

*Jesus prayed: “The words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.”*

*(John 17:8)*

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*

*(Psalm 119:105)*

## The Word of Truth

When Jesus prayed with his disciples on the night before he died, he asked the Father to “sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17) Jesus had given his followers God’s Word, and he was now sending them out into the world to be his messengers of faith.

As present-day disciples of Jesus, the Word of God provides to us the source and the content of our faith, just as it did for the first disciples. The commands and promises we find in Scripture bear witness to the salvation he has brought to us in Christ. In God’s Word we encounter the ultimate Truth — about ourselves, our world, and God.

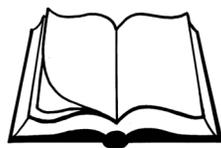
## A Living and Active Word

Most discussions of the authority of Scripture tend to focus on what the Bible is. For Martin Luther, the more important issue was what God’s Word *does* — to us and in us.

**“Indeed, 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.”**

**(Hebrews 4:12)**

In the Small Catechism Luther wrote: “God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word, and live a godly life on earth now and in heaven forever.” Luther also wrote: “We are to fear and love God so that we do not neglect his Word and the preaching of it, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.”



The real power and authority of Scripture rests in the fact that God does something to us through his Word. As law, God’s Word shows us our sin and need for repentance. As gospel, God’s Word announces the promise of forgiveness and new life in Christ. The Holy Spirit uses the Word in these ways to create faith, when and where God pleases.

Scripture serves its true function when it is heard, read, and studied, and through it God engenders faith. On the other hand, the truth and authority of the Scriptures is lost to us when a living faith is removed from the Word — that is, when it is forgotten that the Bible’s primary purpose is to lead us to repentance of sin and salvation by faith in Christ.

## Inspired by the Spirit



Throughout the Bible, the Word of God and the Spirit of God have always been intimately related. The biblical word for “the Spirit” (*ruach* in Hebrew, *pneuma* in Greek), is the same word used for “breath.” When God speaks, the Spirit is active, making things happen according to his own will. It is not surprising then that Scripture — the written Word of God — describes itself as a work of the Spirit as well.

**“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”**

**(2 Timothy 3:16-17)**

The phrase *inspired by God* literally means “God-breathed.” It shows that the active power of God’s Holy Spirit was and is at work in the Scriptures, making it a Word unlike any other.

Scripture is not simply a compendium of human thoughts about God; it is an expression of God’s thoughts and intentions for us. It is for this reason that Scripture is “useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” Like a tool or instrument, God himself *uses* the Scripture to do his work in us.

To say that the Bible is “inspired by God” means not only that the Holy Spirit was active in the writing of Scripture, it also means that the Spirit is able use Scripture to convince our hearts today of its unchanging truth in law and gospel.

## The Authority of Scripture

Traditionally, Lutherans have confessed their trust in the Bible as God's revealed Word by speaking of Scripture as the final authority for all matters of our faith and life.

*From the Lutheran Confessions:*

### The Formula of Concord

We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged, as it is written in Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." And St. Paul says in Galatians 1:8, "Even if an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed."

To speak of Scripture as the "rule and norm" of our faith and life, means that it is the basis for what we believe as well as the standard against which all Christian teaching is to be measured.

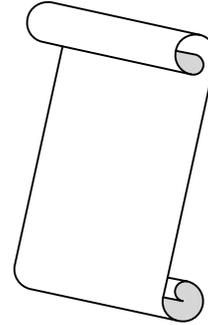
The misuse of God's written Word by individuals or the church does not divest Scripture of its authority, but rather reveals our own sinful rebellion from which we need to be redeemed by God. As Luther wrote in the Small Catechism, it is our prayer that God would always conform our lives to his Word:

*"God's name is hallowed when his Word is taught in its truth and purity, and we as children of God live in harmony with it. Help us to do this Heavenly Father! But whoever teaches or lives contrary to the Word of God dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this Heavenly Father!"*

## Suggested Scripture focusing on the Word:

For those looking to further explore what Scripture says about itself, as well as how God uses his Word to bring about faith in our lives, here are some additional passages you might wish to read:

- **Psalm 1**
- **Psalm 119**
- **2 Timothy 3:14-17**
- **2 Peter 1:16-21**
- **Acts 8:27-35**
- **John 8:12-47**



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# Your Word Is Truth



*Sola Publishing – Educational Series:*

## What Does This Mean?

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"Sanctify them in the truth;  
your word is truth."  
(John 17:17 NRSV)*