



FEBRUARY 2020

CONNECT WITH CHRIST, CHURCH AND COMMUNITY!

THIS WORD IS ALIVE

By Rev. Dr. Jonathan Lovelady

For the word of God is alive 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 NIV

As we continue our year of reading the Word of God, it is important to realize the impact this can have on our spirits, our lives, our church, and the community where we live. The first thing to realize is that the Word of God is “self-validating.” I know this sounds complicated, but really it is very simple: it confirms its own power. The Holy Spirit validates the living Word of God in our lives. The great preacher of the 19th century Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) said: “The Word of God is like a lion. You don’t have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself.” (You will see this quote stated in a variety of ways!) The struggle with this Word is getting people to read it!

The Center for Biblical Engagement (CBE) is a research organization that sets out to answer two questions: “Why do so many people own Bibles, yet so few read them?” and “What difference does engaging in the Bible make in a person’s life?” Even though the American household has an average of four Bibles, they state that: “Less than two out of five people read the Bible at least once a week. In addition, only one out of four American Christians completely agree with the statement that they regularly study the Bible to find direction of their lives.” (Gallup, 2003) The most common reason for people not reading scripture is that they are “too busy.” This is understandable. The pace of our lives has continued

to increase. This is not always because of work commitments, but our desire for more. We have bought into the myth that “more is better,” rather than approaching our lives with greater discretion and discernment.

The second question though is also critical. “Does this ‘self-validating’ Word have an impact in our lives?” This is a rephrasing of the CBE’s question, but I think this is the one that we are asking! Is there any evidence? They have surveyed over 100,000 Christians world-wide over an eight-year period in an effort to answer this question. They discovered the “rule of four.” For people who read the Bible four or more days a week there seems to be clear impacts:

If a person engages the Bible four or more times a week, their odds of giving in to temptations such as drinking to excess, viewing pornography, lashing out in anger, gossiping, and lying significantly decrease.

Receiving, reflecting on, and responding to God’s Word four or more times a week decreases a person’s odds of struggling with issues such as feeling bitter, thinking destructively about self or others, having difficulty forgiving others, and feeling discouraged.

Engaging in scripture produces a more proactive faith among Christians. Controlling for age, gender, church attendance, and prayer practices, the individual engaged in the Bible has significantly higher odds of giving financially, memorizing scripture, and sharing their faith with others.



People's perceptions of their own spiritual growth are also impacted by how often they hear from God through the Bible. Those who engage scripture most days of the week are less likely to feel spiritually stagnant and to feel that they can't please God. (Bible Engagement as a Key to Spiritual Growth, Executive Summary)

When we do not engage in reading scripture four times per week or more, we miss the very practical power that this living Word can convey to our lives. Our vision is "Connect with Christ, Church and Community." This Word is Alive because it conveys to our lives the Living Word, Jesus Christ. When we let this lion loose it does not maul us, but ministers to and strengthens us because he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah!

My father passed away in October of my second year of seminary. This is always a transitional point for any family. My father had been disabled for about 20 years. Due to his disability, all the kids had to pay a portion of his funeral expenses. My brother was not able to pay his part, so Lisa and I paid our portion and his. Lisa was pregnant with our first child, our daughter Stephanie, who was to be born the following February. It was a bitter-sweet time between the loss of my father and the birth of our first child.

Lisa and I had made a singular commitment before God when we started seminary: we would not go into debt to pay for the seminary education. But after the funeral expenses and the expenses of our first child, we did not have the resources for my final year of seminary. Lisa did not have maternity leave with her job, and I was working as much as I could. One option was to leave seminary and try to earn enough money to return, but this was doubtful! I now had a new child and was still a year away from finishing. I had written to the church where I had served as an intern, asking if

they could help me with my final year, but they could not. It was a discouraging time! Toward the end of my second year, I was preparing to tell the seminary that I did not think I could return. I decided to attend chapel that morning. As we sang the closing hymn, everything changed. The Living Word was present with me in that moment. I knew somehow it was going to work out, but I had no clue how! I decided to wait to speak to seminary administration and just finish out my second year. I communicated with the comptroller of the seminary that I would need a little longer to complete the payments for my second year. He was always kind and understanding.

Just before the end of the term, the Dean of Students called me to his office and told me he had heard about my circumstances and the seminary wanted to give me a scholarship for my final year of seminary! I was amazed, but I shouldn't have been. It is just as Hebrews tell us, the Word of God is alive and active and most importantly it is for us!

Unchain this Word in your life and it will surely do great things for you! Amen.

In Christ,



St. Johns is excited to announce that we will be partnering with Family Promise of Jacksonville for the second year in a row! During 2020, SJPC will host families at our church over three, one-week periods (February 9-16th, May 31st-June 7th, and September 20-27th.) This is a wonderful ministry opportunity to provide meals and temporary housing to families who are experiencing homelessness. Family Promise of Jacksonville is a non-profit, interfaith hospitality network providing temporary assistance, hospitality, and case management for families with children experiencing homelessness. Family Promise

has an 85% success rate of homeless to home transition. We look forward to participating in the love and support these families need as they work towards lasting independence. Does this sound like a ministry you would like to get involved in? Are you curious and want to know more? Please feel free to contact our church's Family Promise coordinators!

FAMILY PROMISE COORDINATORS:

Christine Hughes:

christinedhughes@gmail.com

Allison Stanly:

smithab@hotmail.com



YOUTH MINISTRIES

CONTACT CHRIS KELLAM @ CHRIS@SJPCJAX.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL

SUNDAYS @10:00 AM IN THE LOFT THE CLASS IS MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL COMBINED.

YOUTH GROUP

SUNDAYS @5:00-7:00 PM IN THE LOFT. THE GROUP IS MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL COMBINED

D-LIFE

WEDNESDAYS @6:00 PM IN THE KIRK HOUSE A FILM AND THEATER MINISTRY AIMED AT MS AND HS YOUTH, PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN MINISTRY AND TO BUILD SKILLS THAT ARE BENEFICIAL IN LIFE.

WEDNESDAY YOUTH HANGOUTS

WEDNESDAYS @6:00 PM ALL MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLERS ARE WELCOME! BRING YOUR FAVORITE GAME, SNACK, AND FRIEND, TO THE KIRK HOUSE AS WE SPEND TIME TOGETHER.

Sunday School Classes

ALL CLASSES AT 10:00 AM

Women's Class

Location: Purple Door Room"/Room 23 The group is reading *Hebrews: The nearness of King Jesus*. Author Lisa Harper invites you to "love bigger, fear less, and run headlong into the arms of Jesus as a result of hiking through Hebrews." This group meets through May 17th. Contact Heather Griffin at 904-710-7427 (text or call) or hgriffin7427@gmail.com for more information.

Kirk House Class

Location: Kirk House
The group is studying *Harmony of the Gospels*, a study of Jesus' life and teachings from the book of Luke with added context of the Old Testament prophecies and the traditions and teachings of the day. Contact Kevin at kevinhunger@gmail.com or Wendi at wbirdh@comcast.net for more information.

Nolan/Pajcic Class

Location: Kindergarten Room 22
The group is studying 2 Peter Chapter 1. Contact Jim Nolan at james.nolan@gray-robinson.com or Curry Pajcic at curry@pajcic.com for more information.

Men's Class

Location: Session Room
The group is studying the Gospel of John. Contact Bill Mentz at wmentz@gmail.com for more information.

Friendship Bible Fellowship Class

Location: Chapel
A study of the Old and New Testament on how God's grace affects the lives of all believers and how we respond to God's gift of grace. Contact Diane McFadden at bdm56@gmail.com for more information.

Little Flock Class

Location: Nursery
Pre-K through 1st and 2nd through 5th in the "Rainy Day Playroom" Contact Mollie Lackey at mollie@sjpcjax.org for more information.

Youth Class

Location: The Loft
This group is for middle school and high school students. Contact Chris Kellam at chris@sjpcjax.org for more information.

SMALL GROUPS

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Mondays, @10:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall. The group is reading *A Woman God's Spirit Can Guide: New Testament Women Help You Make Today's Choices*, by Alice Mathews. The study discusses stories that remind us doors open in surprising places for women willing to say yes to God's leading. Contact Diane McFadden at bmdm56@gmail.com for more information.

WEDNESDAY MEN'S GROUP

Wednesdays, @6:00 AM at Maple Street in Murray Hill They are studying "The Minor Prophets; Who Were Those 12 Guys?" Contact Trip Stanly at 904-866-2118 or wastanly@hotmail.com for more information.

LUNCH BUNCH

Sundays, @11:30 AM This group meets on the 2nd Sunday of the month at various locations. Contact Katie Marple at 904-384-1382 for more information.

SJPC MOMS' GROUP

Thursdays, @9:00-11:00 AM in the Kirk House This group will begin reading "Mom Set Free" by Jeannie Cunnion on February 20th. Contact Pamela Smith at barbregirl3@aol.com or Lauren McLaughlin at lmclaughlin7@yahoo.com for more information.

S.W.A.T. (SENIORS WITH A TESTIMONY)

During the month of February, S.W.A.T. will have a Valentine's Luncheon on Thursday, 2/13 @ 10:30 AM in the Fellowship Hall. Contact Shirley Douglas at 904-771-0810 for more information.

IF IT MAKES YOU *HAPPY*

BY LISA REINHARD

Driving to work last week, I was listening to one of the oldies stations and a song came on that I've heard many times, but never really listened to until that moment. The singer belted out the words, "If it makes you happy, then it can't be that bad." In an "a-ha" moment, I suddenly realized that that's an apt summation of the world's attitude. Living for happiness, for what makes you "feel good," is what more and more people are basing their lives on. Whether it's accumulating the most money and all the pleasures it can buy, or continuously partying and going for the next high, whether it be by way of sexual encounters, drugs, or risky behavior, more and more people in our society are worshipping the god of pleasure rather than the God of the universe. They're reaching for the momentary "wow," and settling for that rather than focusing on the deep, rich joy that only God can bring through a relationship with Jesus.

Last Saturday, I attended the birthday party of a 4th grade student who had asked me so earnestly with big blue eyes that I simply couldn't refuse. Being greeted by his shouts of pure joy upon my arrival were so worth the time out of my weekend! When the children all piled on the trampoline, and the adults stood watching them, one of the fathers of a boy who doesn't go to my school planted himself next to me and launched into a monologue that alternated between ranting about what was wrong with public schools and telling me how rich he and his wife were. Having made it clear that he was not "a religious person," I felt rather sorry for him that he had to keep telling himself that money was the answer to everything when he was so obviously filled with bitterness. Not relishing a debate with a blowhard, I wisely walked away. Later, when I was heading home, I thought to myself that he may have been richer than me, but I was most definitely the wealthier one.

In the 35th chapter of Isaiah, there is a passage that my Bible's notes say alludes to the coming of Jesus. It speaks of a highway when most roads of Isaiah's day were merely trails left by travelers. "And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. . . Only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing, everlasting joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away." (Verses 8-10) When we are following the Way of Jesus, we are the redeemed. We are filled with the kind of everlasting joy that is not dependent on circumstances or things. It is deep-seated joy, the kind that fills the very marrow of our bones. It does not disappear when times get hard, when we lose our jobs or our savings or someone we dearly love. It is eternal because it comes from God, and it never ends.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul says, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do anything through him who gives me strength." (chapter 4: verses 12 & 13) Knowing Jesus and having him in our hearts is the reason that our joy is not dependent on the balance in our bank accounts, the kind of car we drive, or where our house is located. It's not dependent on the price of the clothes hanging in our closets or on the distance we can afford to go on vacation. Our joy is dependent only on believing in Jesus Christ who leads us to God. It's dependent on being aware of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and on knowing, without a shadow of a doubt, that what God promises, He will do.

The book of James begins with these words: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (verses 2-4) The side note in my study Bible says this, "This doesn't mean we derive pleasure from pain. Instead, this describes a deep sense of well-being that comes from knowing that God is in control of everything in our lives. It's an assurance that he is constantly at work, using both pain and pleasure to develop within us character traits of endurance and patience." This kind of joy is something that cannot be bought on Amazon. It comes as the result of working through difficulty, through pain and sorrow, without giving up, knowing that Jesus is always by our sides, never leaving us, even for a moment. It takes time—something many in our instant-gratification drive-through society are just not willing to spend.

First Peter 1 continues with this: "Though now for a little while, you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, these have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (verses 6-9)

Contrast the richness of that joy to its tinny imitation the world calls happiness, and see if you're content thinking, "If it makes you happy, then it can't be that bad." That kind of happiness, that crosses all kinds of lines and boundaries, just can't hold a candle to the glorious shining joy that comes from knowing, trusting, and following Jesus.

FEBRUARY

BIRTHDAYS

PAMELA SMITH	2/2	BRAD EVANS	2/15
KEVIN CRAINSHAW	2/5	HARRY GAINES	2/15
RICK BARRETT	2/7	BILL MENTZ	2/17
JERRY AUSTIN	2/10	SPENCER PITMAN	2/18
KEVIN COFRAN	2/12	KEN WHYRICK	2/19
BEN NASRALLAH	2/13	TONY NASRALLAH	2/22
WALLY MESSER	2/14	MARGARET BARRETT	2/23
LANE MONTGOMERY	2/14	LEON BARRETT	2/23
TIM TURPIN	2/14	FRAN MILES	2/23
LEON BARRETT III	2/15	WALTER GRANT	2/25
THAD DANSON	2/15	MELODY MELVIN	2/25

PRAYER REQUESTS

-POLLY WALKER
-POLLY ANN
ANDERSON
-FRAN MILES
-JUDY DAILEY
-KATE MARPLE
-BILL DUNN
-WAYNE HOLLOWAY
-MAL MAY
-GAYLE TOLBERT
-GINNY WHITNER

-SUE CULPEPPER
-DORIS CASS
-AIREN WALKER
-VIRGINIA STAATS
-MARYLEA RUSSELL
-RUTH LAVENDER
-LIZ MCKEAN
-MARY SAMFORD
-MICHAEL YARBROUGH

If you have a birthday or a prayer request and you would like it to be in the newsletter, please email Brittany Harris at sjpc@sjpcjax.org or call the office at (904)384-4501.



SJPC'S TEAM IS LOOKING FOR MORE PLAYERS!

Spring 2020 Season 2/9-4/5

Games will be played on Sunday Nights at either 5, 6, 7, 8 PM (or 4 PM if need-
ed.) For more information or to sign up, please call Lynne Turpin at (904)699-8912
or email her at laturp@bellsouth.net.

UPCOMING DATES:



- SCOUT SUNDAY 2/2
- WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY 2/3
- NEW MEMBERS CLASS 2/9
- FAMILY PROMISE 2/9-2/16
- MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST 2/11
- S.W.A.T. VALENTINE'S LUNCHEON 2/13
- VALENTINE'S DAY 2/14
- NEW MEMBER'S CLASS 2/16
- DEACON'S MEETING 2/18
- STEPHEN MINISTRIES MEETING 2/20
- LIVING WATERS FUNDRAISER @ THE LOOP 2/20
- NEW MEMBER'S CLASS 2/23
- MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST 2/25
- ASH WEDNESDAY 6:00 PM SERVICE 2/26
- S.J.P.K. CIRCUS 2/28

