

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



**FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH**

Produced Weekly

***The Authority of the Bible***  
**Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5**

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Prior to this Coming Session:

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

Arrange an interest centre that consists of a "treasure box". Open the box and let various bright necklaces, rings, coins etc. spill out of it. Beside it have an open Bible with a note in large and attractive letters: "Holy Bible, Book Divine, Precious treasure, Thou art mine".

Choose an older child, preteen or teen to read the Scripture passage given in the text. Ask them to read as dramatically as possible. Give them the passage ahead of time so

that they may adequately prepare. If an adult is to read the passage, ask them to prepare as well.

### **Bible Study Leader:**

### **Worship Time Leader:**

Decide how you will use the old hymn given at the end of the lesson. You may want to sing the words or simply use them. Copies may be made from the final page of the session.

Call attention to the treasure box that is the focal interest centre.

### **Music Sources:**

**“Wonderful Words of Life”** #261, *Baptist Hymnal*, (1991).

**“Holy Bible, Book Divine”** #260, *Baptist Hymnal*, (1991).

**“Holy Bible, Book of Love”** #264, *Baptist Hymnal*, (1991).

**“Thy Word”** #234, *Maranatha! Music*, Third Edition, (1993).

**“I Will Delight (in the Law of the Lord)”** #93, *Maranatha! Music*, Third Edition, (1993).

# 1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

## ***The Authority of the Bible***

### **Focal Text**

Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5

### **Background Text**

Psalm 19:7-10; 119:97-112; Isaiah 40:8; Jeremiah 36; Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 21:33; 24:13-45; Acts 17:10-12; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 4:12-13

### **Main Idea**

God speaks today through his written word, the Bible.

### **Question to Explore**

To what extent is the Bible authoritative for your life?

### **Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to recognize and demonstrate the authority of God's word for their lives.

**Leader:** Have the treasure chest, Bible, and note described in the "Prior to this Coming Session" in place before the group gathers. Place it in a central location where everyone can focus on it.

Sing together a song about the Bible. Several are listed in the Music Sources. An old favourite that is easy for all ages to sing is "Wonderful Words of Life" found in many old hymnals.

### **Gathering together:**

Children often participate in some form of Bible use training. It may involve learning all the books of the Old and New Testaments and how to find those books quickly, learning how to find certain passages of the Bible quickly and learning where to find certain topics in the Bible such as "The love chapter" in 1 Corinthians 13. Parents of children participating in such an intense study sharpen their own Bible use skills, as do teachers

and leaders. Competitive feelings are minimized; the goal is to be an able user of Scripture.

Recently, a much loved little girl did well in all facets of the drill except for difficulty in finding the Bible passages in an agile manner. She found the first passage before time was called, but was too flustered to step forward. She became agitated and then had difficulty with the following passages. She was disappointed in her performance. Those who love her wished that she could understand the incomparable value of what she had learned. A twelve year old who easily finds all Old and New Testament books and knows many passages of Scripture would be envied by any adult who has come to faith later in life and struggles to find a verse of Scripture. Many may avoid Bible study groups rather than face embarrassment as they struggle to locate a given Scripture.

Most of all, children who are taught early in life to love and use their Bibles have a treasure beyond any other. Within those pages are the answers to life's big questions, the source of strength for life's difficulties and a picture of hope for the future. Adults who treasure the study of their Bible will always have God's own presence in their lives.

### **Closing the Gathering Time:**

Recently a pastor spoke very effectively. He often paused, raised his hand and said, "Listen to the Scripture". His words took on even more power than before. Today we are saying to ourselves and to one another "Listen to the Scripture" – God's authoritative and loving word to us.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

# 2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the "Teacher Preparation" for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the "Bible Study Plan" for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *The Authority of the Bible*

#### **Focal Text**

Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5

#### **Background Text**

Psalm 19:7-10; 119:97-112; Isaiah 40:8; Jeremiah 36; Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 21:33; 24:13-45; Acts 17:10-12; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 4:12-13

#### **Main Idea**

God speaks today through his written word, the Bible.

#### **Question to Explore**

To what extent is the Bible authoritative for your life?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to recognize and demonstrate the authority of God's word for their lives.

#### **Introduction to your personal study:**

I own several "official" documents. My driver's license authorizes me to drive. My passport gives me the ability to travel to and from my home country. My marriage license states that I am legally married. My university diploma gives me the credentials to do my job. These pieces of paper have an "official seal" on them issued from the government or my university. That makes them authoritative. Having come from the government or university each document carries authority. Today, you will attempt to focus your group on understanding the concept of spiritual authority that will be carried out in the realities of each person's life: mental, emotional, and physical—as well as in relationship with God, other people, and our world.

## Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you as well.

This lesson discusses the authority of the Bible. The Bible has power and authority over peoples' lives simply because of who wrote it. The Bible is "the word of God" that was "God-breathed" and written down for us. God's authority and character stand behind every word found in the Bible. His word is also powerful, because when God speaks, things happen. His word has the ability to expose our thoughts and actions for what they truly are. His word is able to lead someone to salvation. His word can teach, train, and correct people in their Christian faith and practice.

## Focusing on the Meaning:

### "Living and Active" (Hebrews 4:12-13)

Hebrews was written to Christians whose faith was sagging and who were in danger of turning away from their Christian commitments. This letter was to encourage them to stand firm in their faith and to grow in maturity through difficult times. The writer had already stressed how powerfully God had spoken in the past through His word ("God has said" [4:3], "he has spoken" [4:4]), but the writer was also convinced that God who spoke in the past through his word still speaks today through his word ("Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" [4:7; cf. 3:7-11]). God's Holy Spirit appealed to people centuries before to listen to him, and he speaks in every present generation for people to respond to his call. God's word is never outdated and speaks to each generation.

**"For the word of God is living and active"** (v. 12). Some might think that a word spoken by God centuries ago is dead and outdated, but not so with God's word. God's word is alive and is a powerful force with which everyone must reckon. It is also "active," that is, it is effective in carrying out God's intentions. God's word was powerful enough to bring the entire universe into existence (Psalm 33:6), and his word still speaks today with the power to change people's lives.

**"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"** (v. 12). The imagery here refers to God's ability to dissect a person's mind and conscience with his word. God's word penetrates and divides, laying a person's entire life and thoughts open to God's discerning gaze. God's word is a truth that cuts deeply and has the ability to slice past surface religion and hypocritical actions and expose the deepest parts of a person's being. Like a surgeon's scalpel that exposes a diseased organ that must be repaired, God's word opens our very souls to his view, revealing the entire truth of our lives. **"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account"**

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*The Authority of the Bible – 05-14-02-en*

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(v. 13). We may be able to hide our true selves from our neighbours, family and friends, our spouse, or even deceive ourselves, but we can never hide our true selves from God. God's word brings everything into the light (1 Corinthians 4:5). All people must "give account" to God for the life they live (Romans 14:12; 2 Timothy 4:1).

## "Able to Make You Wise for Salvation" (2 Timothy 3:10-15)

The apostle Paul wrote the second letter to Timothy when he was imprisoned for his faith in Rome and soon to be martyred (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Timothy was a leader in the church in Ephesus, a church noted for people in its midst leading members astray with false doctrine (e.g. 1 Timothy 1:3-4, 18-20). In a day when people were searching for truth in the wrong places, Paul urged Timothy (and the Ephesian Christians) to remain true in their faith, grounding their lives and beliefs upon the inspired word of God.

**"You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings"** (vv. 10-11). Paul had demonstrated a life of faithfulness and purpose before Timothy. Paul's "teaching" was sound, based upon the teaching found in God's word. Not only did Paul teach through words, but he also taught Timothy through the "way of life" that he led. Sound doctrine must always be linked with sound living. "My purpose" refers to Paul's chief aim in life, of glorifying his Lord through the way he lived (Galatians 6:14). "Faith, patience, love, endurance" all refer to Christian virtues that all Christians should pursue (1 Timothy 6:11), patience and endurance referring to the ability to remain strong under adverse conditions, such as "persecutions" and "sufferings." Timothy was familiar with Paul's sufferings throughout the course of his ministry (Acts 13:50; 14:2, 5, 19). Timothy was a youth in Lystra and probably was there in person when Paul was stoned (Acts 14:19-20). He thus saw the difficulties that could happen to faithful servants of God. **"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"** (v. 12), that is, those who want to live a truly Christian life must expect to be treated as Jesus himself was (cf. Mark 8:34; Matthew 5:11-12; John 15:18-21). False teachers and impostors to the Christian faith teach otherwise, because **"evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived"** (v. 13). These people both live ungodly lives and lead people away from godliness (e.g. 2 Timothy 3:6-9).

Timothy was to be different from these false teachers, **"but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of"** (v. 14). He was to remain faithful to the true gospel that he had learned (cf. vv. 10-11), **"because you know those from whom you learned it,"** probably referring to Paul and to Timothy's godly mother and grandmother (1:5), who had taught Timothy **"from infancy . . . the holy Scriptures"** (v. 15). He had been taught the Bible from an early age from his family. Paul and Timothy's family had lived godly lives before him, and Timothy is urged to reflect such soundness and godliness in his own life ("continue in what you have learned").



The holy Scriptures **"are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"** (v. 15). The Scriptures themselves do not save, but they teach someone how to be saved "through faith in Christ Jesus." Jesus said that the Scriptures "testify about me," for only in him would someone find eternal life (John 5:39-40). They were written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). God did not give us the Bible to teach us everything there is to know about God or the universe. The purpose of the Bible is to bring people to God through his son Jesus Christ. In that relationship God will restore us to all that he designed us to be. The Bible is a salvation book, given to sinful people to draw them into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

### **"All Scripture is God-breathed and is Useful" (2 Timothy 3:16-17)**

**"All Scripture is God-breathed"** (v. 16). The Bible comes from God himself not from the whims of men (2 Peter 1:19-21). Because it comes from God, then it carries God's authority. Because it is a word from God, then it has authority over men.

Scripture **"is useful for teaching"** because God's people are to give sound instruction in the gospel (1 Timothy 4:6, 13, 16; 6:3). Where may people find the truths leading to salvation and growth in their faith? They can find them in the Scriptures. Scripture is also useful for **"rebuking,"** that is, exposing errors and false teachings. The Bible teaches what is true and exposes what is false. The Bible is also useful for **"correcting,"** that is, restoring a person to the right path when they have wandered. God's word gives the standard by which lives and conduct are judged. The Bible is also useful for **"training in righteousness"** (v. 16), that is, teaching the right way that one must go. God's word leads us in paths of righteousness and convicts us when we wander from that path. The Bible is the final, sure, and sufficient teaching for our belief and practice. It is the standard by which all other authorities (e.g. reason, experience, tradition) are judged. It is the only objective standard we have that is "God-breathed."

**"So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"** (v. 17). The Bible is God's instrument for training his people to do the work that God has called them to do (1 Peter 1:23-2:2). God gives the power for ministry by his Spirit (Acts 1:8), but his means for training our hearts and minds is his word. God's word is like a hammer that can break open stony hearts (Jeremiah 23:29). It is like a lamp that brings light to our path (Psalm 119:105). It is like a mirror that shows us both what we are and what we should be (James 1:18, 22-25). It is like seed that causes birth (1 Peter 1:23), like milk that causes growth (1 Peter 2:2), like wheat that strengthens (Jeremiah 23:28), like honey that sweetens (Psalm 19:10), and gold that makes the one who possesses it incredibly rich (Psalm 19:10).

### **"Preach the Word" (2 Timothy 4:1-5)**

**"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus . . . I give you this charge: Preach the Word"** (vv. 1-2). Timothy's main responsibility was to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to his people. He was not to waste people's time by delivering his own opinions, but to

give people God's eternal, authoritative word of truth. Nothing else could bring people to salvation or raise them up in godliness, but God's inspired word (cf. Jeremiah 23:22). Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). People need to build their lives upon the unchanging and authoritative word of God. **"Be prepared in season and out of season"** (v. 2), because people at all times need to hear God's word. Timothy should be ever ready with a word from God found in the Scriptures. Timothy is to **"correct"** those who are in error (Titus 1:3; 2:15), **"rebuke"** those who do not heed his correction, and **"encourage"** or **"exhort"** everyone to grow in their faith. All of this should be done **with great patience and careful instruction**" (v. 2). People need correcting and rebuking from the wrong way, but they also need to be taught the right way. The teaching of God's word must always be done with patience and love (Ephesians 4:15).

**"For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine."** Timothy was to teach "sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:10) and must do this constantly because the time would come when people would not listen to the truth. **"Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear"** (v. 3). They would not want to know the truth but to hear simply what pleases them. **"They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths"** (v. 4). These people would simply abandon the truth for a lie. **"But you, keep your head in all situations,"** even though others are wandering away from the truth, Timothy was to remain sober and grounded in the word. He was to **"endure hardship,"** no matter the cost. This "hardship" probably refers to suffering on account of preaching God's truth to people (cf. 2 Timothy 1:8; 2:2; 3:12). He was to **"do the work of an evangelist,"** always being active in pointing sinners to Christ. **"Discharge all the duties of your ministry"** (v. 5), not looking back or stopping until his task of ministry was completed.

## **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

These passages describe the importance of the Bible for the believer. We call the Bible "God's word," and by that phrase, we mean that God wants to say something. The Bible is God's word written for us, and because it comes from God it carries his authority. It is a living word that comes from a living God to a living people today. His word is powerful and has the ability to lead people to saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is the objective standard by which all teaching must be judged, and it is the means by which God trains our hearts and minds to know and to do his will. The truth of God's word will remain steadfast, even through times when people choose to reject it.

## **For Personal Reflection:**

1. **What have I learned from this study?**

2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***The Authority of the Bible***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

**Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.**

#### **Focal Text**

Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5

#### **Background Text**

Psalm 19:7-10; 119:97-112; Isaiah 40:8; Jeremiah 36; Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 21:33; 24:13-45; Acts 17:10-12; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 4:12-13

#### **Main Idea**

God speaks today through his written word, the Bible.

#### **Question to Explore**

To what extent is the Bible authoritative for your life?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to recognize and demonstrate the authority of God's word for their lives.

#### **Connect with Life:**

As the group gathers, Ask: "How do you decide which piece of mail to open first?" (probably based on where they came from, personal letter, money, etc.)

Encourage an answer: "Why would the sender determine its importance?" State that the Bible comes from God, and that is why we call it "God's word."

Continue: "How important, then, should the Bible be to us? Can we simply dismiss it like a piece of junk mail?"

Explain that today's lesson will seek to answer the question, "To what extent is the Bible authoritative for my life?"

## **Guide the Study:**

### **1. The Bible is alive and powerful (Hebrews 4:12-13).**

Have someone read Hebrews 4:12.

Look for suggestions: "What images pop into your mind with these terms 'living and active'?"

Get comments on this: "How could a book written centuries ago be considered 'living and active'?" Point out that this passage describes God's word as being contemporary and powerful in accomplishing God's intentions.

Have someone read verse 13.

Ask: "What does the writer mean by God's word being 'sharper than any double-edged sword'?"

Explain God's word cuts deeply like a surgeon's scalpel, exposing everything in our lives to God.

Encourage responses: "Has God's word ever cut you deeply with a truth that you could not deny?"

Point out that we may be able to hide our true selves from our neighbours, family, friends, spouses, or even our own selves, but we can never hide our true selves from God.

### **2. The Bible is able to lead people to salvation (2 Timothy 3:10-15).**

Have someone read 2 Timothy 3:10-15.

Explain: Timothy was a leader in the church in Ephesus, a church noted for people in its midst leading members astray with false doctrine (see teacher's notes).

Now explain: Paul was urging Timothy to remain true in the faith and to train his people in the truths found in the Scriptures.

Ask: "According to these verses, how long had Timothy known the Scriptures?" (from infancy). Explain that Timothy had a godly mother and grandmother (1:5). Explain also that Timothy had learned God's word from Paul and the godly example Paul had set for Timothy.

Have the group look at verse 15

Ask: "According to this verse, what are the Scriptures able to do?" (make someone wise for salvation). Point out that the Scriptures do not save someone, but they teach someone how to be saved "through faith in Christ Jesus."

Have the group look at John 5:39-40 and show that the Scriptures testify about Jesus.

Have them look at John 20:31 note that the Scriptures were written so that people might believe in Jesus.

Seek an answer: "According to these passages, why then did God give us the Bible?" (that we might find salvation through Jesus).

### **3. The Bible is authoritative because it comes from God (2 Timothy 3:16).**

Have the group look at verse 16, "***All Scripture is God-breathed.***" Point out that this verse shows the origin of the Scripture – it comes from God.

Have the group look at 2 Peter 1:19-21 to strengthen this point.

Check for an opinion: "If the Scripture comes from God, then how authoritative would it be?" (it carries God's authority)

Then Ask: "If the Scripture is a word from God himself, then do people have the right to dismiss it?" (No, all people are held accountable to God, see Hebrews 4:13; Romans 14:12; 2 Timothy 4:1).

### **4. The Bible is useful to teach and correct (2 Timothy 3:16-17).**

Have someone read verses 16-17.

Solicit a response from someone: "What is the difference between 'teaching' and 'rebuking'?" (teaching the right way, exposing the wrong way)

Then ask: "What would be the difference in 'correcting' and 'training'?" (correcting from the wrong path, teaching the right path)

Hand out pieces of paper, each with one these Scripture references on it: Jeremiah 23:29; Psalm 119:105; James 1:18, 22-25; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 Peter 2:2; Jeremiah 23:28; Psalm 19:10.

Have each person read their verse aloud and describe the word picture used for God's word in that passage (use the teacher's notes as a reference). Ask each respondent, "In what way does the Bible act like that image?"

Encourage a brief discussion: How then would God's word be 'useful' for a growing Christian?"

## **5. The Bible necessary to discern the truth (2 Timothy 4:1-5).**

Have a volunteer read 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

Ask: "According to verse 2, what was Timothy's primary responsibility?" (preach the word)

Follow up with this: "According to verses 3-4, why was delivering God's word so important?" (people will not put up with sound doctrine, people want to have their ears tickled, people do not want to know the truth)

Ask: "Do we have this sort of situation today?"

Have the group look at verse 2, and ask: "in a day when people play games with the truth, according to this verse, how should we deliver God's word to them?" ("in season and out of season" [i.e. ever ready], "correct, rebuke, encourage" [i.e. with conviction], "with great patience," with "careful instruction")

Point out that delivering the truth to people will not always guarantee a receptive audience. According to verse 5, Timothy also had to be ready to "keep your head" and "endure hardship."

### **Encourage Application:**

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Have the group bring their own applications from this passage by asking them the following questions. Not everyone will have an answer to every question. However, perhaps someone will want to share their answer to one or more of the questions until all four are answered.

Ask: "In light of what we have learned today from God's word,  
What am I supposed to believe?

What am I supposed to do?

Is there a promise I need to claim?

Is there an example I need to follow? or avoid?"

Close in prayer.

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.



# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### ***The Authority of the Bible*** **Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5**

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments.** No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

#### **That “Authority” Thing**

Authority is not a favourite word of teenagers. Testing the limits of the authority that seems to control a teen’s life can be a normal and healthy experience as growth occurs. School regulations, parental guidelines, and faith teachings must all be examined and accepted as valid or it is difficult for teens to obey those limitations and even more difficult for parents and teachers to enforce them.

Biblical authority sometimes falls in the realm of those regulations and rules that are “outside of us”. As teens, you may see the guidelines as oppressive. Guidelines about pure living and commitment to Christ’s kingdom may seem to be imposed by parents, church leaders, or a fear of God’s punishment.

As we study Biblical authority today, the writers desire for you as youth to capture the dynamic idea that is expressed in Hebrews 4:12-13. “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. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

Listen to the words from *The Message*. “God means what he says, What he says goes. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon’s scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one is impervious to God’s Word. We can’t get away from it- no matter what.”

One writer speaks of the “self-verifying” nature of Biblical authority. This refers to the concept of the “powerful Word which is sharp as a surgeon’s scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense; laying us open to listen and obey.” The Word of God is different from any another written material, however powerful that material may be. The Word of God speaks directly to the person who is reading it, addressing the needs that person has at that moment and bringing change in the attitude and thoughts and actions of the person. It is powerful in and of itself. Its power does not come from parents, teachers, or pastors saying to us, “You must obey the Bible”. It comes because the word of God is active and alive today in the individual hearts of each reader. That’s a different kind of authority than we are used to!

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***The Authority of the Bible***  
**Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5****Beginning the Service:**

Ask a pre-teen or teen to read the Scripture. Give them a copy of the scripture ahead of time and ask them to practice reading the words with great feeling. It would be good for them to read it directly from a Bible, especially their own, if they have one. It doesn't have to be the New International Version.

Psalm 119:97-105

Oh, how I love your law!  
 I meditate on it all day long.  
 Your commands make me wiser than my enemies,  
 for they are ever with me.  
 I have more insight than all my teachers,  
 for I meditate on your statutes.  
 I have more understanding than the elders,  
 for I obey your precepts.  
 I have kept my feet from every evil path  
 so that I might obey your word.  
 I have not departed from your laws,  
 for you yourself have taught me.  
 How sweet are your words to my taste,  
 sweeter than honey to my mouth!  
 I gain understanding from your precepts;  
 therefore I hate every wrong path.  
 Your word is a lamp to my feet  
 and a light for my path.

**Offering:**

Today, Lord, we thank you for your Word which is ever alive in our lives. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, judging the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. As best we know how, we ask today that your Word will be strong and fresh in our lives today in new and powerful ways. Amen

## Praying for the World:

The entire day was permeated with God's Holy Presence as nine new believers were baptized on the island of Guadeloupe. Songs of praise accompanied by a classical guitarist were sung as those awaiting baptism boldly gave testimony of their faith in Christ. P. testified that she was a total agnostic, not even looking for God, but He found her!

Sing "Thy Word" #234, *Maranatha! Music*, Third Edition, 1993.

## Sharing Guide:

**This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.**

## Holy Bible, Precious Treasure, Thou Art Mine

Years ago a prisoner in the Mexican state of Michoacan was sweeping the courtyard of the prison when he came across a tiny piece of paper that contained scripture verses and the address of a publishing house that prepared Bible study materials. The scrap of paper was all that remained of a lesson prepared many miles from the prison and studied by an unknown group or person. How it came to be found in the prison yard and how it powerfully spoke to this man is truly one's of God's miracles and emphasizes the reality that the words of the Bible are alive and powerful. The man felt that the Scripture was written directly to him. He had been a successful business man, but a series of unscrupulous acts had led to imprisonment. He was far away from the beautiful family that was his. But God spoke directly to him in that prison yard and he wrote the publishing house to ask for more information. His letter was quickly answered and the way of salvation clearly outlined. Soon he was the recipient of a better life on earth and an eternal life in heaven. The word of God is alive and active and it is able to lead people to salvation. Even the few lines of Scripture written on the scrap paper were enough to start the journey toward Christ for this desperate man. Not only was it active in the life of that man and his family; it was active in the lives of those Christian workers privileged to be a part of the story and a part of the prayer support which under girded this man in his first steps of faith. (The complete story of this man may be found in a book by Don Madaris: *The Scrap Paper Miracle* published by New Hope Publishers, Birmingham, Alabama, USA.)

How beautiful it is when the word of God is real and powerful in lives even from a very young age. Amy was only a little past her second birthday when she stood in the

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*The Authority of the Bible – 05-14-02-en*

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congregation singing loudly, “The Bible, the Bible, the Bible”. She had learned both at home and at church that the Bible was a very special book. She connected it with the loving acts showed to her by teachers and with the joyful feelings she experienced as she met with the people of God. Bible and God were sources of comfort for Amy at age two and have continued to guide, teach, and correct her as she matured into young womanhood. Understanding the authoritative nature of the word of God is not difficult for her because she has experienced and understood the personal nature of the love of God since birth.

Both the prisoner, saved because of his God-ordained encounter with a scrap of paper that contained the powerful, life-giving Word of God, and Amy, who was nurtured in faith, discovered that the Bible exhibits a self-verifying authority. This means that one who studies it while honestly seeking God’s will finds himself or herself somehow spoken to by God in his or her present situation. The prisoner was in despair; he had lost his family, his possessions, and his self-respect. No earthly person or occurrence could make his situation all right. Only God could step in and bring hope from such a situation of despair.

### **Call to Commitment:**

As Amy matured, she, too, faced situations that she could not change. Coping with those situations was not enough. She was able to live beyond the difficulty by her ongoing belief that the Bible brought life-giving and life-affirming hope.

The Bible offers us “a source of authoritative, spiritual truth, telling us among other things who we are, what we are here for, and what ought to claim our first love and loyalty. It tells us also the nature of our human predicament and the way of deliverance from it. It tells us all of these things with an *authority* that is beyond human genius and human experience; even though these may be the vehicles of its truth. It does, in fact, reflect the encounter of searching human spirits with the self-revealing God himself.”

(Rodenhiser, O. William, Jr. “The Nature and Authority of the Bible.” *The Baptist Student*, December 1966, pp. 50-51)

## **Closing the Service**

The words of an old hymn written by John Burton, Sr. who lived from 1773-1822 capture the meaning of our message today.

**Note to Leader:** (Read the words together as a group or have the children in your group read the words. If the children are to read, have them practice the words beforehand and talk with them about the meaning of the words. The old-fashioned words will be difficult for them to understand. Make clean copies of the hymn from the one included on the final page of this session.)

## **“Holy Bible, Book Divine”**

Holy Bible, Book divine,  
Precious treasure, thou art mine;  
Mine to tell me whence I came;  
Mine to teach me what I am.

Mine to chide me when I rove,  
Mine to show a Saviour's love;  
Mine thou art to guide and guard;  
Mine to punish or reward.

Mine to comfort in distress,  
Suffering in this wilderness;  
Mine to show, by living faith,  
Man can triumph over death.

Mine to tell of joys to come,  
And the rebel sinner's doom  
O thou holy Book divine,  
Precious treasure,  
thou art mine.

John Burton, Sr. 1773-1822

If needed, make copies for the congregation from this as suggested to end the Worship Time:

## **“Holy Bible, Book Divine”**

**Holy Bible, Book divine,  
Precious treasure, thou art mine;  
Mine to tell me whence I came;  
Mine to teach me what I am.**

**Mine to chide me when I rove,  
Mine to show a Saviour’s love;  
Mine thou art to guide and guard;  
Mine to punish or reward.**

**Mine to comfort in distress,  
Suffering in this wilderness;  
Mine to show, by living faith,  
Man can triumph over death.**

**Mine to tell of joys to come,  
And the rebel sinner’s doom  
O thou holy Book divine,  
Precious treasure,  
thou art mine.**

John Burton, Sr., 1773-1822