

The Word, July 12, 2026 - Genesis 1:1-3, 15:1, 5; John 1:1-3, 14; Hebrews 1:1-2

Good morning, I'm Michelle Leichty, Communication Director here at Covenant.

"Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

This was a familiar chant on the playground of my childhood, particularly after strings of insults or name-calling.

As a small child, I thought if I believed that saying enough, it would be true. "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

As I grew older, I realized it would never be true. Words will not hurt me in the same way sticks and stones do – physically impacting my body. But words are powerful – and hurtful words wounded me deeply, even if not physically.

Words can harm – and words can heal.

A math teacher who said your struggle with understanding advanced math concepts would make you an excellent math teacher.

A coach who admired your hard work ethic, even if you weren't the most talented athlete.

A friend who saw you for who you are – not just the various roles you fill as child, parent, sibling, employee.

Words are beautiful. Surprising I should say that, right? As a communication director, most of my days revolve around words and writing. I love a beautiful turn of phrase, description, a powerful verb used in an unexpected place.

Our words are powerful – they can wound. They can heal. God gave us language – words - as a way for us to relate to each other and with Him. **God's heart is to relate to us by His Word.**

When I want to know someone's heart, I listen to what that person has to say. Back in the day when Glen and I were dating, letters were the most cost-effective way to communicate when we were in different states. Phone calls were expensive. Email, texting, didn't exist. When Glen went to the east coast for the summer, I looked forward to his letters – and eagerly read them when they arrived.

God has gifted us with an entire book of words! If I want to know God's heart, I want to know His Word – especially because **God's heart is to relate to us by His Word.**

God's Word is POWERFUL.

The first few verses of the Bible, Genesis 1:1-3 don't just tell us God's Word is powerful, they show us.

Genesis 1 says "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

And in verse three, "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

Perhaps you were expecting some magician's drama – abracadabra, hand motions and voila! Here is light!

Nope. No drama. Just words. Just four little words. "Let there be light." And there was light.

This pattern continues throughout Genesis 1. God spoke light into existence and called it day. He spoke and the waters separated, and he called the expanse 'sky.' God spoke and ground formed. Plants grew. God spoke and the sun, moon and stars appeared. God spoke the world into existence. He SPOKE the world into existence!

Our words are powerful – but not that powerful. We don't have the power to speak our visions into existence – the beautiful garden requires digging in the dirt and years upon years of investment. The kitchen renovations require demolition and weeks of rebuilding before we can enjoy the new kitchen.

God speaks - and he creates something from nothing.

God's Word is powerful in effect, too.

In Isaiah 55:10-11 God says, As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

God's words will accomplish what He has purposed them to do. Every. Single. time. In contrast – I may speak what I think are words of encouragement, and yet somehow, they don't accomplish what I intended. I grew up thinking the right way to deal with my anger was by stuffing it. So when my children were small and became angry, I told them, "Hey, it's okay to be angry. It's okay to stomp your foot. You need to go to your room and calm yourself down, then we can talk about it."

My intentions were good! I wanted them to feel their emotions and learn to regulate themselves. However – I did not know that some kids, like me, learn to regulate themselves, while other kids, like some of mine, needed my help to learn how to regulate

their emotions. What I intended for good was actually hurtful for at least one of my children.

God's Word will accomplish what He desires and will achieve His purpose. Every time. God's Word is powerful. It always accomplishes His purpose.

Which can tempt us to think God's word is magical. As in, if we memorize the right verses, we can make God do what we want.

God's word is powerful and

God's word is PERFECT.

Let's read Psalm 19:7-10 – The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; They are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

Here David, the author, pulled out his thesaurus and found all sorts of words to describe God's word – law, statute, precepts, ordinances. This variation and repetition remind us that God's word is perfect. Trustworthy. Right. Pure. Sure. Righteous.

God's word is precious – more precious than the grade. More precious than the degree. The raise. The fat bank account. And God's word is worthy of our desire – more than we desire our favorite sweets. More than ice cream. More than cookies. More than pastries.

God's word is precious and worthy of our desire because God's word is perfect – as David again reminds us in 2 Samuel 22:31, "As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless."

God's word is perfect, flawless. Sit with that for a second. Can we describe anything in this world as perfect or flawless? Maybe a diamond. Maybe a sunset. But nothing compares to the perfection of God's word.

Which can tempt us to worship the words on the page. We can focus on the words in Bible – researching, studying so that we miss the person behind the words, the Creator God.

God's Word is powerful, and God's Word is perfect – and most importantly,

God's Word is a PERSON.

If you are familiar with the gospel of John, your mind might be skipping to the prelude of that book. We'll get there in a minute! Hang with me - as we look at how the Old Testament personifies God's Word. This is something I hadn't considered before!

Let's return to Genesis – this time Genesis 15:1, 5. Here we find the account of God promising Abram he will be a great nation. “After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision...”

The Word of the Lord came to Abram – just as a person would come into a room. And later, in verse 5, the Word of the Lord took Abram outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars...”

The Word of the Lord – He – took Abram outside, just as one person would take another person from room to room, or on a tour. So the author here is personifying the Word who came to Abram. And this is not the only place the Word of God is described as a person or does things a person would do.

Hundreds of years later, Abram's family has grown tremendously. They've had a stint in Egypt and God dramatically brought them out of slavery and into the land He promised them.

In 1 Samuel 3:1, we read the account of the Lord calling Samuel. The story is prefaced by this phrase, “In those days, the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.” As we read through the story, the boy Samuel hears his name being called over and over again, so he runs into the priest Eli, who was his guardian. Eli finally gets wise, and tells Samuel, “The Lord is calling you, you need to respond to him.” Samuel does, and that begins his career as the Lord's prophet to all Israel. In verse 21, we read, “The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.”

God revealed himself through his word, who appeared to Samuel. *Who* – not *that*.

Throughout the Old Testament, the Word of God comes to people – prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 7, King Solomon in 1 Kings 6, Shemaiah, the man of God, in 1 Kings 12; prophets Jeremiah in Jeremiah chapters 1 and 42; Ezekiel in chapter 2, and Daniel in chapter 10. The Word of God came to each one.

Why didn't the Word of God come to, or appear to, everyone?

Skip back to Exodus 20:18-19, when the Israelites are at the foot of Mount Sinai as Moses is meeting with God.

“When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, ‘Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.’”

The people begged Moses to talk with God on their behalf because God was too awesome, too scary for them to speak to themselves. Moses was the first prophet of God – the one who spoke to the people on God’s behalf. Samuel, Nathan, Jeremiah, and a number of others were also prophets, speaking to the people on God’s behalf.

And yet, God had a plan for a more intimate relationship with his people. He wanted to relate to each person on a personal level. How does an infinite, eternal, powerful, incredibly awesome and scary God choose to do that?

Hebrews 1:1-2 gives us a glimpse into God’s plan: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways” – as we’ve just seen... “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”

God speaks to us through His Son – who is also known as the Word.

And now, we turn to the beautiful, poetic prelude to John’s biography of Jesus.

John 1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Skipping down to verse 14 – The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

What was once vision and voice became created, flesh and blood. Jesus, the Word of God, the Creator who created the entire universe with his words, became created being. The Word became flesh.

And all the Old Testament says about God’s Word – his voice, laws, statutes – is embodied in the real person of Jesus.

God’s word is **powerful** – Jesus is powerful! The first four books of the New Testament document the ways Jesus demonstrated his power as the Word of God...

With his word – he calmed raging storms – Matthew 8

With his word – he drove out demons – described in Luke 8

With his word – he healed illnesses – Mark 7, 8, 10

With his word – he brought life back to Jarius’ daughter, as we read in Mark 5. He brought life back to the widow’s son – Luke 7

With his word – he called Lazarus from the tomb – John 11.

Jesus, the Word of God, is powerful.

God’s Word is **perfect** – Jesus is perfect! The book of Matthew relates how Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus perfectly responded to each temptation – he refused to use his power to provide physical nourishment for himself, he refused to misapply Old Testament scriptures, and he refused to take Satan’s shortcut to power.

Jesus, the Word of God, is perfect.

God’s Word is a **person**, He is personable. In those same four New Testament books, we see Jesus, God’s Word, personally relating with people – his disciples, people in the crowds following him. There are so many examples of this, it’s hard to pick just one... personally, I find myself returning to Jesus’ encounter with the rich young man in Mark 10. This wealthy young man comes to Jesus – he has everything. A great job. A big bank account. All the convenience money can buy. He’s done everything right – and yet something is missing. He can feel it deep down in his soul. So he asks Jesus, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus says to him, ‘Son, you know the commandments.’ This young man says, ‘I’ve kept all those commandments since I was a kid!’

If I were there, witnessing this interaction, I’d be thinking, ‘whoa buddy! That is just not true. No one can perfectly keep all the commandments. Who do you think you are?’

But what is Jesus’ response?

Mark 10:21 “Jesus looked at him and loved him.”

Jesus loved this young, pompous man, who thought too much of himself. Jesus tells him to sell everything and give to the poor, then come and follow Jesus. The young man was sad and left disappointed.

Jesus knew what this young man was thinking. Jesus knew he was going to walk away. And yet Jesus answered his question. Jesus looked at him, really saw who he was without the trappings of wealth, and Jesus loved him.

Jesus is a person. He is personable. He is approachable. He is relatable. Even when we do not want to relate with Him.

Jesus, God’s Word, is a person, who loves me. Who loves you.

Yet we cannot physically see him and relate to him the way his disciples could. **Which tempts us** to treat Jesus as an object, and not a person. To say we love and follow him, while in our hearts we ignore him.

“Sticks and stones will break my bones – and words can either hurt or heal me.” It doesn’t roll off the tongue the same as the original. However it’s truer.

We know our words can be powerful. We can deeply hurt those we love with an off-hand comment. We can also speak words of deep encouragement that can change someone’s life.

But as powerful as our words can be, God’s Word is most powerful. Jesus - God’s Word – is powerful. Jesus – God’s Word – is perfect. Jesus – God’s Word is a person... God became a human – why? Because God’s heart is to relate to us by His Word – not just the words on a page. Not just the words spoken by a prophet. God’s heart is to relate with us by His Word – Jesus. Person to person.

When are you tempted to view God’s words as magic – as a way to make God do what you want him to do? I think this is especially tempting with Proverbs – God, I trained up my children in the way they should go, so of course they’re going to follow you, choose a path that makes sense to me... God, I followed you, worked diligently, and I expect to get into the college I want, the job I want, the numbers in the bank account I want...

When are you tempted to worship the words on the page? Especially those of us who love to study and research – oh, it’s so tempting to immerse ourselves in knowledge and understanding of the words and completely miss the Word!! – the person who is longing to be with us, for us to know him and his love.

When are you tempted to treat Jesus as an object instead of a person? Because He is not physically here on earth right now, it’s tempting to ignore Him and focus on what we can see, smell, touch, taste. Or just think of Him when we want something – treating Him like a cosmic vending machine instead of a person we can come to really know. A person who loves us and wants to spend time with us.

God’s heart is to relate with us by His Word – Jesus. And this is the Word with whom we relate, with whom we spend time, the True, Perfect, Powerful Word we worship – Jesus.