

## WHAT I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO ADMIT

Read **Psalm 19:7-14**. Can you relate to David? How he views God's word? How he longs for it? It was interesting studying this week, being reminded how many times God's word is consumed like food.

- **Jeremiah 15:16** Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.
- **Ezekiel 3:1-3** And He said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and He gave me this scroll to eat. And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.
- **1 Peter 2:2** Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation -

You think about Jesus' statement in **Matthew 4:4** *But He answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

**Do you feel the same way?**

"Recently, I've been struggling to get into a bible study routine. When I first was baptized, the only time I ever really studied was with my family, and though I had a personal faith, I was having real trouble in that area. As I read more and more, I've started to notice just how much I tend to look at bible characters as just characters. I suppose it's because I don't personally know these people that makes me view them this way. I really have to force myself into the mindset that I'm reading an autobiography/biography and not a story when I'm studying. But what's been really troubling me is how this mindset of mine applies to Jesus.

It's hard for me to see Him as my brother sometimes, and it really discourages me when I don't seem to have the same conviction as older members of the church when they read the exact same passage I do. I know that some of it only comes from age and time, but I wonder if a lesson on growing closer personally with God might be beneficial. I love Him and I want to please Him by having my whole heart and mind in how I live for Him each day (That's not to say I don't do that now. I just feel like I could

be doing more). Sometimes I feel like I'm going through the motions or offering up canned phrases in prayer, and I know that He deserves more from me. Selfishly, I also want to be pricked to the heart more when I read about Jesus' death. To be completely honest, sometimes I feel bad when I see teachers crying about the story of Jesus because it doesn't bring me to tears. I know that some of that is a bit ridiculous and it may be hard to teach a sermon like I'm suggesting because so much of it is specific to each individual, but anything of the sort would be greatly appreciated and I think it might really encourage me."

I sent out a survey this week and here are the results:

- 1) There is something to be said about personalities. We don't want to take that too far either way. I do believe that we should have an emotional connection. No one is encouraged by what comes across as a spiritual Eore, nor do we appreciate the spiritual, over the top, cheerleader. There's a lot in between there, but yes, it's good to have an emotional connection.
  - 2) Why are we studying? How do view the Scriptures (stories or real life)? Who do you see Jesus as? How is God portrayed and why do you think that is?
  - 3) #2 effects how you study. This helps us not look at it as a cold, intellectual, purely informative text. It's why many don't study. It's not just a book that you go to in order to find out what you can do and cannot do. It's not a story book either. I remember passing out free bibles one time at a library. One woman was offered a bible and her response was, "No thanks. I prefer good fiction." Listen - if the Bible was purely fiction . . . I'd probably agree. Don't get me wrong - there are deep passages that speak truth to those who are searching for it, but if you're looking for stories - well, there are more fanciful stories out there. There's material that is better written for a thrill.
- But, when you understand it for what it is then you have a deeper appreciation for what you're reading.
    - It's teaching you about the one who created all things. It's the mind of deity.
    - You begin to see its practical effect in your life. In other words - it is practical and teaches one how to live a holy, protected, safe and beneficial life. It makes one wise.
    - But not only beneficial for you - for others. The bible begins to open your mind in ways that the world doesn't understand. Everything good about this world is already found in the bible. TRY TO FIND A WAY TO SHARE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED WITH SOMEONE. HOW CAN IT BENEFIT?

- It overall opens your eyes. I think that's one of the most beautiful ways Jesus describes people: they either see or they're blind. I know there are things I've been through that have opened my eyes - I'd never want them to be closed again. In fact, I don't believe it's even possible.
- 4) You've got to truly put it into practice. There is something that happens when you commit to steady study. I'm not saying that you never have dry spells, but it's overall fulfilling. Let me explain what I mean. Instead of just telling you, I'd like to share some examples.
- **Proverbs 30:5** Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.
  - **Job 2:3** And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to destroy him without reason."
    - Listen, I'm not Job, but I remember Billy saying that we could make it through our trials by reminding us of Job - how God is in control and allows hardship to fall on those who can endure it. I saw Job in my brother. Then I was invited to be like Job as well. This isn't a joke. It's not some story. This is rubber hitting the road.
  - **Job 2:11-13** Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place . . . they made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.
    - I actually had this play out in my own life after we lost our father (my dad just turned 60 and I was 26). Billy's best friend and brother in Christ flew into Dallas. He came to the house. We'd withdrawn fellowship from my mother, and Billy, David and myself were at Billy's house taking it all in. He showed up and just sat with us. People came and went. Had different things to say (I can't remember any of them), but I'll never forget Chris sitting with us - not saying a word. He had compassion like Jesus. He looked at us with sympathy as the word instructs us to do. It was a beautiful moment during a storm.

- **Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
  - I had a counselor tell me that I had trust issues - that is . . . I trust others too much. That I should learn to make others earn my trust . . . even God. This was a Christian counselor. Can I let you in on a little secret - I was guilty of **2 Cor. 7:10**, but not godly sorrow. I was living in sin and didn't want to deal with it. But, God's word was there the whole time and I knew it. I finally got back into His word and out of the world. It pierced me.
- **2 Corinthians 12:8-10** Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
  - And for those times when I seemed to fall into despair - I was reminded by this powerful passage by one of you long ago. I found strength and was determined to believe it. Honestly, I used to struggle with depression, but when I settled my heart to endure the pain and let God take care of the rest . . . the depression went away.
- **Psalms 119:96-104** I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad. Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.
  - This has happened in my own life. Not only has God been merciful, but He continues to guide and teach me. He's equipping me at a young age. There's so much to go, but yet He's brought me further than those older than me, because they neglect His counsel. One of my main goals in life is to attain the truth behind **Proverbs 18:4; 20:5**.
- **2 Corinthians 1:3-5** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the

comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

- Not only does this hit home, because I appreciate so much God being my comfort and calm during storms, but I've seen this passage bring a light and peace to others who are suffering. I've seen the face of a woman who lost her husband to suicide find a moment of peace and connection to God's word. It was soul food to her as she struggled with a daughter who had been raped and then broken up by her fiancé after finding out she was pregnant.
- **1 Peter 1:3-7** Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfaded, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith - more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire - may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
  - I've watched the word of God bring clarity to a sister in Christ who had fallen away. She'd gone her own path and attempted to lay of treasures on this earth - and it fell through. I watched her face as she was reminded of the mercy and grace of the Lord - what He has prepared for His children. How she had a reserved room, if you will, with her name etched into the door - waiting for her arrival. I saw a look of change and watched it happen over time.
- **Isaiah 55:1-2** "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."
  - I've talked to those who have never known the Lord. Who are spiritually bankrupt. Who are trying so hard to make it in this world, but it's all for not and too high a cost. I've seen the faces as I've read this passage to them and have witnessed the point they saw themselves in the passage - as if God wrote it directly to them.

- We could go on and on. But then, beloved, we get to Jesus' life and its what the Old Testament was pointing to and what the New Testament is grounded on.
  - You cannot appreciate Jesus' death until you appreciate His life.
  - Study isn't about reading - it's about reading, understanding, and meditating on with the intention to put it into practice.
  - It's only until we see the power behind God's word and the beauty of Jesus that we can, like Peter, say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."