



2026 2Q Growing in a Relationship with God Lesson 4: The Role of the Bible

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read 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 NIV84

What does this text mean?

How is the word of God living and active? How is it like a double-edged sword? What does it mean to divide soul and spirit?

Is it some type of magic, incantation, something supernatural that when we read God's word it activates some mystical energy that makes changes, like coming under a spell? Or is this describing some aspect of reality? Some aspect of how God constructed life to work and how God's power works?

What is the soul and what is the spirit? The text gives a clue when it then contrasts joints and marrow and thoughts and attitudes.

The soul is analogous to a computer's software, it is your unique individuality, personhood, which would correspond to the structures of your being (joints), the thoughts you think, beliefs you hold, values you choose, framework your mind is built around etc., and the spirit is the animating motivating energy, which corresponds to the marrow within the bones from which blood is derived, the deep wellsprings of the heart, the attitudes or motivational energy that drives us.

We come into the world descended from Adam animated by a spirit of fear and selfishness and form individualities, identities, souls based on the motivations of the spirit of fear and therefore naturally form beliefs, values, and practices that protect self and justify us.

The Word of God calls our false beliefs about self, God, the world, what we think is good and healthy into question—the light of truth shines in and exposes all that is not true, not healthy, and as we are enlightened and choose to accept and say yes to God's word, the truth becomes encoded into the substructures of our brains and we experience not only a change in thought, but our souls, our identities, are separated from the spirit of fear, we grow in the spirit of love and trust and move from survival driven ways of living, to ever increasing love, trust, truth, openness, giving, and godly ways of living.

Truth sets free, the Word of God is the written source of divinely inspired truth about God, humanity, sin, our condition, our value to God, God's solution to the sin problem and thus as we partake of His Word and incorporate it into our lives the spirit of fear, selfishness, and distrust is cut away from our souls and we are reborn and grow by the animating Spirit of truth, love, and trust. But it is all dependent upon our choosing to accept God's truth.

This is how reality works—and it works in reverse as well. Lies believed separate the soul from the spirit of love and trust and infect the soul with the spirit of fear and selfishness—this is what happened to Adam and Eve in Eden. Because of their sin, we are born already infected with the spirit of fear and selfishness and thus we must have that destructive spirit cut out of our hearts and minds as the controlling power, and the sword of the Spirit, the word of God is one of God's instruments that we can wield in cooperation with God for the freeing of our souls from the control of fear and selfishness.

This is not magic—in fact, if one uses the Bible as a magic book, as a good luck charm, carrying it because they think it functions like a rabbit's foot or a four leaf clover, and they end up reading the Bible like a book of incantations that they believe allows them to tap into supernatural powers. Reading the Bible in this way encodes lies, distortions, fiction, and fantasy into the brain and people become ever more fearful and self-centered.

The Bible is helpful in our healing journey to the degree we receive truth from it. If we use the Bible to encode lies that will make us more afraid of God and we further strengthen the spirit of fear and selfishness and are not set free. This is what the Jews in Christ's day were doing and Jesus said to them:

- You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. John 5:39-40 NIV84.

They were studying the right Bible, but they were not getting truth from it—why not?

Because they went to it with the wrong premises, assumptions, pre-existing beliefs about the Bible—that God's law functions like human law, sin is a legal problem, God uses power to kill and destroy, and the Bible is the key to finding out the right rules to avoid getting into legal trouble and punished by God.

They were not reading Scripture to find out what was actually there, what it actually teaches; they were reading Scripture to support their presuppositions and beliefs.

What are the keys to being truly benefited by Scripture reading?

We must remember that while the Bible is the inspired Word of God and contains the truth of salvation, God's eternal truths are not restricted to the Bible. The Bible teaches that God reveals His truths in many other ways:

- Science/Nature—For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Romans 1:20 NIV84
- Life experiences—“Taste and see that the LORD is good” Psalm 34:8 NIV84; Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” John 20:27
- Direct communication—Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Hannah
- Dreams—Joseph, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel
- Prophets—Noah, Jonah, and all the others
- Rituals—sacrificial system, baptism, communion
- Witness and testimony of others
- Direct observation of cause and effect

Then why was the Bible given? It has many specific purposes—not just one:

- Perhaps most importantly in our time, the Bible is the divinely inspired standard against which to test all other lines of evidence.
 - “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isaiah 8:20 NKJV.
 - So while God absolutely reveals Himself and truth through other lines of evidence—those other lines must be tested by the Scripture and when in harmony then we believe.
 - But this is also true, our understanding of Scripture must also harmonize with clear and unequivocal truth from nature and life experiences. For instance, the Dark Ages interpretation that the Earth is flat and the sun revolves around the Earth, needed to be revised when science confirmed that the Earth is round and rotates around the sun. The problem was not in the Bible, the problem was in people misinterpreting the Bible. We must go beyond what the Bible says, to comprehend the truth, what it actually means.
- But the Bible, in addition to being a standard to measure other threads of evidence by, is also a source of revelation of knowledge not attainable from any source (other than directly from God or His angels speaking), such as creation of Earth and life by God in 7 literal days, humans made in His image, Sabbath sacredness, Lucifer’s rebellion, the fall and cause of human sin, God’s plan of salvation etc.
- A book of evidence of God’s dealing with humanity and the results of applying His methods versus apply Satan’s methods.
- Stories to inspire and encourage
- Wisdom for how life is designed to work
- Ultimately a revelation of God to us to win us back to trust

What other principles, methods, tools, have you found that are essential or helpful in studying the Bible?

1. We must understand the overall context of Scripture—not just the immediate context, which is what many Bible students focus on and, thus, they lose the forest for the trees; i.e., they lose the broader message for the local message. The overall context is a is the Great Controversy over God’s character and government centering upon Satan’s lies about God which undermine trust. The conflict between the two antagonistic principles, methods, modes—and this requires we realize that the battle is not physical.
2. So, we read the Bible and read about real events happen in history to discern the underlying battle of ideas, concepts, and beliefs—seeking to win hearts and minds to one side or the other. God’s weapons are truth, love, and freedom. Satan’s weapons are lies, fear-based selfishness, and coercion.
3. Understanding the Bible is the revelation of the truth about God, His character and methods, how reality works in harmony with God’s design laws, then we can discern God’s plan to send Jesus to save humankind; How through achievement, through truth revealed in action, not declaration merely, God exposes Satan as the source of evil, death, pain, and suffering and reveals throughout history the problems that deviating from God’s design cause.
4. Another key to understanding the Bible correctly is Genesis 3:15, after mankind sinned salvation is only possible by Jesus coming. This truth becomes a lens that focuses our understanding of both what has been recorded in Scripture and what is happening. We see God working to fulfill the promise and with Satan working to oppose God by seeking to close the avenue through which the Messiah would be born. This focus lets us understand why we follow the specific lives we follow in Scripture.
5. The Old Testament records real people who did real things; thus, it is a book that is historically accurate. However, of the billions of people who have ever lived, only a few are recorded in Scripture. This is because the focus of Scripture is the plan of salvation. Thus, God inspired His penmen to record the stories that were not only historically accurate but also revealed cosmic truths—were metaphorical for the battle between Christ and Satan and provide insight into the plan of salvation—seven miracle births, the Exodus an object lesson of our exodus from sin and journey to the promised land, and so many more examples.
6. Some specific rules of interpreting Bible prophecy are:
 - If one part of a passage is symbolic or metaphor, then the rest is symbolic or metaphor unless clear reasons for taking it as literal are expressed in the text.
 - The Bible should be used to interpret itself (i.e., symbol interpretations should rely on Bible definitions before other definitions).
 - The general theme is that of the conflict between Christ and Satan.
 - God’s character of love never changes; therefore, interpretations should never result in God being represented with a character other than love.
 - God’s law of love never changes; therefore, interpretations should always be in harmony with God’s law of love.
 - God’s other design laws never change; therefore, interpretations should not violate God’s design laws for life.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph,

- Before we explore why the Bible is so valuable and how to dig deeper in our personal Bible study, we must understand something: one of the most significant attacks Satan can make on you is to stop you from spending time with God in His Word. Keeping people away from their Bibles through business, apathy, tiredness, or doubt is his number-one strategy. He knows that when we spend time with God in His Word, it revives our lives and nourishes our souls; so, of course, he would do everything to prevent this! *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 31.

It is so true that Satan wants to keep us away from the Bible—as he wants to keep us away from all sources of God’s truth. The lesson cite as a means to do this business, apathy, tiredness, and doubt.

What other things have you found that interfere with regular study of God’s word?

I want to point out that the business that interferes does not have to be worldly business—I have discovered that if the devil can’t get someone to choose evil or to neglect time with God, he will seek to overwhelm them with godly causes so much that they neglect their time for rest, recovery, devotions and meditations and ultimately burn out and/or become discouraged or slowly deviate from the truth. Jesus, in His humanity, took time away from the real-world needs of people for His sleep, spiritual rest, and time with His Father.

But what are other ways that Satan interferes with Bible study? Isn’t one of them to get people to have the wrong filter on when reading? To go to the Bible with a spirit of fear and defensiveness in order to prove oneself right and others wrong? The Pharisees in Christ’s day approached Christ with Scripture seeking to do just this—and they were not benefited by their study of Scripture. I have experienced people doing this with me. If the heart and mind are not open to learn truth from Scripture, if instead the attitude is one of using Scripture to defend self and prove others wrong, it is very likely one is not reading the Scripture correctly.

Read second paragraph,

- We are told that “Satan employs every possible device to prevent [people] from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 593. Satan knows that God’s powerful Word makes him powerless. Satan knows that prayer and Bible study are the most powerful weapons humanity can use against him (Eph. 6:17, 18; Heb. 4:12), so he does everything he can to stop us from reading and praying. He knows that God’s words are powerful and that they not only spoke this world into existence (Ps. 33:6), but they can raise the dead (John 11:41–44) and give us strength to overcome (Matt. 4:1–11). *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 31.

How is it that God's Word makes Satan powerless?

Satan is the father of lies—and what does truth do to lies? It exposes and destroys them. Thus, Satan only succeeds by preventing truth from being understood and embraced by people—and he has a variety of strategies.

Jesus gave the parable of the sower who was sowing seeds of truth, but the truth didn't take root in all the hearts where it was cast—why not? What is revealed about Satan's methods?

- So Jesus said to them: "Don't you understand that this illustration demonstrates that God's kingdom operates upon natural law — design protocols for life? If you don't understand this, you will misunderstand all my illustrations. The farmer plants the words of truth into the hearts of people. Some people have hearts that are hard and callous, like a road, and they don't respond to the truth when it is presented. They hear the truth, but they don't consider it seriously: Satan distracts them with some temptation or problem, and the truth is forgotten. Other people have hearts like gravel—shifting and unstable: they respond with excitement to every new idea, but nothing takes root. And since the truth doesn't take root in their hearts, they only stay involved briefly. As soon as the truth requires some sacrifice or actual work on their part, they quit and move on to their next emotional fix. There are other people, who have minds like soil filled with weeds and thorns. They hear the truth, but the thorns of worry and fear, or the weeds of seeking healing of heart in fame, fortune, or other earthly desires choke out truth and love, and make their hearts desolate. But there are those whose hearts are like fertile soil. They hear the truth, comprehend it, love it, embrace it, nurture it, choose it, and build on it; and it heals, transforms and renews them, causing them to produce fruits of righteousness even more than a hundred times what was planted in them." Mark 4:13-20 REM.

The lesson also said, "He knows that God's words are powerful and that they not only spoke this world into existence (Ps. 33:6), but they can raise the dead (John 11:41-44) and give us strength to overcome (Matt. 4:1-11)."

What can God speak into existence and what can He not speak into existence?

God can speak into existence:

- Space
- Time
- Matter
- Energy
- Life—including free intelligent beings
- The laws that govern the operations of the universe

God cannot speak into existence:

- What free beings choose to believe
- Who free beings choose to trust

- Who and what free beings choose to love
- To whom free beings are loyal
- Who or what free beings worship
- What character free beings develop

Why? Because of God created reality—God is love, and love only exists in freedom and He created life to operate in freedom.

This is why every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind—for only as we are persuaded and say yes are we changed and transformed. It is also why God does not predetermine or predestine who will be saved and who will be lost—that happens only in artificial systems, where puppets or robots are being controlled.

MONDAY

The title is Scripture and Authority—what is the authority of Scripture?

Why is the Scripture authoritative?

Is it authoritative because it is inspired by God, the act of being inspired makes it authoritative, or something else that inspiration brings is what constitutes Scriptures authority?

Does God want us to believe because the Bible said it? The Bible said it, I believe it, that settles it?

The lesson references,

- All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness 2 Timothy 3:16 KJV.

Any concerns? Is this an inspired truth as it reads? Could it be misunderstood to teach something that is not inspired?

If you had an original KJV of the Bible, then after reading this verse, you could turn in your Bible and read the Maccabees, Esdras, Bel and the dragon and many other apocryphal books, which were all part of the KJV for 274 years being removed from the KJV in 1885—and would you consider these inspired by God? They are included in the Roman Catholic Bible and still considered inspired by them—and those who value them will use their Bible and point to 2 Timothy 3:16 as proof that these are inspired by God.

And this is an example of how translations can introduce misunderstanding. God did not inspire the words of the Bible, but the penmen of the Bible. And the penmen wrote in the language they knew, not in English. Paul wrote in Greek and the Greek can be translated differently, to include:

- For all Scripture, inspired by God, is beneficial for teaching, redirecting, correcting and training — to promote character transformation 2 Timothy 3:16 REM.

Okay, so we have the right, inspired Scriptures, what makes what we read authoritative? Because God inspired that it be written OR the truths that are conveyed by what was written?

Is it the act of inspiring, or the truths contained? Does it make a difference?

If a person believes the Bible is inspired of God and takes the position because it is inspired, then anything it tells me is truth and I must do it—could there be problems?

- If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. Matthew 5:29 NIV84.
- Use the silver [tithe] to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. Deuteronomy 14:26 NIV84.
- Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish; let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more. Proverbs 31:6-7 NIV84.

Are we to take the approach that the Bible is inspired by God and we are to take it as it reads and do it—or are we to stop and ask, what is the truth, what is going on, what does it mean, what is being revealed and then when we understand the divinely inspired truth and how it is to be applied then we say yes and through God’s grace seek to do it?

- “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. Isaiah 1:18 NIV84.

Why has God linked reasoning with Him and cleansing from sin?

Why didn’t God say, “Come now, memorize the Bible and do what it says, for I have said it and yours is not to reason why simply to accept it, do it, or die”?

Read last sentence of the second paragraph and the third paragraph,

- God doesn’t bypass human reason but invites us to submit it to His Word and wisdom when “working out” our salvation.

Human reason, however, is still human—capable of error and deception. It’s never infallible. It’s possible for human reason to push God aside to try to work things out on our own, which places self as equal to, or above, God when it comes to thinking. People can approach Scripture with an arrogant and critical spirit, thinking they’ve heard it all before and that there is nothing new. It’s when we feel important, confident, self-sufficient, and in need of nothing

that we neglect our relationship with God and rely on our own limited knowledge and faulty reasoning. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 32.

What is the relationship between human reason and Bible study? Is there some other faculty we are to use beside human reason? Yes our consciences in humble surrender to the Lord to lead us in understanding and comprehending, thus our hearts and minds are to be cleansed by the truth.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- A trend among some liberal theologians in the 1960s was to write God out of the field of theology. In 2017, a cover story of Time magazine featured the headline “Is Truth Dead?” It’s interesting because this trend illustrates the position of our society today. The very idea of “truth” itself is decaying to such an extent that no one knows what truth is anymore. According to popular culture, there is no measuring stick, no foundation that remains constant that can be depended upon to endure the test of time. Contrary to this, Jesus said, “ ‘I am the . . . truth’ ” (John 14:6). His Word testifies about Him as truth in complete purity. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 33.

What is truth? To me, it means reality, what is real, accurate, factual, the way things are. Fiction is make-believe, fantasy, untruth, myth, lies.

Have we seen a decay in society of the belief in truth, not in a specific truth, but in the idea that there is truth?

What of the philosophy “that’s your truth, it’s not my truth” Or, “this is my truth”?

This is an example of how Satan and evil works. Words connote meaning and encode those meanings into our brains impacting our spirits, attitudes, and become filters through which we interpret and internalize new experiences, evidences, and both new truths and lies. Satan works to redefine words to mean something they originally did not mean in order to bring into the minds of people ideas that are not true.

Lies that are directly and openly opposed to known truth are not effective to those who know the truth, therefore, Satan works by redefining the words that convey truth with subtle alterations that turn the mind slightly off target, and perhaps even attaching an unstated but different truth to the new distortion that ultimately leads the person into error.

This way of impacting minds has been termed **Semantic Drift**? It is the subtle redefinition of words to introduce ideas, concepts, beliefs that the words do not originally mean and thereby introduce falsehood into people’s minds without them realizing it.

Step 1: Start with a True Word

A word is grounded in reality—something observable, testable, or coherent with how things actually function.

- Truth = what corresponds to reality
- Love = acting for the good of others
- Freedom = the ability to function in harmony with reality

Step 2: Introduce a Subtle Redefinition

The word is kept, but its meaning is quietly altered.

- “Truth” → your personal perspective
- “Love” → whatever feels good or affirming
- “Freedom” → doing whatever you want without constraint

This step is rarely announced—it’s implied through repetition, culture, and emotional appeal.

Step 3: Normalize the New Meaning

The redefined word gets repeated in media, education, conversations:

- “Speak your truth”
- “Love is love” (undefined)
- “Live your truth freely”

At this stage, people feel familiarity, not suspicion.

Step 4: Use the Word to Justify Conclusions

Now the corrupted definition is used to reason and make decisions:

- If truth is subjective → disagreement becomes oppression
- If love is feeling → actions that hurt feelings are labeled “harmful”
- If freedom is unrestricted → consequences are seen as injustice

Step 5: Disconnect from Reality (Consequences Follow)

Because the word no longer points to reality, people live their lives by following false maps, false roadmaps for life and:

- Confusion increases
- Conflict increases
- Harm can be justified as good—just defending their truth
- We see this in the transgender movement today

And those in darkness do not appreciate the light of truth but rage against it because the truth exposes their fiction and inflames their spirit of fear, guilt, shame, and self-loathing. They need repentance and rebirth, but instead they double down on their fiction and lies and seek to destroy those who carry the truth. We see this in the life of Jesus, the apostles, Christian history, and in the world today.

We see this in the food industry all the time—redefining words:

- Healthy, nutritious, organic—yet read the label and see what is in the box?
- Reality doesn't change because we call it something different.

Satan is the father of lies and one of his most potent weapons is to redefine words because: **If you redefine the word, you redirect the mind.**

So when you see words being redefined to mean something they are not, recognize this as one of Satan's methods to corrupt and destroy.

I am labeling this method as demonic, not the person saying it! Innocent people can believe lies and tell those lies without maliciousness, so I am not suggesting that if you hear a person using redefined words in their false light that they are in their heart evil or trying to mislead. I am suggesting that they have been listening to some source that is infecting their minds with lies and they are saying untruths that are harmful and all lies trace back to Satan. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

This is why Jesus said,

- Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. Matthew 5:37 NIV84.

What Jesus is saying is that our words, our answers, our speaking needs to be clear, direct, accurate, with meanings that are truthful, and that all attempts to subtly change the meaning of words to something they are not is evil, it is a form of lying, and when lies are believed they corrupt the person, hearts and minds—just like introducing errors into computer code corrupts the operating system.

Now with this in mind, can you identify the most destructive distortion of a word that introduces falsehoods about God, about reality, about God's kingdom that has been introduced into hearts and minds and undermines trust in God and obstructs God's healing—and which we are called specifically to confront and destroy with the sword of truth?

The redefinition of God's law from the design law protocols of law of love, truth, freedom upon which reality is built and which deviations are inherently destructive resulting in death—to the lie that God's laws are no different in function than the types of laws creatures make up, made up rules that require God to use external power to inflict death for law breaking.

This redefinition of the word law is at the root of the Great Controversy and whenever and wherever it is believed, the mind that believes it is corrupted, their conception of God is perverted, their love and trust in God is undermined, fear is incited, which shapes the inner world to seek protection from punishment rather than loving/trusting connection for healing. And this results in the false penal legal theologies in which Jesus is presented as doing something to the Father to protect us from the Father.

We must come back to reality, we must leave the fantasy land of imperial law, and again worship God and Creator, understanding His laws are design law and that sin destroys while God heals and saves, but He is only able to heal and save us if we trust Him and we will only trust Him if we actually know Him and knowing Him requires we know the truth, thus the truth will set us free.

So we have exposed a very destructive method to corrupt hearts and minds—the redefining of words to mean something they do not truly mean. And this type of lying leads to another form of mind control and deception—false authorities and who we trust.

You see when we begin to believe things that are in fact contrary to reality, reality itself, along with the work of the Holy Spirit, will bring conviction to hearts and minds that their course is not right. If the person responds to the truth and repents and embraces and applies the truth, then they experience healing, maturing, growth. But this means acknowledging they were wrong which typically results in a transient/temporary negative emotional experience of anxiety, fear, humiliation, grief, frustration, and often arrogance, pride, not wanting to be wrong, causes people instead of repentance to deny the truth—and in order to maintain their fantasy, their self-comforting fiction, they then formulate mental constructs that insulate them from truth. They choose to prioritize other things as having authority over the truth such as:

- Their feelings—if it feels good it is good
- False frameworks, including false theologies
- Surround self with like-minded individuals who all reinforce the same lie

Paul describes this in Romans:

- Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. Romans 1:32 NIV84

What is being described? Denial of what they know is true and then surrounding self with others who prefer the lie and they all approve of each other reinforcing their lies. Again, nothing in our society so clearly demonstrates this that the transgender fiction.

Other examples of replacing the authority of truth with something else?

- Authority of office—pastor, priest, pope, Bible, God—“God said it, I believe it that settles it.”
- Authority of degree—MD, PhD etc. expert opinion
- Authority of law/government—the law or judge says so
- Authority of tradition—it has been done this way for generations

The mature are those who have learned to think for themselves and understand reality as God designed it because it is actually that way.

Where does the Bible fit into this?

It is a divinely inspired book that contains eternal truth, *when rightly understood*, but the Bible can be misunderstood and misapplied, through various methods as we have just demonstrated, such as taking Bible truths and redefining the words.

Like God's wrath—in the Bible is God giving people up and letting them go to reap the natural consequences of what sin does to the sinner—see Romans 1:18-32. But Satan gets people to redefine the word wrath to mean human wrath, satanic wrath, which is the use of power to inflict harm on people who displease you.

Thus the only way to rightly understand the Bible is with a mind/heart guided by the Holy Spirit with the individual actively engaging their God-given reasoning ability to harmonize Scripture with all of God's revealed evidences and truths, meaning harmonizing it with nature/science and life's experiences.

Read the second paragraph,

- The Bible declares that basic truth, Jesus Himself, doesn't change (Heb. 13:8). At the same time, as we read God's Word, our understanding of God and His truth can grow. "There are mines of truth yet to be discovered by the earnest seeker."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 704. In speaking of "truth," Ellen G. White always referred to truth as given by God through His Word. We can search for additional light in the Bible because God's Word never contradicts past truths but instead builds on them. *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 33.

The lesson takes a position that one of the founders of the SDA church, EGW "always referred to truth as given by God through His Word." And there is no question about it that EGW upheld the Bible as our standard of faith with statements like this:

- **The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed**, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God's Word is infallible. Instead of wrangling with one another, let men exalt the Lord. Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying, "It is written." Let us lift up the banner on which is inscribed, **The Bible our rule of faith and discipline**. *The Review and Herald*, December 15, 1885, emphasis mine.

So absolutely, we hold the Bible alone as our creed, meaning the entire Bible as our standard—no question about it.

But to understand the Bible correctly, it is interesting that she didn't teach we read it in isolation, but truth requires its harmony with all other revelations. What I find most significant about these statements is that I discovered them *after* we began teaching the integrative evidenced based approach:

- **God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith.** His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony **that appeals to our reason**; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. **Our faith must rest upon evidence**, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth, will find **plenty of evidence** on which to rest their faith. *Steps to Christ*, p. 105, emphasis mine.
- **The great storehouse of truth is the word of God—the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience in God’s dealing with human life.** Here are the treasures from which **Christ’s workers are to draw**. In the search after truth they are to depend upon God, not upon human intelligences, the great men whose wisdom is foolishness with God. **Through His own appointed channels** the Lord will impart a knowledge of Himself to every seeker. *Christ’s Object Lessons* p. 125, emphasis mine.
- Rightly understood, both the **revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testimony of Scripture to the constant working of God in nature.** *Education* p. 130, emphasis mine.
- **Jesus followed the divine plan of education.** The schools of His time, with their magnifying of things small and their belittling of things great, He did not seek. **His education was gained directly from the Heaven-appointed sources; from useful work, from the study of the Scriptures and of nature, and from the experiences of life—God’s lesson books**, full of instruction to all who bring to them the willing hand, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart. *Education* p. 77, emphasis mine.

Read the last paragraph,

- In the end, the Bible, and the Bible alone, must be the foundational source of what we understand as truth. All other sources must be tried and tested by the Word of God. Even what we deem “reason” needs to be tested by God’s Word! *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 33.

All other sources must be tried and tested against the Word of God, but the Word of God must be tried and tested against the other divinely appointed sources of truth—His laws built into the operations of nature and life experiences.

WEDNESDAY

Read the first paragraph,

- What might change in your home if you turned to the Bible when faced with a big decision, relationship problem, or challenge? What might change in your workplace or church if the words of the Bible truly became the lens through which people viewed the world and chose to live by? *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 34.

What about this sentence, “What might change in your workplace or church if the words of the Bible truly became the lens through which people viewed the world and chose to live by?”

Is there a difference between the “words of the Bible” and the truths of the Bible? Is there a difference in words and meaning? Didn’t we just describe how words can be subtly distorted with false meaning? Satan often attack by getting us to attach false meanings to the words of the Bible!

- Redefining God’s law in false light
- Redefining God’s wrath in a false light
- Redefining Christ’s sacrifice in a false light
- Redefining death in a false light
- Redefining predestination in a false light
- Redefining salvation in a false light

And on the list goes. So, can a person follow the words of the Bible and not follow the truths of the Bible?

Yes, we have to start with the words of the Bible, what does the Bible say—but we must go beyond what the Bible says, to what is the meaning, what is the truth contained within those words—and this is why I have paraphrased the Bible because I believe much of the words of the Bible have been translated into English with linguistic honesty and integrity, however, because of the beliefs of the translators they have translated in ideas that the Bible does not originally intend or contain. One example already given related to the inspiration of Scripture, but the most common distortion translated in is the penal/legal distortion about God’s law. This happens in so many ways, when the linguistics allow for more than one word too often translators choose penal legal sounding words, like justice instead of righteousness—both English words come from the same Greek. We do not hear those words the same.

We must seek to go beyond words to the truth meaning, which requires we harmonize all 66 books of Scripture together in our understanding, as we harmonize it with nature and experience.

THURSDAY

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13:

- And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 NIV84.

Read the third paragraph,

- God’s Word works in us when we believe. When you open your Bible and believe that God has something to say to you through the words on the pages, He will indeed speak to you and work in your life. But so much depends on your faith and your expectations. The good news is that if your faith is small, God can help it to grow (Mark 9:24), even if it’s tiny like a mustard seed (Luke 17:6). *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 35.

Yes, the Word of God works in us—how? As we study God’s Word and are persuaded upon its truths and in our hearts say yes to the truth, “Yes, that’s true, yes, I believe that.” Those truths become encoded into our brains and we experience changes in attitude, spiritual changes, we become more receptive to more truth, align more with love, become less comfortable with lies, exploitation, we eventually are led to trust God and open the heart to Him and experience a new power animating and motivating us, love, trust, peace, joy. And as we continue to internalize into our hearts and minds God’s truths not just as ideas but as choices in how we live, our brains rewire, our habits change, our day to day baseline state of beings grows, matures, heals. We are in reality changed by God’s Word—however this is a reality of how God created us to function.

We are not only changed by God’s Word, we are also changed by lies, by internalizing fear, selfishness, and destructive ideas and practices. They become encoded into our brains, change our attitudes, inciting more fear, guilt, shame, causing more self-centered self-protective survival actions, we become less loving, more suspicious, more guarded, less open, and truth and love have a harder time reaching us.

It really does matter what we choose to focus upon, internalize, believe, value, and ultimately who we trust.