

A. THE WORD

- One of the more descriptive verses about the unique attributes of God's Word is the title verse for our series this year: Heb 4:12 ESV--The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- Hebrews 4:12 is written in the context of an exhortation for believers to:
 - Listen to God (Heb 4:7)
 - Believe Him (Heb 3:12, 19)
 - Do not harden your heart (Heb 3:13)
- The Bible depicts the people of God needing to be reminded of this -- in the wilderness, during King David's reign, and in every other time period including today
- Listening to God is one of the top priorities of this class and this discipleship ministry!
- We'll grow in our ability to listen to Him by journaling at the end ("One Thing"), by using Listening Exercises during each lesson, and even more techniques as we go.
- As we experience God speaking to us more and more, we'll find ourselves naturally responding to the Scripture with increasing faith. (Rom 10:17)
- Believing Him, according to Jesus, is the work we are called to pursue: Jn 6:29 NLT--Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."
- Accepting God's Word as the Truth does require some work since we already have opinions and mindsets formed over many years.
- Our believing work includes agreeing with the truth, allowing it to change our previous thoughts, applying it, and complying with it.
- Do not harden your heart means the opposite of listening to and heeding God. A hard heart lacks responsiveness, humility, gratitude and submission: Zech 7:12--They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear . . . the words [of] the Lord
- We're all liable to becoming callous to the Word of God due to isolation, busyness, suffering, distraction, or weariness. Staying in community is a safeguard: Heb 3:13 NLT--You must warn each other every day, while it is still "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
How would you describe your desire and your readiness to hear from God? (Ex: eager, uncertain, doubtful, reluctant, etc.)

How difficult is it for you to believe? Where are you on the continuum between being a faith-filled hearer and one who struggles with unbelief, doubt or worry?

Ask the Lord to reveal to you any issues (past or current) that have kept your heart from being soft and responsive to His Word:

- Insights:

B. LOGOS

- The Greek word *logos* is used in Scripture to mean both a) Jesus, the Son of God and to describe b) God's sayings, instructions, precepts and promises. (Strong's G3056)
- "John calls Jesus *the Word* because he had come to see the words of Jesus as the truth of God and the person of Jesus as the truth of God in such a unified way that Jesus himself — in his coming, and working, and teaching, and dying and rising — was *the final and decisive message of God.*" (John Piper)
- John wanted his readers to understand from the very start of his gospel that this man Jesus was God and was the incarnation of God's message to the world: Jn 1:1-- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- Knowing Jesus as "The Word" impacts the way we interact with Him and our Bibles. We'll be more prone to take a relational approach rather than seek information only.
- It's been said, "The Bible is the Word of God in print." When we engage with this supernatural book, we are connecting with the very heart and mind of God Himself! Heb 1:1-3 MSG--Going through a long line of prophets, God has been addressing our ancestors in different ways for centuries. Recently he spoke to us directly through his Son. By his Son, God created the world in the beginning, and it will all belong to the Son at the end. This Son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature. He holds everything together by what he says—powerful words!
- To be clear, we listen to God not to find something in addition to Scripture, but to clarify and personally apply what's already been written.
- Insights:

C. LIVING

- Scripture is more than words on a page that are lifeless and dead. It possesses living power (*zao*) in itself that it exerts upon the soul. (Strong's G2198)
- God uses His Word to bring eternal life to our lost souls: Jn 5:24--Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

- The Word also breathes life-giving solutions into our difficult and seemingly dead situations: John 6:63 NIV--The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.
- The life that The Word possesses and imparts to us believers will never pass away: 1 Pt 1:25—The Word of the Lord endures forever.
- Personal words and promises given in the past still have life today. The same is true as the Spirit brings to mind the testimony of the Lord in our lives from days gone by.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
Take a moment for the Spirit to bring to mind either a word or a work that He has performed in your life.

Now ponder that the God of the universe would do that for you. Let that memory's intrinsic life breathe life afresh to you now.

- Insights:

D. ACTIVE

- The Word of God is active, meaning it is operative, powerful and effective. (G1756)
- Though hard to comprehend, God spoke all of creation into being with His Word: Heb 11:3 ESV—By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God.
- His divine activity continues today. As we expose ourselves to His Word, it works on us and in us: 1 Thes 2:13 NLT—We never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe.
- Whenever God speaks, His Word has the power to produce what it says!
- Note, however, how the previous verse indicates that our response will impact its activity in our lives. This is where listening, believing, and being pliable are critical.
- Not only does The Word exert its activity on believers. It can also act in our behalf when the enemy comes against us with his temptation and lies.
- Jesus proved this when fasting in the wilderness for 40 days. The Word of God was more powerful than Satan's strategic attempts. (Matthew 4:4ff)

- Insights:

E. PERSONAL APPLICATION

- ONE THING

The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

- PONDER THE TRUTH

Which verse or principle stood out to you this week? Write it below taking some time to review it often. Be still in God's presence, alert for new insights. Record them here.

- PROCESSING THE TRUTH

Prayerfully consider the Listening Exercises from this lesson. Ask the Spirit to guide you into a deeper understanding of the truth and to reveal any specific faith steps He is calling you to take. Write down your insights.