
- The writer of Hebrews says that the Word pierces us into the deepest depths of our being...and it discerns, more accurately it assesses the thoughts and intentions of our hearts
  - And if we're honest with ourselves, we realize just how broken our hearts are.
    - That's why following your heart is the worst advice that anyone could ever give
    - Jeremiah says that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked! Why would I ever want to follow something like that!
  - No! When we are confronted with actual Truth, the ugliness of our sin becomes ever more apparent to us... and we realize that none of it is hidden from God
- ***"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." -Hebrews 4:13 (NKJV)***

- We can lie to ourselves and talk ourselves into just about anything. We can deceive all of the people around us and put on a facade for them
  - But we can't fool God. He knows you better than you know yourself. He's the Creator and the Designer
  - And no matter what facades we put on or what kind of walls we put up, the Word of God is sharp enough to cut through it all... revealing to us who we really are, but more importantly to show us who Jesus really is.
  - What too many Christians fail to realize, is that the primary purpose for the acknowledgment of our sin in our lives, is not to make you feel all bad and motivate you to work harder to be better.
    - It doesn't work that way. Because like we said last week, Christianity is not about Trying Harder, it's about Trusting More.
- The piercing effect of the Word of God, is not meant to strip us of our hope, it's meant to point us to our Hope
- Naked and opened, or naked and exposed...is literally translated "Stripped and Stunned."
  - He is using this language in the context of the Word being a sharp two-edged sword, because the writer is actually giving a word picture of a gladiator competing in the Roman Colosseum.
  - And this language is comparing to the one who fought as hard as they possibly could, gave it everything that they had...but inevitably lost the fight.
  - And the gladiator is now laying at the feet of his opponent, stripped and stunned, disabled and disarmed, beaten and broken. All that is left is the hope of mercy.
- And if you're familiar with Roman history, or have seen the movie Gladiator, whenever someone was in this position, the fight all but over, they would all look to Casaer, or whoever the highest ranking official was at these games. And the victor would wait for a thumbs up, signaling to show mercy and let the

opponent live. Or a thumbs down, signaling to administer the final blow.

- And too often, we Christians either hear a message like this or share a truth like this and we stop right there.
- As if to say, *“You need to realize that you are nothing but stripped and stunned, disabled and disarmed, beaten and broken before God and you better work really hard to pick yourself up and be better or God’s going to give you that thumbs down!”*
  - And in doing so, we present a very fear based faith, do the writer a vast disservice, and we completely miss out on the rest that this truth actually provides.
- Because the truth is, we *are* nothing but stripped, disarmed, and broken before a Holy God...but the writer goes on to tell us that we lay at the feet of a high priest that sympathizes with us.
- Because He knows exactly what it’s like to be in that position.

- *He allowed Himself to be stripped and stunned by Roman guards.*
- *Even though He was all-powerful God in flesh, He allowed Himself to be disabled and disarmed*
- *He allowed Himself to be beaten and broken, and He took the final blow upon Himself for you and for me.*

- Therefore we realize there is nothing we could ever do to win the fight.
  - We can’t win the fight over temptation
  - We can’t win the fight over pain
  - We can’t win the fight over the troubles of this world
  - But He took our failure upon Himself, so that we could experience victory without doing a single thing to earn it.
- Because when I was in the arena, trying so hard to fight sin, fight temptation, fight the troubles of this world

- No matter how hard I tried, no matter how hard I fought, I just kept gettin beat. My sin, my regrets, the enemies of hell beat me down left me stripped and stunned, disabled and disarmed, and stood over me, mocking me, just waiting for permission to administer the final blow.
- And the judgment was death. But before the judgement was carried out. The very Son of One sitting on the Judgement Seat, got up from the right hand of the King, stepped into the arena, and all of heaven and earth watched in utter confusion as He picked me up, took my place, and didn't just let me go....no, He told me to take a seat with the Royal family...
  - And all I could do is watch, as He took the blow that I deserved, that I earned because of all of my failure
  - But He took it for me, so that I could go before the Throne with all of the Rights of a Child of the King
- Therefore, the writer says, ***“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” -Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV)***
- Now, my boldness before the Throne doesn't come from my confidence and security in who I am...no it comes from knowing what Jesus went through to give me this opportunity, so I can confidently take advantage of it.
- I never go before the Throne with Entitlement... No, I go before the Throne in order to Honor the One who saved me and allowed me to be here.
- You see, despite how broken and sinful we are...The Father accepts us because of What Jesus did for us.
  - We can go before the Throne with boldness, or also translated, "Cheerful Courage"...full of gratitude for what Jesus did on my behalf
  - God is pleased to Show you Grace because He is Pleased with the Work of Jesus....God



is Pleased to Show you Mercy because He is pleased with the what Jesus did for you

- You are pleasing in God's sight, because you have been washed by the Blood of Jesus and Hidden in Christ.
- WE OWE HIM EVERYTHING!
  - So He can cut out anything He wants to cut out of my life...He can move in whatever way He wants to move in my life...Because I owe it ALL to Him anyway.
- And these are the conclusions that we come to, whenever we have a consistent relationship with the Word of God in our lives.
- So let's consistently pray that the Word would come alive to us, that it would move Powerfully in Us, and that it would Pierce us and expose what we need to be exposed...