

6 Depend on God's Word

“I will forget the Lord and no longer speak in his name,” said the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. In a time of discouragement, he poured out his heart to God in complaint, “Everyone makes fun of me. Lord, I am ridiculed and scorned all the time because I proclaim your message.”

But something happened to Jeremiah. God’s message burned like fire inside him! He said, “If I say, ‘I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot” (Jeremiah 20:7–9). He experienced the quickening power of God’s Word and then could say, “‘Is not my word like fire,’ declares the LORD, ‘and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?’” (Jeremiah 23:29).

As you share the good news, remember that God’s Word is like a *fire*. Fire burns things up; God’s Word convicts of sin and destroys evil. Fire radiates warmth. God’s Word is truth; it warms the heart. God’s Word is also like a *hammer*. A hammer crushes. Have you seen workmen with sledgehammers pounding large rocks into small pieces? God’s Word, like a hammer, has power to break down hard hearts, but remember that His Word is the hammer—not you! Learn to depend on God’s Word.

lesson outline

God's Word Is Your Authority for Soul-Winning

God's Word Possesses Great Power

God's Word and the Holy Spirit Work Together

God's Word Must Become a Vital Part of Your Life

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

1. Support the fact that God's Word is your authority in soul-winning.
2. List five ways God's Word functions in soul-winning.
3. Recognize how God's Word is the Holy Spirit's tool in bringing conversion.
4. Discuss how you can make God's Word a vital part of your life.

learning activities

1. Read the lesson in this independent-study textbook and do the exercises in the lesson development. Memorize the *Fingertip Text*.
2. Take the self-test at the end of the lesson and check your answers carefully.
3. Review Lessons 4–6, then complete the unit student report for Unit 2 and send it to your instructor.

key words

agnostic

indisputable

reinforce

atheist

occult

fragment

penetrate

lesson development

GOD'S WORD IS YOUR AUTHORITY FOR SOUL-WINNING

Objective 1. *Support the fact that God's Word is your authority in soul-winning.*

Of its writers, the Bible says, "Prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). Of course, their styles of writing often differed one from the other. Isaiah the prophet wrote in grand poetic style; Mark the evangelist wrote in a direct, vigorous manner. But the overall theme of the Bible, despite its many authors, flows together in unity. "All Scripture", the apostle Paul wrote, "is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Since the Scriptures are God-breathed, their authority stands at the highest level. No higher authority exists in the world. The psalmist said of the Lord, "You have exalted above all things your name and your word." (Psalm 138:2, English Standard Version).

Some people ask questions such as, *What right have you to convert a person from one faith to another? Or, Upon what authority do you evangelize?* Many governments are opposed to evangelism. What, then, is the answer?

Perhaps we can use this illustration. If you were driving a car and came to a red light, you would know that you were supposed to stop. If, however, a policeman stood in the intersection directing traffic, and he told you to go ahead in spite of what the light said, you would do it. You would regard the higher authority.

Jesus spent house teaching when He was here on earth. We read that "the people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law" (Mark 1:22).

The right to persuade people to turn to Christ in repentance and faith springs from the teachings of God's Word. The Bible is our indisputable authority to evangelize. We are told to spread the good news of salvation:

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. (2 Timothy 4:1–2).

Application

1 Read Acts 5:15–30. Whom did Peter and the other apostles recognize as highest in authority?

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Not only does the Bible *give* us authority to proclaim its message, but the Bible *is* the authority, for it is the revelation of God himself. For that reason, it stands unique, superior to all other religious books. The Bible records the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the “word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

The whole message of Scripture may be summarized by these words: “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). The Old Testament reveals God's righteous law. The New Testament fulfills the Law, radiating grace and truth through Jesus Christ.

Application

2 Fingertip Text

Title: God's Love Revealed	Reference: John 1:18
Text: No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.	



The laws God gave are based upon ten major laws that we call the Ten Commandments, and these commandments have influenced the basic laws of many countries for centuries. The purpose of the Law is to make people realize what *wrongdoing* is (Galatians 3:19). It reveals sin, man's failure, and the penalty for sin.

Grace, which came through Jesus Christ, presents the solution to the sin question. It is the person and work of Jesus. He stands foremost in history as the world's only Savior: "Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given" (John 1:16).

When you evangelize, you are communicating both bad news and good news. The bad news relates to the Law: every person has failed at some point to keep God's righteous and just Law. A terrible punishment awaits all who have sinned against God. The good news relates to salvation in Christ, who bore the full penalty of the Law in our stead. We can be saved by God's mercy, love, and grace, which are in His Son, Jesus (Ephesians 2:4–5). Evangelizing by preaching, teaching, and telling the good news helps people "know the truth," and the truth will set them free (John 8:32). The truth has a ring of authority about it!

Application

3 The purpose of the Law was to make people realize their

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4 Old and New Testament teachings overlap in some areas, with God showing His love long before Christ. We see in Christ the full revelation of that love. Nevertheless, the Law kept people “locked up” as prisoners (Galatians 3:23). Put a **G** by the words that apply to living *under grace*, and an **L** by those that apply to living *under law*.

Wrongdoing	.....	Mercy	.....
Life	.....	Sin	.....
Freedom	.....	Truth	.....
Penalty	.....	Bondage	.....

5 In your notebook, give two reasons supporting the fact that the Bible is our authority in soul-winning.



GOD'S WORD POSSESSES GREAT POWER

Objective 2. *List five ways God's Word functions in soul-winning.*

The Word Reveals Sin

Years ago, a man in mainland China was reading aloud the first chapter of Romans. A group of men sat in a circle listening attentively, nodding their heads in agreement. Then, they began to lower their heads in shame as he continued and read, “They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil” (Romans 1:29–30). Obviously, these men were convicted by God’s Word, but if they had read further, they would have come to these words, “All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).

The story shows clearly why the devil does not want people to hear God’s Word. When one is truly convicted of one’s sin, one will look for a solution, and God’s Word has that, too.

The Word Penetrates the Heart

The Word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It cuts all the way through, to where soul and spirit meet, to where joints and marrow come together. It judges the desires and thoughts of the human heart (Hebrews 4:12).

Ephesians 6:17 tells us to accept “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” We can fight spiritual battles with God’s Word because Scripture is more than the words of man—it is divinely inspired. God’s Word is the *sword of the Spirit*.

The following story illustrates the penetrating power of God’s Word. An atheist went to a large church to hear a famous organist who had come to his city. Many people attended the service, but the atheist planned to listen only to the organ music. When the pastor preached, read Scripture, or prayed, the atheist would put a finger in each ear to block out the sound.

Then, a housefly landed on his nose! When he unplugged his right ear to use his hand to shoo the fly away, the word of Scripture being read just then was, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Quickly, the man put his finger back in his ear, but he couldn’t erase what he had heard. The words kept repeating themselves in his mind. The Holy Spirit used this fragment of the good news to speak to his heart, and he was later converted!

The Word Tells of Salvation

Not only does the Bible’s message reveal sin and penetrate the heart; it also tells us of salvation. We are not left in despair, knowing just the dark side. Thank God for the Book of hope that gives us the bright side as well!

The Bible contains all the facts necessary for man’s salvation. Its joyful message isn’t found in other literary works. Other writings may exhort the reader to try to reform and thus do a bit of good, but their messages are limited. In contrast, the Scripture tells of a Savior, Jesus, who alone has the words of

eternal life. Like Peter said, to whom else could we go for such words (John 6:68)? Who else could say, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10)?

The great theme of Scripture therefore centers around Jesus Christ. "These... Scriptures," said Jesus, "testify about me" (John 5:39). The *core* of the Bible's teaching on salvation is the gospel of Christ. Paul condensed the "greatest story ever told" into these words:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. (1 Corinthians 15:3–5)

The gospel, then, is God's story of Jesus; the good news is about His love-gift to the world (John 3:16). No wonder Paul exclaimed, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

The Word Generates Faith

There lies in every person a hunger for God. Even those who claim to be agnostic experience this longing. The Lord has given His Word to create the faith we need—faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "These [miracles] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

God's message must come through the ear into the heart, and then on to the lips.

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified,


and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. (Romans 10:8–10).

Would you like to share your faith with others? You can do it by giving them God’s Word. Romans 10:17 says, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” Others need to hear God’s message just as you heard it so that it has a chance to enter their hearts and that they might have faith to believe and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Application

6 Write in correct order the “route” that God’s Word takes in generating faith.

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The Word Produces Conversion

Palma was just 14 years old when her Sunday school teacher, who herself did not know what salvation was, told her pupils to start reading their Bibles.

“I started in Matthew’s Gospel,” said Palma. “When I had read as far as the Sermon on the Mount, a deep conviction of sin gripped my soul. I went to the pastor and told him about it, but his only answer was, ‘What does a good girl like you know about sin? Go home and play with your dolls!’ I found no one who could help me find Jesus as my Savior.”

Palma didn’t know how to receive Christ and His forgiveness. For five years, she carried this burden of wanting to know the Lord and to be assured that she would get to heaven when she left this world, but she didn’t know how to find Him. Then, one day she went to a church in another city, where she heard the pastor preach on repentance and the need to be born again. Palma was shown from God’s Word how to be saved, and through God’s Word, she received spiritual life.

“How happy I was to experience real conversion!” she exclaimed. She received the baptism of the Holy Spirit—another radiant experience in her life. She later went to mainland China, Ceylon, and Taiwan as a missionary and spent many fruitful years leading others into the same experiences she enjoyed.

Scripture carries out the principle that only life can produce life. The apostle Peter wrote that “you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). This “word of God,” he explains further, “is the word that was preached to you” (v. 25). The apostle James confirmed this truth when he wrote that God “chose to give us birth through the word of truth” (James 1:18).

The living Word of God produces spiritual life through the new birth.

Application

7 Match the description of the person (left column) with what the Word of God can do in his or her life (right column).

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| ... a Susan thinks she is good enough. | 1) Produce conversion |
| ... b Daniel needs a message of hope. | 2) Reveal sin |
| ... c Jacob lacks faith to believe. | 3) Penetrate heart |
| ... d Mary tries to close out spiritual things. | 4) Tell of salvation |
| ... e Paul wants to be saved. | 5) Generate faith |

8 Review the five ways God’s Word functions in soul-winning, then write them in your notebook from memory.



GOD'S WORD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT WORK TOGETHER

Objective 3. *Recognize how God's Word is the Holy Spirit's tool in bringing conversion.*

“Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). In this age of the Holy Spirit's ministry, His weapon is the Word of God. Remember that it “penetrates” to a man's conscience and to his heart (Hebrews 4:12). The Word is the Spirit's sword. What a formidable combination this is to enemies of the Lord!

Paul wrote, “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4). What are some of God's powerful weapons? Praying in the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God, calling upon the name of Jesus, and trusting in the merits of His shed blood. These are weapons with which “we demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

When involved in soul-winning, you are engaged in a great spiritual battle. Demons, occult forces, and other powers of darkness hold people with a steellike grip, and Satan opposes those who would help set them free. But the Lord in whom you trust is the victor! “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations’” (Matthew 28:18–19).

In all soul winning work, you must rely on the Holy Spirit and allow Him to quicken the Word to your heart so that you speak the right words at the right time and in the right place. Speak under His authority. Remember, your job is to proclaim the truth of the gospel; it is the Spirit's responsibility to convict men of this truth and draw them to repentance. You cannot do His work, and He does not do yours. This is the great

partnership between the Spirit and us, which God has ordained as the means through which His work is to be accomplished.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached the Word with great power to thousands of people gathered in the streets of Jerusalem (Acts 2:14–40). He quoted Scripture after Scripture from the Old Testament. From these texts, he preached Christ—the one crucified, risen again, and enthroned in glory, giver of the blessed Holy Spirit. That day, the Word became like a sledgehammer in Peter's hands! He gave the Word and the Holy Spirit used it to convict people's hearts. "What shall we do?" they cried out.

Peter appealed to them with "many other words" to turn away from their sins and to accept Christ's provision of salvation. So powerful was the message and appeal that many believed and were baptized. At least 3000 were added to the group of believers (Acts 2:41). Later, as the preaching of the Word continued, the number grew to 5000 (Acts 4:4). God's Word, released in power, produces conversions just as it did in Bible times. We must trust the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of those with whom we share the good news.

Application

9 The Bible is called a sword, but it isn't only *our* sword. It is also the

10 Describe in your own words how the Holy Spirit and the Word unite to produce conversion.

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GOD'S WORD MUST BECOME A VITAL PART OF YOUR LIFE

Objective 4. *Discuss how you can make God's Word a vital part of your life.*

The apostle Paul urged believers to “let the message of Christ dwell among you richly” (Colossians 3:16). The Word must become a part of your life and witness. This means reading the Bible daily and meditating upon it. Follow your time in the Word with prayer. In this manner, God speaks to you through His Word, then you speak to God in worship and prayer. Speak to Him also about the many people who need salvation, praying for them by name. Keep praying for people and not so much for things. Witnessing to people then becomes as natural as breathing.

Nothing takes the place of having God's Word fixed in your heart and mind. As you have seen, each lesson in this textbook gives you a verse or two to memorize; we have labeled these sections *Fingertip Texts*. You will recognize the following verse as one that has been used as part of the text in previous lessons, but you will be able to use it more effectively if you commit it to memory.

Application

11 *Fingertip Text*

Title: Saved by His Mercy	Reference: Titus 3:5
Text: He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.	

When you begin to share the good news with someone, talk naturally about subjects that interest the prospective convert. Then, as the Holy Spirit leads, steer the course of conversation to spiritual matters. Reinforce what you are saying with a verse of Scripture. A well-chosen verse anointed by the Spirit

adds authority to your own words, but do not quote numerous passages of Scripture to someone who knows little of the Christian faith. When Jesus did personal work, He rarely quoted Scripture to people who were not interested in spiritual matters. Instead, He captured their attention by meeting them on their own terms or by approaching them with something they were interested in, then He led them into spiritual truth.

He reached the chief tax collector in the city of Jericho this way. Zacchaeus was a short man who wanted to see Jesus, but he couldn't press through the crowd. So, he climbed into a tree where he could get a good view of the Master as He passed by. Imagine his surprise when Jesus looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."


Zacchaeus scrambled down the tree as fast as he could. This was more than he could have hoped for! Picture this little man as he joyfully welcomes the great Savior to his home! His willingness to entertain Jesus led to Christ's words: "Today salvation has come to this house." After first showing friendliness to Zacchaeus, Jesus won him over as a devoted follower (Luke 19:1–10).

Application

12 Circle the letter in front of each correct completion to the sentence. We can help make God's Word a vital part of our lives if we

- a)** read it prayerfully.
- b)** take time to think and meditate on what we have read.
- c)** commit Scripture to memory.
- d)** carry a Bible with us to church.

13 In your notebook, write which areas—prayer, study, reading, or memorizing—you feel need strengthening in your life. Ask the Lord to help you with them and then try to reschedule your days to allow more time for spiritual things.



In this second unit, you have looked into the supernatural power of God in the experience of conversion, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. He has provided for His people so that they may be equipped to carry out the work He has for them to do.

self-test

TRUE-FALSE. Write **T** in the blank space if the statement is true. Write **F** if it is false.

-**1** Jesus' teaching was different because He taught with authority.
-**2** Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ
-**3** God's Word both convicts of sin and offers hope.
-**4** The Law came by Moses and faith comes by keeping the Law.

MATCHING. In front of each action given (left column) write the letter of the quality or thing it relates to (right column).

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 5 Given by God's Word | a) Friendliness |
| 6 Shows our wrongdoing | b) Authority |
| 7 Produces life | c) Scripture |
| 8 Jesus showed Zacchaeus | d) Law |
| 9 We should memorize | e) Grace |

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Circle the letter(s) of the correct answer(s).

10 Select three things from the list below that describe God's Word.

- a)** Living
- b)** Changeable
- c)** Limited
- d)** True
- e)** Immortal

11 Circle the letter in front of each correct completion to the sentence. It is the responsibility of every Christian to

- a)** read and meditate on God's Word.
- b)** share the good news with others.
- c)** convict people of sin.
- d)** confess Jesus as Savior and Lord.

SHORT ANSWER. Write the answer to the question on the lines provided.

12 In this lesson we have studied three things to which God's Word is compared. What are these three things?

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13 What "route" does God's Word take in us to build up active faith?

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FINGERTIP TEXT.

14 From memory, write in your notebook or quote to someone else the *Fingertip Texts* you learned. Include the title, reference, and text.

Before you continue your study with Lesson 7, complete your student report for Unit 2 and return Answer Sheet 2 to your GU instructor.

answers to study questions

- 1** God
- 8** God's Word reveals sin, penetrates the heart, tells of salvation, generates faith, and produces conversion.
- 2** Without looking at your card, you should be able to quote all three parts of the *Fingertip Text*, John 1:18.
- 9** Sword of the Spirit.
- 3** wrongdoing (or sin).
- 10** Your answer. I would say that the Word contains the message that the Holy Spirit makes real to the heart.
- 4** *Under Law*: Wrongdoing, Sin, Penalty, Bondage.
Under Grace: Truth, Life, Mercy, Freedom.
- 11** Without looking at your card, you should be able to quote all three parts of the *Fingertip Text*, Titus 3:5.
- 5** Your answer. I would say this: The Bible is inspired by God and so represents the highest authority, and the Bible tells the message of salvation.
- 12** **a)** read it prayerfully.
b) take time to think and meditate on what we have read.
c) commit Scriptures to memory.
- (Not **d)** carry a Bible . . . we can develop a habit of carrying a Bible without ever taking time for personal Bible study.)
- 6** Ears, heart, lips (or mouth).
- 13** Your answer.
- 7** **a** 2) Reveal sin.
b 4) Tell of salvation.
c 5) Generate faith.
d 3) Penetrate heart.
e 1) Produce conversion.



UNIT THREE

A WORK TO DO—Be Involved!

Lessons

- 7 Approach the Unconverted
- 8 Explain the Way of Salvation
- 9 Bring to a Decision
- 10 Disciple New Converts