

The Subversive Word of God
1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

Introduction: Steve said on Sunday, “Words reveal.” Without words there are many things that would be impossible for us to know. If this is true in our human relationships, how much more so when it comes to God? Without words, we would not know who God is, what He thinks or what He is up to in this world. Thankfully, God is a communicating God and He has chosen to accommodate our human limitations by speaking to us in human language. His words tell us things that we simply wouldn’t otherwise know and couldn’t figure out on our own. May this study remind you (or convince you) that the word(s) of God is the most precious, valuable information that humanity possesses.

Opening Discussion: Steve mentioned on Sunday that he had a Sunday school teacher who told his class that if they had a Bible in a stack of books, it better be on top. Did you grow up with any such superstitious practices or beliefs about the Bible?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16

1. What general observations do you have of this passage?
2. How does Paul describe the Thessalonian church?
3. What do you think it means to accept God’s message “for what it really is, the word of God” (v. 13)?
4. Paul says that the word of God “also performs its work in you who believe” (v. 13). What was the work that it was performing in the Thessalonians (v. 14-16)?
5. What is your understanding of how the word of God performs its work in our lives?
6. What kinds of things can hinder the word of God from doing its work in our lives?

Steve said:

A Warning: The word of God is subversive. If you receive the word of God for what it is – not the word of men but the word of God – all bets are off. There's really “no telling” what God will do in your life through His word. If you like your life just the way it is or if you really, truly don't want to live outside your comfort zone, then I would recommend that you **not** listen to the word of God. I say that because if you hear and receive the word of God, you will be drawn into a whole world that you never knew existed. The Scriptures invite us to participate in the kingdom of God itself.

7. In what ways has the word of God been “subversive” in your own life? In other words, in what ways has it changed your life in ways you never expected?
8. How have the Scriptures invited and helped you to participate in the kingdom of God?

Steve said:

It's not what we do to the word of God; it's what we allow the word of God to do to us. So often we use the Bible like a manual to troubleshoot our lives. But the sobering reality is that God isn't committed merely to troubleshooting our lives. He isn't committed to solve our problems. In reality, He wants us to experience a type of life – a type of reality – that is so much richer and fuller than we have ever wanted for ourselves. He wants to give us things that we don't even know about. He wants us to participate in things that we never expected.

9. What do you think it means to use the Bible “like a manual to troubleshoot our lives” and why do you think that this approach to the Bible is an insufficient approach?
10. Steve gave the perspective that it's not what you do to the word of God; it's what you allow the word of God to do to you. What do you think this means? How do we put ourselves in a position to allow the word of God to do what it should in our lives?
11. What do you sense you need to do this week to put yourself in a better position to allow the word of God to perform its work in your life?