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# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

“The Scribe, The Prophet, and The Monk:

Three Archetypes for Pursuing God through the Word of God”

written by

Lucas McCann

and submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for completion of  
the Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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Dr. Ray Franklin, thesis director

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Dr. Barbara Pemberton, Honors Program director

Date:

## **Introduction**

In any given sermon, one of the most common application is for Christians to read their Bibles. Regardless of what passage the sermon comes from, what other spiritual truths are being communicated that day, or even what mood the preacher is in that day, it seems as if it can always come back to an exhortation to read the Word of God more. And though hearing the same application over and over may be tiresome at times, perhaps this is not a bad application to be over-emphasized. After all, reading scripture is of utmost importance. God speaks to his people directly through his written word. The Holy Bible is a beautiful narrative of how God created mankind, how mankind distorted his beautiful creation, and how God is the one who redeems and restores that creation.

Spending daily time with the Lord by reading scripture surely is a viable and crucial aspect of every believer's spiritual walk; however, is it the only viable way? Many in modern times simply do not seem to be created to read. And what about those who are simply unable to read, either because they do not have access to the written word or because they lack the ability to read (or both)? And, when discussing the lack of access to the written word, how can one explain how individuals such as Noah or Abraham related with God when they did not possess a written word from God to "spend time daily with him?" Both individuals are said to be counted as righteous because of their faith in God, yet this faith is not enhanced by the written word of God. The Word of God surely is essential to develop a relationship with the Lord, yet it seems there may be other ways to pursue a relationship with him and develop the faith that saves, as seen from Abraham and Noah.

Thus, this paper seeks to establish a broader methodology for pursuing God apart from solely reading the Word of God. In no way does this paper seek to downgrade or depart from the written word of God, for, as will be discussed soon, God chose to primarily communicate to modern-day believers through this media. Thus, everything believers do must be grounded in scripture, and this paper itself relies heavily on the written word to present alternative models to the written word. However, modern-day believers do not do justice to their relationship with God if reading scripture is their sole means of deepening their relationship with God, for scripture itself presents a broader methodology than that. This paper will argue for three different methods of pursuing and relating with God: Studying the Word, Hearing the Word, and Seeing the Word. No matter the method, the Word of God is still central. The only thing that changes is the media through which it is presented. And from these different mediums, three different historical archetypes for pursuing God emerge: the Scribe, the Prophet, and the Monk. Finally, from these historical archetypes, various modern-day applications and disciplines for pursuing God emerge, some of which may appear quite common, while others may seem uncommon. These disciplines are intended to bring this paper out of the academic world and into the practical, everyday life of a believer to demonstrate how one can use these different mediums of the Word of God to relate to the Lord in a more complete way.

## **Biblically Defined Ways to Pursue God**

### **Studying the Word- The Scribe**

Christianity today is defined by scripture. When one thinks of Christianity, one can hardly help but think of the holy scriptures. As pointed out by Dr. Barbara Pemberton, “We are a people of

the book.”<sup>1</sup> God, in his divine providence, chose to communicate his will to his people through the medium of a book. Jesus himself continually quotes Old Testament scripture during his life and ministry, clearly emphasizing scripture’s importance. He even goes so far to say at the end of Luke’s Gospel that “the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms” contain prophecies written about himself. If Christians truly follow Christ’s example, they will study and know the scriptures, just as Christ did. Jesus, being fully God, was able to follow and abide in scripture in a way Christians will not be able to until they are glorified at Christ’s return. Yet, Christians are still called to “be imitators of God,” since we are his children. Thus, if God himself abided in his word when he was here on earth in human form as Jesus, how much more so must modern-day Christians also abide in and study his word.

Jesus was not the only one who placed an emphasis on the importance of scripture. Paul, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, speaks of the Old Testament scripture, calling them “God-breathed,” or “inspired,” and saying that they are “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” equipping the man of God “for every good work.” Paul affirms scripture’s usefulness in almost all areas of life here, and, as Lea and Griffin note, from this the reader can trust that “those who obey the commands and respond to the promises of Scripture can find the strength to live a life of such an arresting quality that it can encourage and enlighten others.”<sup>2</sup> Scripture may not speak on every topic, but it speaks into all areas of life and, as Paul puts it in the earlier verse, makes people “wise for salvation.” Studying and abiding in God’s word gives people the ability to know his will, for God has chosen to directly reveal to us his will

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Barbara Pemberton, interview by author, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Lea, Thomas D., and Hayne P. Griffin. *1,2 Timothy, Titus*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), New American Commentary Series, 238.

through the written word.<sup>3</sup> From Paul's instruction to Timothy, it becomes very apparent that scripture must be of utmost importance in one's life if one desires to deepen her relationship with God.

All these people in the New Testament affirm that the Old Testament scripture is instrumental in developing one's relationship with God. But where can one see an example of believers who read and study the scripture in the sense that people do today? The Bible mentions instances of people reading and writing on multiple occasions, as well as containing instructions from Moses in Deuteronomy 6 to "write" the commandments God has given to Moses to give to them on their gates. However, despite this, if one looks at the grand picture of the Old Testament within its cultural context, it seems that most individuals depicted as reading and writing are officials of some sort, whether that be a scribe or priest, or even one of the kings of Israel.<sup>4</sup> There can certainly be arguments made for widespread literacy among the people of Israel; however, it seems far more likely that most common people in Israel were not able to read and write with ease. Also, a case can be made that even those elite individuals that could read did not do so in the sense that people commonly do today. When people read today, it is most often reading silently, yet the primary Hebrew word for "read" does not normally have this connotation. The main Hebrew word commonly translated as "read" is קרא (*qra*), and it typically is used with connotations of "crying out," "reading aloud," or even "proclaiming" something.<sup>5</sup> Thus, even though there were individuals in scripture who did read scripture, it does not contain the

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<sup>3</sup> Towner, Philip H. *1-2 Timothy, and Titus*. (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press 1994), IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 202.

<sup>4</sup> Carr, David M. *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature*. (New York, USA: Oxford University Press 2009), 116.

<sup>5</sup> *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017) קרא (*qra*).

connotation of a private, devotional style of reading silently that people might think of today. Instead, reading scripture was more often a corporate event since Israel was a corporate culture; they did activities most often in the context of community.

Despite an apparent lack of literacy in the sense modern-day believers understand, there are indeed several individuals who stand out among the rest for their intensive study of scripture and devotion to the Lord. One of these individuals is a man named Ezra. In the book of Ezra, the Israelites are returning to the land of Israel from the exile and begin to rebuild the temple. They face great opposition but manage to build and dedicate the temple.<sup>6</sup> Then, in chapter 7, a man named Ezra enters the scene. He is given two defining features that qualify him for his leadership role in the rest of Ezra: he is from the priestly lineage of Aaron, and he is a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses.<sup>7</sup> The text also says that “Ezra had “set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.” The Hebrew word translated as “study” here is not קרא (*qra*), as discussed before, but instead is דרש (*darosh*). This word is not typically translated as “study,” for it is more often used to convey the idea of “searching” or “seeking” for something, or even to “investigate.”<sup>8</sup> But, because of the association with the scriptures here in verse 10 of Ezra 7, דרש is translated as “study” because this English word best conveys the idea of “searching the scriptures.” This instance of Ezra “studying” or “searching the scriptures” is probably the closest parallel to modern-day reading of the scriptures. And, as the reader can clearly see in the text, it is the fact that Ezra set his heart on the study of scripture that prepares

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<sup>6</sup> E., Nikolaishen Douglas J, et al. “Ezra.” *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 2018) Teach the Text Commentary Series, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Nikolaishen, 78.

<sup>8</sup> *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017. דרש (*darosh*).

him for the great work the Lord had in store for Ezra in the rest of the book. His dedication to the Word of the Lord sets an example for modern-day Christians to follow: intense study of the scriptures will equip Christian leaders for the work God has in store for them.

Historically speaking, the written word has played a vital role in the lives of the people of God; however, most did not learn about God through the written word. After all, from Adam and Eve in the garden until the time of Moses, the “people of God” may not have had written word, but only the oral transmission of what they knew of God. When the prophet Moses came though, it is likely that he at least begins the process of writing down the Word of God, as he is believed to be the author of the majority of the Pentateuch.<sup>9</sup> In Deuteronomy 6, Moses instructs the people of Israel, who are on the verge of entering the promised land, to love the Lord their God and to keep the words given to them from Moses. After this, Moses establishes the tradition of orally teaching the Word of God to the next generation when he instructs them to teach these words to their children, talking about them whenever they are at the house, on the road, when they are going to bed, and also when they are getting up in the morning. The people of Israel are not just supposed to know the Word of the Lord, but they are to speak of it whenever and wherever they go. Moses gave this as the primary learning structure for learning about God because ancient Israel was primarily an oral culture, meaning they passed their history, culture, and religion down not by reading, but by telling the next generation about it, typically in the form of stories.

As discussed earlier, it is most likely that the majority of Israelites were not literate, and, if they were, they may not have had access to it. Only those with privileged authority, such as a king, scribe, priest, or possibly a prophet would have access to the scrolls with the written word

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<sup>9</sup> Schnittjer, Gary Edward. *The Torah Story: An Apprenticeship on the Pentateuch*. Zondervan, 2006, 10.



of God on them. Also, there does not appear to be much evidence of a set education system in ancient Israel before the exiles and the formation of synagogues. In biblical times, the ability to read and write well was not necessary for every-day life as it is in many of the western “modern” societies of today. In fact, according to John Beck, it is probable that “less than 10%” of the men and “virtually no women” would have the ability to read and write as modern-day readers understand it.<sup>10</sup> This does not mean they had no literacy at all, but simply that they could not engage the written word in the way modern-day believers understand it. However, this does not mean small-scale education did not occur in the small kingdoms of Israel and Judah.<sup>11</sup> After all, as instructed in Deuteronomy and mentioned throughout other places of scripture like Psalm 78, the primary responsibility for instruction of the Word of God to the next generation was placed on the parents. They were to teach their children to place their hope in God, to “not forget his works,” and to “keep his commandments.” Thus, one can see small-scale instruction of the Word of God occurred within the home. However, because of the lack of both access to the written word and ability to read it, this was most likely an oral learning process, where the parents told stories of the scriptures to their children, explaining the Word of God by speaking it aloud to their children. This method will be discussed more later in the next section. However, it is important to note that this instruction was already taking place to a certain extent within the homes of each family of the people of Israel.

Thus, the individuals who had the type of literacy modern-day readers are familiar with would be the scribes. They were the “literate” individuals, the possessed the ability to read and

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<sup>10</sup> Beck, John A., and Rodney Reeves. “Scribe.” *The Baker Illustrated Guide to Everyday Life in Bible Times* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2017), 228.

<sup>11</sup> Carr, 113.

write very similarly to the way a modern-day reader would think of it.<sup>12</sup> Scribes in the Bible are those given the privilege and honor of creating copies of the written Word of God. As discussed earlier, Ezra gives modern believers the best example for a scribe: one who studies the word. One can see multiple other references to scribes throughout scripture, but the earliest they are mentioned is during the reigns of King Solomon and King David, suggesting that with the formation of the kingdom of Israel increased the formal literacy of Israel. This is not to say they had the type of literacy familiar to modern-day readers, but simply that there is evidence that, with the creation of a formal kingdom, the people of Israel were also able to create a more formal education system for scribes, since they were needed no longer for just religious reasons but also for political and military reasons.<sup>13</sup> Thus, while it is possible there were scribes before this time, there appears to be a definite rise in the occupation during this time. In fact, it is most likely that scribes assisted others in any occupation that required forms of documentation: from the lowly merchant in the streets needing to record transactions, to the king in need of his speeches being put into written proclamations, to even those in need of records with the temple or military.<sup>14</sup> All of this is simply to make the case that, while some level of basic literacy was possible in the general population, it is most likely the case that only the scribes and a few other officials in ancient times possessed the type of literacy required to read and study the scriptures in the sense modern-day believers are so strictly taught to.

For the majority of the history of the world, this lack of a modern type of literacy amongst the majority population continued to exist. Because of this, it has been argued that the

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<sup>12</sup> Beck, 228.

<sup>13</sup> Carr, 163.

<sup>14</sup> Beck, 229.

scriptures were primarily passed down through oral practices, and because of this, individuals who desired to walk with the Lord relied heavily on orality to deepen their relationship with God. In fact, this method was perhaps more common than actually reading scripture in the sense modern-day believers do. However, modern-day believers find themselves in a completely different world than the ancient Israelites and even the early church. With the invention of the printing press around 1436 and the evolving education system, more and more individuals attained access to the written Word of God. And in today's time, there are billions of copies of scripture across the globe. In fact, the Holy Bible holds the Guinness World Record for the “best-selling book of all time.” Even though it is impossible to know the true number of how many copies of scripture exist, it is estimated to be between five to seven billion copies overall.<sup>15</sup> Modern-day believers are incredibly blessed, for they have access to the Word of God more than ever before.

Thus, studying the Word of God is a crucial practice that must be emphasized for modern-day believers. Christians should take advantage of the ability to hold the printed Word of God in their own hands and read it for themselves. Just as Ezra did, they can [search] דרש (*darosh*) through the scriptures to deepen their relationship with God and prepare themselves for the good works God has in store for them. The practice of studying the scriptures set forth by scribes like Ezra is of vital importance. And many have rightly recognized this in today's time. The Protestant Reformation stands as a clear indication of this. The importance of having the written word of God in every individual believer's hand was central to the reformer's beliefs. Erasmus felt so strongly about this that he believed that “all who are baptized into the name of

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<sup>15</sup> *Guinness World Records 2022*. Guinness World Records, London, ENG, 2021.

Christ have the right and obligation to know the teachings of Christ” found within the written word.<sup>16</sup> And this passion for the written word of God can still be seen in the sheer number of pew bibles there are in many modern-day churches. It can also be seen in that one of the primary methods missionaries use for reaching the nations for Christ begins with the goal of getting the Word of God written down in a people groups’ language.

Clearly, Christians in today’s time recognize the importance of studying the scriptures, but how exactly does one study the scriptures? The most obvious answer to this is simply to read the Word of God for oneself. Preachers across the globe continually beg their congregations to have a daily time with the Lord where they read a portion of scripture. This insistence on reading the Word of God should make complete sense now; God certainly speaks to his people through the written word. Thus, his people should respond by reading what God has said to them. And if people for centuries struggled to do this despite a lack of literacy among the common people, how much more should modern-day believers passionately read and study the Word of God. Another clear practice that can come from studying the Word of God is the memorization of scripture. Through this practice, one goes beyond simply reading the Word of God and they move this word into their inner being. Many find the task of memorizing scripture burdensome or too difficult, but there should be great joy in this practice. Again, modern-day believers have the privilege of holding the Word of God in their own hands, and this should be taken advantage of. There are many ways to facilitate this practice. Many advise writing the scriptures down repeatedly or even saying them out loud to oneself. Some individuals or companies have developed mnemonic devices or visual illustrations to facilitate the memorization of scripture. The company, Dwell Differently, has created many different illustrations to remind oneself of

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<sup>16</sup> McNutt, Jennifer Powell. *People's Book: The Reformation and the Bible*. InterVarsity Press, 2017, 55.

certain scriptures, and Christian scholar Patrick Schreiner actually created a book filled with visual illustrations to outline the New Testament.

Many modern-day parallels to the scribe archetype of pursuing God can be seen in the academic world. Seminaries, universities, and even some schools at the undergraduate or high school level emphasize the study of scripture and instruct believers on interpreting scripture all over the world. Perhaps millions of commentaries and other books have been written to facilitate the individual believer's study of scripture and encourage people to go deeper in their knowledge of the Word of God. There is a plethora of research into the written Word of God, and one could do nothing but study these many books for the rest of one's life and barely make a dent in this academic pursuit. And even though there are certainly books that one might rather avoid instead of reading, there is great value in studying these resources, as they are able to give insights into the Word of God that can take the believer beyond what they see when reading to what others across the globe and throughout the centuries have seen and learned from reading the Word of God.

Believers can and should deepen their relationship with God through the study of God's written word. Even though this practice may seem common to modern-day believers, the privilege of holding God's Word in one's hand is a relatively recent one in comparison to the history of the world. Many followers of God did not have access to his word in this way. Thus, believers in today's time must take advantage of the blessing of God's written word and study it in order to deepen their relationship with him.

## Hearing the Word- The Prophet

Every Sunday across the world, millions of people gather to hear the scriptures taught. Some gather in very public and beautifully adorned places, others in their houses, still others in hidden meeting places. Some gather on other days; some gather on multiple days a week. Ever since the time of Christ, this has been a sacred tradition the people of God have followed. In the book of Hebrews, the author urges his readers to not neglect their meetings together, but to use them as a time to encourage one another as they endure life until Christ returns. Paul himself, in 2 Timothy, charges Timothy to “preach the word” in order to guard against false doctrine. In the gospels, the reader can even see Jesus regularly teaching at synagogues, quoting scripture, and even reading from the scrolls of the Old Testament. Finally, in Revelation 1, the author issues a blessing upon both “the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy” and also “those who hear and keep what is written in it.”<sup>17</sup>

This tradition of gathering together regularly to hear the scriptures read aloud and taught over is indeed an important one with much scriptural support. While studying the word certainly has examples in scripture, hearing the Word of God spoken aloud and taught over is far more prominent throughout scripture as a whole. One can look at any of the prophetic books and see individuals proclaiming the word aloud to both the people of Israel and occasionally to other nations. Two amazing examples of this come from the passages where the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah are called to serve the Lord and speak for him. In the case of Isaiah, the Lord called from his throne in heaven in, asking “Whom will I send?” After Isaiah responds to this call, the Lord again speaks, saying: “Go, and say to this people...” Then, in the case of Jeremiah, the Lord instructs him in that he has chosen Jeremiah as his prophet, and when Jeremiah protests, the

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Lord commands: “to all to whom I send you, you shall go and whatever I command you, you shall speak” for “I have put my words in your mouth.” In both instances, the Lord instructs these prophets to speak to the people of Israel in order to warn them of coming judgment, call on them to repent, and to remind them of the future hope. Throughout the prophets, the reader can see this pattern everywhere. The Lord speaks to his chosen prophet and gives them the words to say, and the prophets speak these words to the people. The words of these prophets bears the same weight as the Word of God itself, since it was God speaking through his prophets.

And just as one thinks that the written Word of God can impact a person’s life, so also was it expected that the spoken Word of God these prophets spoke could impact people’s life. They were not empty words, but instead were teachings and warnings directed at the people of God. And, while people often did not listen to these teachings and warnings, sometimes they did, as is the case with the prophet Jonah, where the entire city repents after receiving the Word of the Lord from Jonah. But not only prophets spoke the Word of God. For, while the written word was not readily available to the common people, many kings and other officials had access to the scrolls, and in scripture we see examples of these individuals reading the scriptures aloud to the people of Israel, expecting a response, much like a prophet would. In 2 Kings 22, a king named Josiah becomes king of Judah, and, in verse 10, the book of the Law is brought to him and read aloud to Josiah. In the very next verse, Josiah tears his clothes in response to hearing these words because he realizes they have not been obeying the instructions within the book of the Law. It is important to note Josiah does not read the book of the Law for himself, but it is read to him. The spoken Word of God has just as much power as the written word. It is also interesting to note that after hearing this, the high priest, Hilkiah, and his assembly seek out Huldah the prophetess to speak with her. Once again, the reader encounters a prophet speaking aloud the Words of the

Lord, warning them of the judgment to come upon Judah. After this event, Josiah begins his reforms by doing one very specific; he gathers the elders, priests, prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “both small and great,” and then he reads (אֶרָא *qra*) aloud the words of the Book of the Covenant. This proclamation of the Word of the Lord is what began his great reforms. Instances such as this are found all throughout scripture, as the powerful Word of God is often the starting point for the miraculous events in the bible. It can be seen even at the beginning of all creation, when the narrative portrays everything coming into existence simply by the Lord speaking into existence. The repetitive pattern of “And God said” followed by creation following his word sets a wonderful theme in scripture. The biblical reader finds that when the Word of the Lord is spoken aloud, it truly is a powerful thing.

Jesus himself is even called “the Word,” or λόγος (*logos*) in the Greek. It is typically translated as a “word,” “message,” or “account.” While this can carry connotations of a written word, it most often refers specifically to the spoken word. While one must be careful in placing too much emphasis on this, it seems very interesting that apostles like John chose to equate Jesus with the spoken Word of God seen in the creation account. Jesus is God, the Creator, and this is demonstrated by relating him with the words God speaks in Genesis 1. And, if one continues examining the life and ministry of Jesus, one can see that, while he performed many miracles and wonders before people, he most prominently spoke to them and taught them about the word. He did not pull out a bible and point to specific passages, nor did he beg others to study scripture deeply. Instead, he mostly spoke scripture aloud to them, and his teachings, also spoken aloud, were heavily scripture based. Thus, Jesus set the example for speaking the Word of God to people.



Returning to the period of time before Jesus, the prophets stand as one of the greatest historical examples for the power of the spoken Word of God. In the ancient Near East, the world in which much of the biblical text is written, it was a common belief that “certain individuals might have regular, but not necessarily predictable, access to information from the gods.”<sup>18</sup> These individuals were, for the most part, known as prophets. The most common Hebrew word for these people is נָבִיא (*nabi*), and it seems to clearly indicate someone who speaks on behalf of a divine being.<sup>19</sup> Most often this divine being is the Lord in the Old Testament scriptures, but there are examples of “prophets” of other gods and goddesses in many of the Ancient Near Eastern religions. Meier notes though that, when נָבִיא is used in the scriptures, it most often is used to identify “one called by God to convey special messages to humans.”<sup>20</sup> These individuals were responsible in part for being an in-between for God and man. Of course, they accomplished this quite differently than did the priests, but it was a very similar idea. Prophets were individuals who spoke on behalf of God to the people of Israel. They “were his mouthpieces.”<sup>21</sup>

The impact these prophets had has already been established in this paper. The same weight that modern day believers place on scriptural authority as the inspired Word of God was placed on the words spoken aloud by the prophets in history. Of course, just as modern-day

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<sup>18</sup> Beck, John A., and Samuel A. Meier. “Prophets in the Old Testament World.” *The Baker Illustrated Guide to Everyday Life in Bible Times*, Baker Books, a Division of Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, MI, 2017, 63.

<sup>19</sup> *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017. נָבִיא (*nabi*).

<sup>20</sup> Beck, 63.

<sup>21</sup> Reid, John Calvin. *We Spoke for God*. Eerdmans, 1967, 12.

believers do not always follow the teachings of the written word, the Jewish people often did not follow the warnings and commands given to them by the prophets. However, this did not negate their authority in any way. The spoken Word of God was able to and still can impact a believer's life just as much as the written Word of God. And interestingly enough, the spoken Word of God is mentioned much more than the written word within scripture itself.

As discussed earlier, whenever an individual reads within scripture, it is highly likely the word for "read" is קרא (*qra*), which carries heavy connotations of reading scripture out loud to people instead of reading silently as modern-day believers do. And whenever this scripture was read aloud or whenever the prophets spoke on behalf of the Lord, people were at least expected to respond to the Word of God. The prophets spoke to the people of Israel and urged them against turning their backs on their God and worshipping false idols. They warned them of coming judgement from God if they did not repent. Along with these two, they proclaimed that, despite the bleak circumstances, there was still hope, for the Lord, the God of Israel, is faithful. They "refused to allow the faith of the people of Israel to be swallowed up in despair."<sup>22</sup> Some prophets saw many respond to their messages from the Lord. Some were persecuted and even killed for the warnings God delivered through them. But, all the prophets were successful, for they followed the Lord's commands and delivered his messages.

One need not look any further than the pastors and preachers throughout history to find individuals proclaiming the Word of God to their congregations week after week, year after year. Though vocationally different from prophets, these preachers strive to accomplish many of the same goals the prophets did. They preach the Word of God to their congregations, often reading aloud the words given to them by God in the written word. They urge people to turn away from

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<sup>22</sup> Reid, 17.

loving the world and turn back towards God, and this is often accompanied with warnings of the coming judgment. Most of all, preachers remind and encourage their congregations of the hope they have in Christ's redemptive work and tell them the good news of the gospel. While the context is different, the principles of their messages remain the same as those of the prophets. Also just like the prophets, these preachers are not having services of quiet time where everyone individually reads the Word of God for themselves. Instead, these services are moments of teaching and proclamation, where the Word of God is spoken aloud. People can encounter Jesus by reading the Word of God, so it stands to reason that people can also encounter Jesus by listening to the Word of God. Christians can pursue God through the medium of hearing the Word of God just like they can through reading the Word of God. This is part of the reason why attendance at weekly church gatherings is so crucial to people's spiritual walks; many people have their first encounter with Jesus through the proclamation of the Word of God there. And if they do not have their first encounter there, they are still able to continue encountering Jesus by attending church and hearing the Word spoken aloud and taught over.

It is interesting to note at this point something about the original texts of the holy scriptures. Many Greek manuscripts were written differently than modern-day manuscripts are written. The oldest texts were written in all capital letters and without any spaces or markings to indicate sentence structure. As Carr points out, "classicists long ago pointed out that the oldest Greek manuscripts...were constructed for reading by people who had already mastered the relevant text."<sup>23</sup> Even to a fluent Greek speaker, reading one of these manuscripts with no familiarity with the text would have posed many difficulties. Thus, it is very apparent that this was not the original intention in the making of these manuscripts. Instead of being a narrative

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<sup>23</sup> Carr, 4.

people could pick up and read with ease as modern-day believers do, these older manuscripts were written to serve as a “permanent reference point for an ongoing process of largely oral recitation.”<sup>24</sup> These Greek manuscripts were not meant for “first-time readers” but for those who were already familiar with the text. They were not originally meant for the individual, but for benefit of the community, for they would be read aloud to crowds of people gathered together to encounter God through his word.

Therefore, the precedent of reading the scriptures aloud to groups of people so they may encounter God has both biblical and historical evidence. While preachers and prophets certainly do this on the mass scale, other teachers and individual believers also have a responsibility to speak the Word of God aloud to people in order that they might encounter Jesus. This can occur in smaller group areas, such as Sunday school groups or other discipleship groups. Or it can occur between individual believers as they remind each other of the Word of God by reciting it to each other. Regardless, one can clearly see how proclaiming the Word of God is intricately related to studying the Word of God at this point. For it is only possible to teach or recite scripture to other believers if one has studied the scriptures beforehand. Thus, these two disciplines are dependent upon one another. Studying scripture prepares the believer, while reading scripture aloud is one of the ways a believer can bear fruit from that endeavor.

Meditating over the Word of God is a discipline that demonstrates this link. For one must have either read or heard the Word of God before she is able to meditate on it. And meditation can be a key aspect of deeply studying the Word of God and learning what God is speaking to oneself through it. However, it also can be a key way to prepare oneself for proclaiming the Word of God to others and is deeply intertwined with the memorization of scripture. For when

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<sup>24</sup> Carr, 5.

one meditates on scripture repetitively, they will naturally begin to memorize it. Because of the innovations of technology though, there are even more ways to hear the Word of God aloud. Audio Bibles have provided a revolutionary tool to modern-day believers that must be utilized more. Many who either do not have the ability to read or do not have an affinity towards reading, hearing the Word of God spoken to them through audio bibles is a beautiful way to allow people to encounter God through his word.

Overall, the spoken the Word of God stands as a strong medium for encountering Jesus. The message is the same as reading the Word of God; it is only the method of communicating it that has changed. With the dawn of the printing press and the reformation, many believers turned away from hearing the Word of God as the main way to encounter God and turned to reading silently in their own homes with their own bibles. Again, what an incredible blessing it is that modern-day believers can indeed read the bible for themselves. However, Christians must not lose the age-old tradition of hearing the Word of God in the process. This medium is a vital way for people to encounter Jesus in their lives, and it must be recaptured in the church as a whole. People should know why they listen to sermons every week; churchgoers should understand why scripture is read aloud to them. And most of all, they should be reading scripture aloud to others.

### **Seeing the Word-The Monk**

Not only can one read the Word of God on paper and hear the Word of God spoken aloud, but one can also see the Word of God lived out in the lives of believers across the globe. Possibly one of the greatest examples of this can be seen in mentoring relationships. Many within the modern church recognize the importance of these type of relationships; however, it is not always seen as a direct way to pursue God or have God intervene in one's life. And

mentoring is most definitely placed at a different level of priority than the other two methods discussed earlier. It is almost a guarantee that if one attends church for long enough, he or she will hear scripture read to them and be exhorted to read scripture for themselves as well. Yet, it is quite possible for one to go to church their whole lives and never have a mentoring relationship. Perhaps this is one of the causes for the many problems with non-active laity within the church body. In order to have active believers within one's church, one must have moral exemplars for the laity to look to as mentors. They must be able to see the Word of God in action.

What is perhaps most striking about this lack of an emphasis on seeing the Word of God lived out in a believer's day-to-day life is how prominent this model is within scripture itself. For one need not look any further than Jesus himself to see this perfectly being lived out. In the words of John, Jesus, quite literally, is the Word of God becoming flesh and walking among us. As discussed earlier, this has heavy implications for the importance on the spoken Word of God, since *λόγος* (*logos*) indicates a heavy emphasis on the words one speaks aloud. But it also creates an interesting connection with one's spoken words and deeds, particularly the words and deeds of Jesus Christ. For in the rest of John's gospel, Jesus's actions are continually pointed to as evidence of him being who he says he is. From many different people in the gospel, there is a continual invitation to "come and see" the wondrous and miraculous signs Jesus performs to prove that he is from God. Jesus himself even points to his works as evidence that he is the Messiah in John 10:25, when he says that "the proof is the work I do in my Father's name." Jesus not only teaches the people, but he lives and walks among them, ministering to them in the Father's name and performing miraculous signs to prove that he is from God.

Jesus not only stands to all believers as a wondrous example of how to live, but he more specifically shows his followers how to mentor through his relationship with the 12 disciples,

who lived and followed him for his entire three years of ministry. As Lawless points out, “Jesus shared life with his disciples.” They ate meals with him, heard him teach, saw him do awe-inspiring miracles, and also have regular conversations with regular people.<sup>25</sup> And as the disciples heard and saw the way Jesus lived his life, they gradually were included in the ministry Jesus accomplished here on earth and worked alongside him even. First and foremost, Jesus called the disciples to simply be with him.<sup>26</sup> For it was Jesus’s incarnate presence that impacted their lives so greatly. It was more than simply intensive study: it was a visual representation of what one’s life should look like when she is in a relationship with God.

Jesus is surely a prominent example of a mentoring relationship, but there are many other prominent individuals that engaged in this crucial lifestyle to live out the Word of God. During Moses’s ministry with the people of Israel, Joshua, the son of Nun, is mentioned in the background continually, always following Moses’s lead. In Exodus 24, Joshua follows Moses up Mt. Sinai when he is going to receive the 10 commandments, and he is allowed to journey even farther than the elders. Continually throughout Moses’s ministry, Joshua is there, listening and learning from Moses, as well as assisting him in various leadership roles. When Moses dies, God uses Joshua to lead the people of Israel out of the wilderness and into the promised land. There is no doubt that this mentor relationship between Moses and Joshua is what prepared Joshua to do this.

A similar relationship is seen in another prominent Old Testament character and his successor can be seen in the life and ministry of Elijah and Elisha the prophets. Elisha appears

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<sup>25</sup> Lawless, Charles E. *Mentor: How along-the-Way Discipleship Will Change Your Life*. (Lifeway Press, Nashville, TN, 2017), 35.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

later in Elijah's ministry, but he is said to go after Elijah and "assist" him. Since God tells Elijah in 1 Kings 19:16 that Elisha will be anointed as a "prophet in your place," it can be easily assumed that during Elisha's time with Elijah, he learned from his example and was indeed mentored by him. For whenever it comes to be Elijah's time to ascend to the Lord, Elisha took over his ministry as prophet of Israel, and he performs even greater miracles than Elijah did. Elisha was only able to do this because of the both the Spirit of God on him and because he had seen the Word of God in action through Elijah. In many ways, Elijah gave Elisha a practical example to look to when acting as a prophet of God.

Shifting back to the New Testament, the reader can see another clear example of how the Word of God can be received through the actions of individuals by looking at the life of Paul and more specifically, how he mentored Timothy. In general, Paul continually exhorts his readers to not only follow what he is teaching but also to look at the example he sets for how a believer should behave. For example, in Philippians 4:9, Paul is giving final instructions to the church at Philippi and encourages them to put into practice what they have "learned and received and heard and seen" in Paul. He does something similar in his letter to the church at Corinth as well, for, after a lengthy discussion on how they should behave regarding specific circumstances, Paul ends in 1 Corinthians 11:1 by exhorting his readers to "be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." It is interesting to note the pattern here. Discussed earlier, Jesus was and still is an example to look at for how we should live. All who follow Christ should model their lives after his. In other words, Jesus is the ultimate mentor for believers. And even though Paul did not spend time with Christ during his life on earth, Paul catches on to this truth, and he imitates Christ in all things, including how Christ mentored the disciples. Paul carries on the pattern set by Jesus and exhorts other believers to imitate him just as Jesus exhorted his disciples to imitate himself. Jesus was



the Word of God incarnate; the word literally lived out among the people of Israel as an example. And, since disciples and followers of Christ are to carry out his ministry on earth now that Jesus has ascended to heaven, believers must also live out the Word of God among the people of the world as an example for how people should live.

More specifically, Paul's mentor relationship with Timothy almost perfectly demonstrates this truth. Timothy is first mentioned in Acts 16 and is regarded as a disciple who is "well-spoken" of by the brothers and sisters in Lystra and Iconium. After this, the passage immediately shifts to Paul desiring for Timothy to accompany him on his missionary journey. Not much is known about Timothy's origins beyond this, but it is likely Paul saw potential in Timothy, seeing him as a future minister that Paul could train up and teach how to live out one's faith in Christ.<sup>27</sup> Regardless of how or why these two met, this meeting created an intimate and loving relationship between them, even to the point where Timothy is called Paul's "beloved son in the faith" in 2 Timothy 1:2. These two had a deep fellowship with one another. From this fellowship, Timothy was able to learn all about how he was supposed to conduct himself as a believer from Paul's teaching, personal conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, and even how Paul was persecuted and suffered for the gospel's sake.<sup>28</sup>

Timothy saw how Paul lived as a believer and was able to see a practical example of how one's life should look like as one in a deep relationship with God and working for the sake of his kingdom. In everything Paul did, Timothy was included, and he was prepared for the ministry God gave him because of it. Because of the mentorship Timothy received from Paul, Timothy became a co-laborer for the kingdom of God alongside Paul, even going on to be listed as a co-

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<sup>27</sup> Lawless, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Lawless, 55.

author in six of Paul's letters in the New Testament.<sup>29</sup> Not only this, but Paul also brags on Timothy to the church at Philippi in Philippians 2:19-22, where he says that he has “no one like him” and that Timothy has proven his worth, for he has served “with Paul in the gospel” as a son with a father. Paul lived the Word of God out in his life, and Timothy was able to see this, just as was most everyone around Paul. Because of this, lives were changed, very similarly to how lives were changed when they encountered Jesus during his earthly ministry. Followers of Christ are to follow his example and live out the truth of the Word of God so that individuals may look at their day-to-day lives and be able to encounter Jesus, the Word of God, through how they live.

Many modern-day believers have elevated personal knowledge of scripture to the highest importance and have diminished their insistence that a believer's life should also measure up to the teachings of scripture. The written Word of God is of incredible importance and the blessing to be able to read it should never be taken for granted. However, how a believer lives out the Word of God is of equal importance. If one looks back to the earlier days of the church, this can be prominently seen by how believers were described. In Justin Martyr's Apology, he describes how believers were seen during his time:

Among us these things can be heard and learned from persons who do not know their letters and are uneducated and barbarous in speech, though wise and believing in mind; from some even who are maimed and blind. Hence you may understand that such knowledge comes not from human wisdom but is given to us through the power of God.<sup>30</sup>

One can clearly see that, though many believers seem to have greatly struggled with the more “academic” side of their faith in the study or teaching of the Word of God, they clearly lived the

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<sup>29</sup> Lawless, 57.

<sup>30</sup> Lucian, Justin, Irwin Edman, Marcus Aurelius, and Walter Pater. 1945. *Marcus Aurelius and His Times : The Transition from Paganism to Christianity, Comprising Marcus Aurelius: Meditations ; Lucian: Hermitimus, Icaromenippus ; Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho, First Apology ; Walter Pater: Marius the Epicurean (Selections)*. New York, N.Y. : Walter J. Black, 286.

Word of God out in their daily lives. One could look at these individuals and see the evidence of their faith not by any great knowledge of scripture but by how they lived. As Athenagoras, a Christian philosopher from Athens, describes it, these individuals may have been “utterly unable to describe the value of our doctrines in words” but they proved their faith “by their deeds.”<sup>31</sup>

In the early days of Christianity, there certainly was a heavy emphasis on the teachings of Jesus; however, there was also a heavy emphasis on the lives individual believers were called to live. Their lives were testimonies to the power of God at work among them, for, apart from the moving of the Holy Spirit, these individuals could not live the way they did. While there were certainly many influences on the spread of Christianity, this testimony of the remarkable lives that believers led was one of the crucial points reasons Christianity spread so rapidly across the world. People saw that this was more than just a knowledge-based faith; it was an active faith.

One final example of how these early believers lived out the Word of God can be seen in the when even one of the greatest persecutors of the Christian Church, the Roman Emperor Julian, noticed that Christianity “has been specially advanced though the living service rendered to strangers and through their care for the dead.”<sup>32</sup> People noticed the actions of believers, and they saw the Word of God through them and were changed. When Christians carry out the ministry of Jesus here on earth, people can go beyond reading the Word of God and are able to visibly see the Word of God living and walking among his church.

The figures in history that have perhaps embodied this truth of living out the Word of God most clearly must be the monks. These individuals’ lives are a wonder to behold, for they are both mysterious and inspiring. Originally, Christian monks are thought to have begun in

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<sup>31</sup> Shelley, Bruce L. *Church History in Plain Language*. Zondervan, 2021, 79.

<sup>32</sup> Shelley, 38.

about 250 AD when a man named Anthony who took Jesus's command to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19 very seriously and did just that: he sold all his possessions and devoted his life to following Jesus in complete solitude.<sup>33</sup> Solitude was required so there would be no distractions and he could focus all his attention and energy on his relationship with the Lord. It is estimated that hundreds of individuals followed his example and devoted their entire their lives to following Jesus.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the Christian monastic movement began, not with individuals gathering together in monasteries, but with people retreating away from the world to focus on following Jesus and living out the teachings found within the Word of God. Thus, one need not define a monk according to the institution to which he belongs but by his "inner being and disposition" as "one who seeks God single-mindedly."<sup>35</sup>

Before moving on to the next phase of monasticism, it is interesting to note that, though these individuals led lives of solitude, many still interacted and even taught other people about Christianity. There are stories that speak of thousands being converted to Christianity because of the lives these monks led.<sup>36</sup> Eventually though, the monastic movement shifted away from the image of a singular individual setting aside worldly possessions and wholeheartedly following Jesus with their entire life, and the monks began to gather into communities and form monasteries.<sup>37</sup> While the day-to-day life of many monks changed with this shift, the essence of why the monk did what he did remained the same. A monk withdrew from the world and all the

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<sup>33</sup> Shelley, 127.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Peters, Greg, *The Monkhood of All Believers: The Monastic Foundation of Christian Spirituality*. Baker Publishing Group, 2018, 62.

<sup>36</sup> Shelley, 128.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

distractions within it. By doing this, the monk was able to focus on following Jesus Christ and modeling his life on Jesus's. In short, the monk tried to live as Jesus did. Of course, as monasteries developed, the focus shifted from this ideal to more of a monasterial focus instead of a Christ focused life. As Shelley rightly points out, "Monasteries often grew immensely rich," "their discipline became lax," and "their original rigor often declined."<sup>38</sup> This paper is not elevating the monastic life, but instead is focusing on the essence of why monks withdrew from society: they desired to truly live as Christ did in their daily lives. In other words, they wanted to live out the Word of God.

As pointed out earlier, thousands of people came to faith in Christ because of the testament the monks demonstrated with their lives. The devotion to the Lord with which monks lived out their lives affected not just themselves, but also other people's lives. Many monasteries soon became hubs for those who wished to go deeper in their faith. Traditions and rules were put forth to give these monasteries more structure, and they soon became a truly wonderful image of "a little world in itself, in which the monks lived" and pursued a deeper relationship with God in the context of community.<sup>39</sup> Many of these disciplines and rules included extra principles not dictated by scripture such as strict vigils or worship service attendance, heavy reading, or even initiation procedures.<sup>40</sup> However, though these extra rules were not dictated by scripture and may have become excessive in later years, the devotion of the monks must be acknowledged: one cannot deny how they strived to live out the teachings of scripture with their lives. Monks were not perfect, but they gave their entire lives to living out the Word of God in action.

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<sup>38</sup> Shelley, 132.

<sup>39</sup> Shelley, 131.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Greg Peters has written a fascinating book arguing that in all actuality, all believers are meant to be “monks.” For if one strips down what a monk was, one realizes that it was never truly about the institution of the monastery or keeping vows. As Peters puts it:

To be a monk was to be spiritually formed so as to live single-mindedly focused on God, living into the fullness of one’s baptismal vows as priests in God’s kingdom. To be a ‘monk’ was to live into the fullness of the Christian life as laid out in the scriptures and as it has developed in history. It was to take one’s spiritual formation seriously, hoping, in the end, to be in sweet communion with God.<sup>41</sup>

In essence, being a monk simply means living out the Word of God. The monks were doing the same thing that the believers of the early church were doing, for they were both truly living out the faith they claimed to follow. Christianity was not a superficial, words and knowledge-based faith. To them, it was about worshipping and following the man Jesus Christ, who had rescued them from sin and death. Because of what Christ did for these individuals, their lives were changed dramatically, and others could see the evidence in their lives. They lived with a “single-minded focus on God.” People were able to see Jesus, the Word of God, in their lives. They did not necessarily need to go into deep academic study about him to encounter Jesus; they were able to meet him simply by seeing him in the lives of his followers.

Overall, it is very evident both from scripture and from history that how one leads his life can impact their relationship with God and can most definitely be a medium through which one pursues God. When believers live out the Word of God in their lives, people notice and can encounter Jesus, much in the same way that they are able to when they encounter him through the written word. Seeing the Word of God lived out in this way affects people deeply, and modern-day believers must re-capture this essential aspect of pursuing God. However, God has still chosen to speak to his people through the written word. Thus, this in no way diminishes the

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<sup>41</sup> Peters, 154.

written Word of God or the necessity of reading and studying it. Instead, seeing the Word of God is deeply intertwined with deeply studying the Word of God. For those individuals who are enriched in the written word are most often the same people believers and non-believers alike can see the Word of God lived out through. They are the ones who know the teachings of God and know how to obey them; they know how Christ lived and can imitate his life and ministry. The connections between these two will be discussed more in-depth later, but it is important to recognize that these two mediums stand in conjunction with one another instead of opposition.

For now, it is important to realize that one of the most prevalent ways for the Word of God to be seen in a believer's life is how he or she studies the word of God. Psalm 1 describes the man who "delights in the law of Lord" as "a tree planted by streams of water." For one of the primary ways believers learn how to live out the Word of God is by reading, and also hearing, the Word of God. They must know what the word says in order to live it out. However, it must be acknowledged that, though reading or hearing the Word of God is a prominent way for people to encounter God, individuals are also able to first encounter Jesus through interactions with believers. Depending on their relationships, personality, and experiences, people can begin their walks with the Lord in different places. As discussed earlier, many came to faith in Christ through their relationships with believers. Others came to faith by their interactions from the monks. And even in today's world, individuals consistently come to faith not because they read an argument or deeply studied the scriptures, but because they encountered Jesus through the actions of modern-day believers. They experienced the Word of God, not in written or spoken words, but in action.

Most prominently, these individuals demonstrated the love of God to others through acts of service. Serving and ministering to the sick, poor, and hungry were testimonies to how God

loved these people, and this was and still is one of the primary driving forces of the gospel. Many people are not attracted to the “academic” study of Christianity. But when one shows the “hands on approach” of Christianity, where individuals can physically be Jesus to others and minister to the least of these. That shows people what the Word of God is all about. Service is possibly the greatest example of how one can live out the Word of God in her life. For even Jesus did not come “to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” If Jesus’s life was marked and defined by service, then so should his followers’. Modern-day believers must recapture this aspect of an “active faith” and truly learn to live out the Word of God.

While service is the greatest example of what believers can do to demonstrate the Word of God with their actions, mentor relationships are one of the best methods in accomplishing this. These relationships are a beautiful way for believers to pour into those younger in the faith and instruct them on how to live out one’s faith practically. This includes teaching information about the Christian life, but it goes beyond that. Above all, a mentor relationship is a definite way to demonstrate to the mentee how to develop that “single-minded” focus on God with one’s life displayed from the monks. A mentor relationship shows the mentee what to do by example and leads the mentee by the hand toward “independence from the mentor and dependence on God.”<sup>42</sup>

From a relationship like this, the mentee can learn from example how to do all sorts of disciplines to demonstrate the Word of God in their lives so that it can be seen. As discussed earlier, service is one of the primary disciplines, but other disciplines that display the Word of God in one’s life are prayer and worship. Both are visible actions a believer does in response to what Christ has done in their lives. In true worship and true prayer, the believer demonstrates their relationship with the Lord to those around them. There are private moments in both of these

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<sup>42</sup> Lawless, 103.



disciplines, but they still retain a very tangible aspect to them despite this. How one prays for others can really impact those around them. Similarly, when one worships God with their life beyond the worship service at church, those around them can see the Word of God on display. However, all three of these disciplines, service, prayer, and worship, can rarely be solely taught. They must be exemplified in the lives of believers, and these believers must also enter into mentor relationships to pass on the wisdom they have gained regarding the pursuit of God in life. From this relationship, the mentee can learn practically what it means and looks like to serve, worship, pray, and so much more. Eventually, they can even learn to mentor others, which creates a beautiful cycle of discipling new believers in the faith.

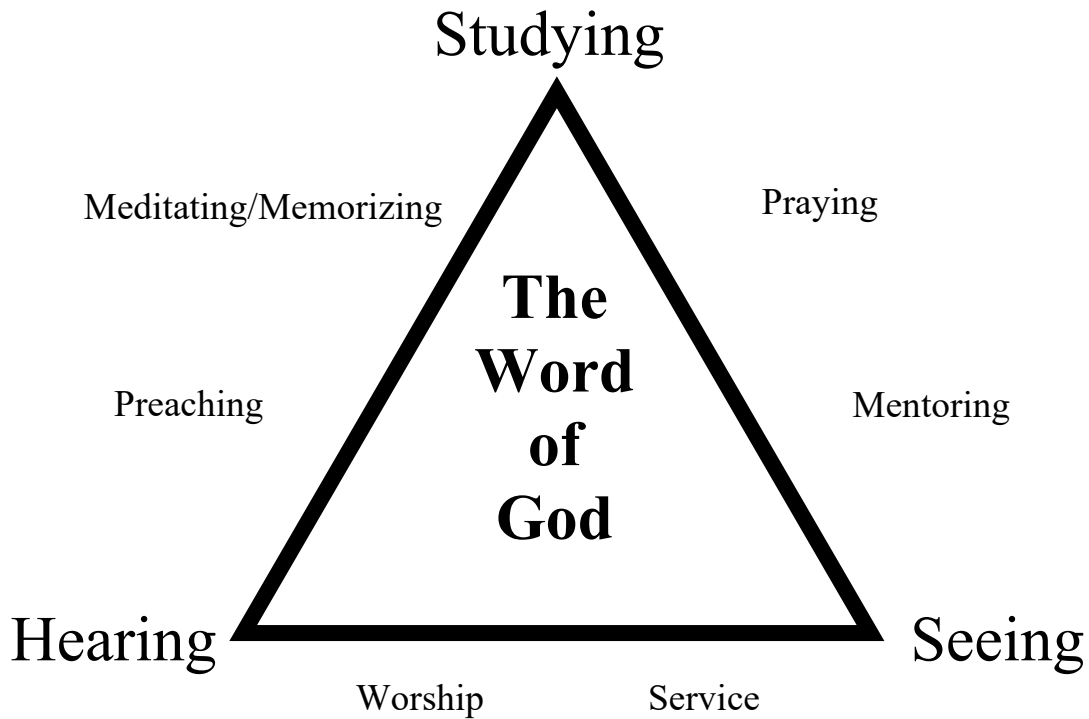
Moving beyond studying and hearing the Word of God and applying it to the real lives of modern-day believers is the only way the people of God can accomplish all that they are called to. Faith is not meant to be something only seen in the head-knowledge of an individual, but it must also be seen in one's actions. In the words of James, "faith apart from works is useless." Believers should not just study and hear the Word of God, but they must also live the Word of God out in their lives so that people everywhere may see the Word of God through them and encounter Jesus.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this paper, it has been argued that, while studying the Word of God in written form is an incredible blessing modern-day believers have, it is not the only viable way to encounter God and pursue a relationship with him. By examining scripture, history, and modern-day times, it seems there are three primary mediums to pursue God: Studying, Hearing, and Seeing the Word of God. Each is crucial to the spiritual walk of a believer and can heavily

impact how one pursues a relationship with God. However, certain individuals may be geared towards one of the media over the other because of a lack of access to the other media, a certain phase of life one is in, or even simply the personality and experiences one possesses. Because of this, there arise certain archetypes to demonstrate how one primarily pursues God: the Scribe, the Prophet, and the Monk. Each is associated with a certain medium of receiving and experiencing the Word of God. The scribe is associated with studying the Word, the prophet is associated with hearing the Word, and the monk is associated with seeing the Word.

While these archetypes exist, it is important to understand that, even though one may lean towards a certain medium of receiving the Word of God over another, one cannot simply dismiss the other mediums, for they are all essential and valuable to an individual believer's walk with the Lord. In order to pursue God wholeheartedly, the mature believer will lean into other mediums, even those he may find discomfort in. And this can be seen perfectly demonstrated in the historical figures of the archetypes. The scribe was still diligent in keeping the law of the Lord and living out his faith even though studying was his primary calling. People could certainly see the Word of God through the actions of prophets as well as the words they said aloud. And the monks embodied all three: they lived out their faith, devoted themselves to studying scripture, and read the scriptures aloud to each other regularly. Even though they certainly had leanings towards particular media for receiving the Word of God, they often appeared to use a mixture of all three to pursue God instead of relying on just one alone. Thus, a diagram has been included below to illustrate how these media are related to one another.



The disciplines in between the three media are examples of what seems to naturally occur when one pursues God through these media. When one wholeheartedly pursues God through the Word of God, all these disciplines should be implemented in one's life. They are all vastly interconnected and dependent on one another. Someone will not get the same value out of praying if they are not also worshipping. They will not get the same value out of hearing a sermon preached if they are not studying the Word of God for themselves. And if one only studies the Word of God and does not put this knowledge into practice through mentoring or service, what is the good of all that knowledge?

There are multiple ways to pursue God, much in the same way that there are multiple ways to initially encounter God. Therefore, believers must be aware of this when explaining people the faith they have. They must not tell individuals struggling to pursue God that the only

way to deepen their faith is to read. For there is so much more to the Christian faith than simply reading! Reading is a crucial part our faith, for, as stated at the beginning of this paper, God chose to communicate to his people in today's time primarily through the written word.

However, there are other ways he communicates and relates to his people, and believers must not diminish the work of God by not emphasizing these other media.

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