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Words of Life
Psalm 119:97-104

My friend Lynda just returned from a mission trip with V.E.T. Net to Mongolia. They work with families in the rural areas of Mongolia to improve the care of their livestock, the very thing that keeps these families alive.

But they also delivered Mongolian Bibles, taught classes, worshiped, held retreats, and stayed with local residents to share the story of Jesus Christ.

Lynda says the rural Mongolian people are hungry for God's Word, something that is rare here in the U.S., where there are so many other entertainments and distractions.

Life in rural Mongolia is lived in a small hut, with an outhouse beside, and a working farm. A small stove inside the hut burns wood during the day and coal at night, for cooking and warmth in the sub zero temperatures near the border of Russia. Life is simple, and it can be harsh.

Depression, alcoholism, and domestic violence are common problems in these villages, and the story of a loving Savior is good news indeed. A Holy Book like the Bible is truly a Godsend, a welcomed gift of life to a people looking for hope in an often dreary existence.

Lynda was especially moved and refreshed while leading a women's retreat and studying Philippians 4 with these humble women. The passages were about rejoicing, giving thanks in all circumstances, and giving all things to God in prayer. After studying the verses, she asked through the interpreter, what does this mean to you? And she expected something rather American, like for them to talk about how hard it is to really do these things....

instead the leader of the women spoke up and said, "Well, it seems very simple. God asks us to do it, God will give us the ability to do it—so we're going to rejoice, give thanks, and pray! "

She was amazed to find such excitement and acceptance for God's Word. Such a refreshing attitude about our Holy Book.

Unfortunately here in America, where almost everyone has a Bible readily available to them, and churches are found on nearly every corner, we take it for granted.

Gallup Polls recently announced that 40% of Americans don't know basics about any of the Holy Books of major religions, especially the Bible.

Over 40% did not know the first four books of the New Testament.

(ABC news even tested the theory on people leaving Mass).

Can you name them? Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. What about where Jesus was born? Remember the little town of Bethlehem?

How about the first book of the Bible? Genesis.

Ever seen “Jaywalking” with Jay Leno? They are always able to stump people with questions about the Bible like

who was Moses? Oh yea—a big King?

Or what did Noah build? The Temple?

It's unfortunate because so much of our culture is rooted in scripture, and we don't even realize it because we've lost the practice of studying it—

we've lost the practice of studying it as Christians too,

even those who are in the church doors every time they're open!

We have a great *deficit* in knowing God's Word,

Which means we are missing out on a part of our *relationship* with God,

A vital part of our relationship with Jesus Christ!

It's like trying to develop a friendship, without conversation....

You see we believe that the Bible is more than just a Good Book.

And, it's more than factual *information*—What does that mean?

This book is the inspired Word of God, written through human hands

It has been translated from original Greek and Hebrew...now we read it in

English. It's far too rich to take every word literally, it's deeper than that, we

read it as a whole, we interpret it together, we study and study, and keep

studying...Because....We believe THE BIBLE IS *ALIVE*.

Hebrews 4:12 says it this way, *the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Unlike the words of other sacred books,
the words of the Bible were not just handed down to someone—
we believe they are the **WORDS OF a LIVING GOD**.

We believe that these words hold **God's power**.

Remember how God created the world?
God SPOKE and it came into being...
Genesis 1 says *And God said, 'let there be light' and there was light....*
Each new bit of creation—God speaks, and it happens.
God's WORDS have power.

So much so that God's Word is even **personified**...
In the person of Jesus Christ.
John doesn't open his gospel with the Nativity story—instead he starts
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

To the early Jews the word "**WORD**" **was more than just a noun**.
They believed that "word" meant action—it was something that happened,
the way that God's word created the world.

So it makes sense for **Jesus** to be known as the Word.

In the gospel of John the word for word is **Logos in Greek**...
Logos is word, logic, reason, wisdom that makes the world work.
It is the meaning in the universe.

So the **Bible** is the Word,
and **Jesus** is the Word,
and the Word is where we find
reason, wisdom, and meaning!

This book is literally ALIVE—living and active, able to bring meaning to our lives.

Just as our words reveal ourselves to others,
God's Word reveals the mind of God to us.

The Bible is a way God relates to us,
the way God communicates with us...it is God's word, and it is ALIVE

Not only is the Bible alive because it's God's word...

The Bible is alive because you can NEVER GET TO THE END OF IT.

As the psalmist says, "*the grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of the Lord stands forever.*"...Psalm 119:89 says 'your word O Lord, is eternal'

It's kind of like getting to know someone,
getting to know your Bible takes a lifetime.
There's always more to each sentence,
deeper meanings behind every story.
It doesn't matter how many times you read it,
you can always get something more,
something new from the words.

Regardless of how many times you read it, there's always more to learn.
Consider the story of the prodigal son—
one time you read it and you're touched by the prodigal,
but another time you notice how amazing the father is,
another time you might understand the elder son.

Same with ***Psalm 23***...

Think of all the treasures in each and every verse...

The Bible is alive... the more you read it, the more you want to read it.
It keeps talking to us, revealing more and more about God.

Martin Luther put it this way, *The Bible is alive, it speaks to me;
it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me.*

Did you know that the entire ***Psalm 119*** is about God's word?
It describes what God's word does in our lives, in 22 sections, one for each letter
of the Hebrew alphabet.

I encourage you to read through it this week.

Verse 9 says '*how can a young person keep his way pure?
By living according to your word.*'

Verse 28 says *My soul is weary, strengthen me with your word.*

Verse 98 says '*your words make me wiser
than my enemies*'

Psalm 119 reminds us that
God's Word brings *wisdom, understanding, it keeps us on the right path..*
God's word has the power to *convict us--*
 To show us where we have fallen short, and
 Where we need to grow in faith.

We read a story like the *Good Samaritan*,
 And we realize that we have been like the priests
 who passed by the injured man on the side of the road.

God's word also has the power to *uplift and encourage* us—if we are willing to
put ourselves right into the words.

Consider *Isaiah 43*—put your name into these words,
 and hear what God says to you.

*But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed
you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name,
you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through
the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not
be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. 3 For I am the Lord your God, the
Holy One of Israel, your Savior... you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I
love you...*

What about *Philippians 4:13*?

I (put your name here), can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Psalm 119 reminds us that God's word *transforms us*.

We need this book.

It's not just information—it's a story of God's love for all creation.

It's a love **LETTER** from God—

 St. Augustine said the scriptures are
 'our letters from Home'

Have YOU ever considered God's Word a letter to YOU?

Psalm 119 reminds us that God's Word is our word

We need this book.

We need to read it as our own *family album*,

 The stories of our ancestors of faith.

Because these words are alive,
we need to OPEN OUR HEARTS to it.

*I love what I read about a man who said he had received
no inspiration from the Bible although
he had “gone through it several times.”
“Let it go **through you** once,” replied his friend,
“then you will tell a different story!”*

If we let the Bible *go through us*.
If we open our hearts and minds to it...
we can meet and know the God who lives within its pages. Have You?

And it starts by reading one word, one sentence, one page at a time.
Little by little letting God’s words sink into your soul.
And the more you read, the more you’ll want to read....

Do you want to have the *desire to read* the Bible?
Start reading just a bit at a time.
Do you want to hunger for its knowledge and power?
Keep on reading.

If you *don’t understand* what’s happening....
Go to a commentary or a concordance. Use a study Bible.
Go to an online Bible and look for more information

If you *can’t find the time* to read the Bible.
Start with just a few sentences a day...
the gospels, or the psalms.
Or one of these wonderful *One Year Bibles*—

And most importantly, when you get stuck, or busy, or bored,
Turn the page, and keep on reading!
Because this is not just a good book.

There's a saying about the Bible....

"This Book is the mind of God, the state of humanity, the way of salvation.... Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the Christian's character. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. Follow its precepts and it will lead you to Calvary, to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ; yes, to glory itself, for eternity.---author unknown

Friends, hear the good news of the gospel

This life-changing book is ALIVE.

May we have the courage and strength to go to this book

To keep reading its pages

To trust its wisdom and strength. Amen.