

I. THE LIVING WORD

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

A. The word of God is more than just true statements or important concepts. It is more than ideas. It is alive and has supernatural power to transform the human spirit. It is what stokes the fire of love in our heart.

1. The word became so impassioned and alive within Jeremiah that it was like a fire.

But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. (Jeremiah 20:9)

B. Being a “student of the word” is not enough to give us life.

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

1. We must bring the written words into dialogue with the living Word, Jesus. The Bible then becomes the fuel to enrich our conversation with Him.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. (John 1:1-4)

2. The Pharisees in Jesus’ day thought they could have life in God through studying the Scriptures. They could not find life because they were not willing to come to the One the Scriptures testified of, the One who *is* life. They approached the study of the Scriptures with their minds, but Jesus says of them that love for God was not in their hearts.

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life. 41 "I do not accept praise from men, 42 but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. (John 5:39-42)

3. If we desire to abide in His word, we must turn away from all filthiness. This is not just immorality. Filthiness includes having a wrong spirit that motivates our activity, whether in thought, word or deed.

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (James 1:21)

- a. We must approach the word with a spirit of obedience - a commitment to obey His commands and submit to the Holy Spirit's leadership in every area of our life. God imparts the word to our spirit as we seek Him in humility.

II. THE PRACTICAL: OUR DEVOTIONAL DIALOGUE

- A. What are some practical ways to connect with the heart of God as we study the word?
 1. To begin with, we must approach all of our studying with a spirit of love or devotion towards God. This is simply carrying an "I love You" in your heart as you read His word and speak to Him. God is after the voluntary response of love from each individual heart. By approaching Him in this way, our Bible study becomes affection-based instead of solely an intellectual pursuit.
 2. Do not attempt to cover too much material at once. The goal is not quantity, but quality. Our devotional dialogue with God is conversational in nature. Just as a human-to-human conversation would be, it is helpful to pause every few moments or phrases throughout your study to both speak and listen to God.
- B. Responding to God through His word can be as simple as taking time to thank Him for the truths in the verse, and asking for understanding. This is an excellent way to respond to His promises.
 1. When reading a command, we must respond with a commitment to obey, asking God for the strength to follow His word.
 2. When a passage is difficult, ask God to give you understanding; to give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened... (Ephesians 1:17-18)

- C. When we approach the study of God's word in a way that brings us into communion with Him, it will drastically change our lives. We will reap from whatever we have sown. If we stay in the word not just to study it, but to turn it into God-centered, loving dialogue with the commitment to obey, we will reap the fruit of righteousness. The impact may not be felt overnight. Not all growth will be evident in our own estimation, but we *will* be changed over the months and years.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:7-9)