

5. We limit the Word to church events, programs and curricula.

My soul is consumed with longing for your ordinances at all times. -- Psalm 119:20

Church members often leave teaching and learning the Word to church programs and events, sometimes because of laziness and sometimes just because they don't know how to study it or are afraid to study.

If we are consumed with longing for God's Word at all times, then we will want to study it at home as well as at church or school. We will want to know for ourselves what it says and how it applies to our lives.

6. We lack discernment and courage to apply that discernment.

Don't turn away God's Spirit or ignore prophecies. Put everything to the test. Accept what is good and don't have anything to do with evil. – 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

This applies especially to the spoken Word, but it also applies to any interpretation of the written Word.

We can destroy confidence in God's Word either by accepting everything as true without testing it, in which case people will lose confidence as false words or false interpretations cause destruction. We can also destroy God's Word by cutting off all words and interpretations.

To make God's Word effective, we must "put everything to the test" and then accept the good and reject the evil.

7. Lack of patience for hearing.

In Nehemiah's time, people listened to the Word for several hours (Nehemiah 8:1-8). We need patience to spend time listening to the Word and increasing our understanding of it. There are no shortcuts.

Additional PBS resources:

- What is the Word of God?
- The Authority of the Bible
- I Want to Study the Bible

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**Seven Barriers to
Hearing the Word**

7 Barriers to Hearing the Word

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On the first day of the seventh month, the people came together in the open area in front of the Water Gate. Then they asked Ezra, who was a teacher of the Law of Moses, to read to them from this Law that the LORD had given his people. Ezra the priest came with the Law and stood before the crowd of men, women, and the children who were old enough to understand. From early morning till noon, he read the Law of Moses to them, and they listened carefully.
– Nehemiah 8:1-3



Young people can live a clean life by obeying your word. -- Psalm 119:9

Many people have trouble enjoying the scriptures and finding power in and through them. They find that the written word is boring or incomprehensible, and so they don't get the benefit of the living word.

There are seven barriers to really hearing God's Word. Break down these seven barriers and you will find that your experience of reading the Word will become more rewarding and will be a source of God's power in your life.

We lose the power and excitement of the Word when . . .

1. We don't know what the Word is.

God's Word is not limited to the written word. God created the universe through His Word (Psalm 33:6-9). Jesus was God's Word in human form (John 1:1-3, 14). God's Word is reflected throughout creation (Romans 1:20). The written word is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) and it is useful. The Word in all its forms is alive and active (Hebrews 4:12).

What God has said isn't only alive and active! It is sharper than any double-edged sword. His word can cut through our spirits and souls and through our joints and marrow, until it discovers the desires and thoughts of our hearts.
- Hebrews 4:12

2. We divorce the Word and the Spirit.

The original reception of the Word, our understanding of it, and its application are all brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21). When we separate the Word from the Spirit that gave it, it becomes a collection of dry facts. The Word should have the power to transform lives, but it can only do that when we allow it to work on our hearts and lives through the power of the Spirit.

The Word is not just a matter of reading, but of hearing and of obedience.

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
For he will speak peace to his people,
To his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.
-- Psalm 85:8

3. We make the Word a scholarly rather than a spiritual study.

Scholarship is important in studying the Word, but we do not merely study in order to know facts; we study in order to know **God**. Further, we don't study to know **about** God; we study to **know God**.

When we see the study of the Word as a scholarly pursuit we will often study more **about** the Word than we study the Word itself. Studying what others say about Scriptures can be valuable and is often necessary, but it is no substitute for studying the Word for yourself.

That's why only someone who has God's Spirit can understand spiritual blessings. Anyone who doesn't have God's Spirit thinks these blessings are foolish. People who are guided by the Spirit can make all kinds of judgments, but they cannot be judged by others.
- 1 Corinthians 2:14, 15

4. We limit the study of the Word to a few rather than all.

The Bereans are commended for studying the Scriptures for themselves to see whether Paul's teachings were accurate (Acts 17:11). Jesus asked the young ruler how **he** read the scriptures (Luke 10:26). Part of the power of the Word is that God communicates with each one of us through it if we open our hearts to hear.

The Scriptures train God's servants to do all kinds of good deeds. -- 2 Timothy 3:17