

Christian Growth
Week 8: God's Word as a Means of Grace

Introduction

Spiritual maturity and God's Word

1 Pet. 2:2* Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (NASB)

Heb. 5:11-14** Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is* hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (NASB)

- We can *all* _____

- We can *all* _____

- We can *all* _____

- We can *all* _____

It doesn't have to take a decade to be able to reach this level of competence. The Word is an inexhaustible source of wonderful and profound life-giving truth.

God's Word and the Gospel

The whole Bible is God's inspired Word. But Jesus is the Word of God (Jn. 1:1,14), and the main theme of the Bible is Jesus and the gospel—the "Word of Christ" (Col. 3:16), "the Word of his grace (Acts 20:32).¹ This has important implications for how we approach the Word as a means of grace and growth:

- We should not merely seek comprehensive Bible knowledge, as good and important as this is. We should especially seek _____ of the message about Jesus and God's grace (2 Pet. 3:18).

- We should spend proportionately more time in the _____, since it explains the gospel in its fullness.

- We should not merely develop self-discipline in Bible reading and meeting attendance. We should especially cultivate _____ through his Word (1 Pet. 2:2*,3).²

¹ "The 'word of Christ' is not exactly the Scriptures. It is the Gospel—but the primary access we have to that Gospel is the Scriptures...This is what is to dwell in us richly. It is to fill our memories, occupy our horizons, constitute our priorities. We are so to reflect on it, as we turn it over in our minds and learn how it applies in every area of our lives, that, far from occupying a little religious corner of our experience, it will dwell in us richly. This must take place not only in the privacy of personal study and reflection but also in our mutual instruction and admonition. Whatever teaching takes place within the local church, it must be full of the Gospel and its rich, life-transforming implications and applications." D. A. Carson, *For the Love of God, Vol. 2*, Reading for April 2.

² "What quickens our desire for the life-giving word of God?...Those who read the word of God...must never forget *why* the word is given and *whom* it reveals. The word shows us that *the Lord is good*; his words are sweeter than honey to our taste because in them the Lord gives himself to us." Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, commentary on 2:2,3.

Key practical ways to cultivate craving God's Word:

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Ps. 119:36-37 Give me an eagerness for your laws rather than a love for money! ³⁷ Turn my eyes from worthless things, and give me life through your word. (NLT)

- View the Bible as _____ vs. _____

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Ps. 119:18 Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions. (NLT)

Eph. 1:16b-19 I pray for you constantly, ¹⁷ asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom* and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. ¹⁸ I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. (NLT)

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Acts 2:42* They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (NASB)

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- _____ what you're learning.

“One key to a deep friendship is time spent in long conversations...Many people do not seem to have time for long conversations. They have so many things to do! When they have free time, it is spent on entertainment...We can't bear the thought of just sitting and discussing issues...(But such discussion) has a richness to it. It satisfies the deep desire in our hearts implanted by a God who is committed to truth. God's understanding of truth includes more than facts. Christian truth has a qualitative and experiential aspect to it. So truth can be enjoyed only if we are willing to linger with it, to ask what its implications are, to ask how it should influence our thinking and acting...Those who set aside time for enriching discussions on issues, on the things of God, will rediscover the joy of truth. They will bring new depth of true personal fulfillment to their lives. We need to bring long chats back into our schedules, allowing significant slots of time for truth-related discussions...It is in such times that minds meet, that we experience together the joy of truth which is one of the most precious forms of joy. People who let long conversations eat into their schedules—and that is a sacrifice—will know the joy of minds meeting on a deep level. From such depths true friendships will be forged...”³

- _____ God's revelation; _____ on God's Word. (Jas. 1:21-25; Heb. 3:7,8; Matt. 13:12).

Matt. 7:24-27 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.” (NASB)

What is the difference between the wise and the foolish men in Jesus' parable?

- _____ of regular, whole-Bible private reading.

D. A. Carson. *For the Love of God*

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Plan

³ Ajith Fernando, *Reclaiming Friendship* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1993), pp. 28-35.

- Practice biblical_____.

Psalm 1:2,3 But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. ³They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do. (NLT)

A way to practice biblical meditation:

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- What does it say about _____? What does it say about _____?
- What truth arrests your attention? What would it be like if this truth was alive in your life? Why is God showing you this now?
- _____ biblical passages.
Ps. 119:11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. (NASB)
- _____ that focus on the gospel (Eph. 5:18-20).

Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.(NASB)

Keep cultivating this craving! Expect progress!

Memory Verses

1 Pet. 2:2* makes the explicit connection between spiritual growth and God's Word.

Heb. 5:11-14** also connects God's Word with spiritual maturity. It is also a good summary of what *all* Christians are capable of in our mastery of the Word.

Assignment

Fernando, *The Supremacy of Christ* – “The Joy of Truth”