

Treasure God's Word

Lesson 8 in "More Like Jesus"

Lesson Aim: To encourage us to treasure God's Word, and apply it to our everyday life in practical ways as an important step toward Christian maturity.

Key Verse: And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. I Thess. 2:13

Life's Greatest Treasurers

What do you most treasure in life? What is most dear to you? What is the last thing that you would let go of if everything else was being taken from you? Answering that will help you understand the word "treasure."

We live in a world that is functioning on principles contrary to God's. The spirit of the world draws us toward itself. If we have any intentions at all of becoming more like Jesus, we must treasure His Word.

There is no writing, or thought or opinion that is even close to God's Word in terms of accuracy; presentation of Truth; timelessness; source of wisdom for life; or instruction on how to handle difficulty.

By "God's Word" I'm not only speaking of the printed Bible that we (at least used to) carry to church. I'm speaking of the powerful, authoritative, life-giving truths that God has spoken, and which are recorded in what we know as "the Bible." We treasure those truths because there is no other way to know how to live the abundant life on earth and to go to heaven when we die.

The Right Attitude

We can know the Bible well and still not grow if we don't have the right attitude toward it!

We must invite it to penetrate our minds and spirits and become integrated into our values, emotions, actions, and responses in life. We must hold it close to our heart. It is the last thing that we would let go of if everything were being taken from us; except that no one could take it from us if it is in our mind and our heart!

Do we bow our hearts before the Word and submit to its counsel and instruction, even if it is contrary to the voice of the world and painful to our human desires? Do we accept it as our standard for life; the criteria by which we judge right and wrong?

Some contemporary theologians assume that the Word is outdated; Paul was simply ignorant of certain things that we now know; the heart of man is really not so bad; and, it rests with the church to decide what "truth" is and what applies to us today. This approach produces distorted theology and leads to a church that is handicapped in Godly living and in speaking for God in our broken world!

The humble heart seeks and receives instruction, counsel, and correction from God's Word. It bows before the Word and looks up to it. The proud heart may freely discuss it intellectually, but it looks down upon it and gives little serious thought to that which confronts its earthly desires.

Scriptures to Consider

These scriptures are like big flashing electronic billboards. As you read them, feel the energy of God's Word and the effect it can have. Observe that it is literally a power in the life of those who receive it!

Psalm 1 - The man who delights in the law of the Lord will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither, and in whatever he does, he prospers.

Psalm 119 - Read it and feel its heartbeat.

Prov. 2 - Read vv6-22 to see the incredible benefits of receiving God's Word, and then read vv1-5 to see how we get it.

Prov. 4:20-22 - "My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words.²¹ Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;²² for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body."

Isaiah 55:8-11 - "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Jer. 15:16 - "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty."

Mt. 4:4 - Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Also Deut. 8:3)

Mt. 7:24-27 - Story of men who built their houses upon the rock, and sand. This is not just a kid's song; it's a truth for life!

Mt. 13:18-23 - V23: "But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

John 6:63 - "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life."

John 8:31b-32 - "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Acts 20:32 - "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

Romans 15:4 - "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope."

I Tim. 4:6 - "If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed."

II Tim. 3:16-17 - "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Heb. 4:12 - "For the word of God is alive 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."

James 1:21 - "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."

I Peter 1:22-25 - "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart."²³

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.²⁴ For, "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word that was preached to you."

What was happening inside of you as you read those verses? How do we respond to such simple and powerful truths? What do they say to the needs that lie within us, and in the broken people around us?

What do they say to the dullness that many Christians have toward God's Word?

Truly, God's Word *is* alive, active, and able to help us become more like Jesus! It *is* able to lead us into the abundant life that He provided for us at the cost of His own life. And it *is* able to equip us for every good work in making God known to others.

Other Words

God's Word is not the only "voice" that wants to direct our steps. The world that we live in, is ruled by another master whose voice is spoken in our hearing every day.

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." I John 5:19

We are constantly bombarded with messages from radio, TV, music, advertising, magazines, theater, educational institutions and friends; messages which are directly contrary to God's.

It's hard to live in a pigpen and smell like a rose, yet that is what God calls us to! How can we possibly expect to become more like Jesus, and less like the world, unless we distance ourselves from some of these influences and fill ourselves with the cleansing, renovating, change-affecting and life-giving Word of God?

A Searching Mind

Think about this. Isn't it true that those who "get ahead" in business, or any field of endeavor, are those who read a lot; ask questions; and listen a lot? Aren't they always ready for new information; even if it means changing their mind about something? Should our pursuit of Christlikeness be any different than their pursuit of their profession?

Closing Thoughts

This whole lesson is about one teeny tiny simple little principle. There's no complicated theology here.

However, simple as it is, it is absolutely essential to spiritual maturity; to abundant living; and to effective Christian service. In accepting or rejecting the core point of this lesson we open or close the door to the fullness that God has for us.

Where *do* we look when we need help in life? Is it possible that we would go to God's Word more often if we didn't need to humble ourselves so much in order to benefit from it?

Read John 8:31-32 and try to feel the imperative of abiding in the Word. We need it to help keep us pure as we walk in a contaminated world. Do we understand how desperately we need to receive instruction from our Master while we live in enemy territory?

Let's understand that God wants to show us His way in the experiences of every day! It is *there* that His Word becomes practical! Let's approach the Word with both our mind and our heart; coming for knowledge, instruction and even correction! As you read, ask God to instruct and correct you through His Word, and to actively bring change into your life. He is waiting for that but it is something we need to choose to do!

Prayer:

Jesus, I want to have a deeper respect for the scriptures and for the practical way in which they can speak to my life. I want to search your Word and apply its truths to my life more often.

Jesus, I want to see you, and me, as I read the scriptures. Show me how to become more like you; and how to bear the fragrance of your presence as I serve you in this sinful world.

Please remind me often of the splendor of your Word, and work in me an appetite for it. I humble myself before your message to mankind, and I know there is no other path to abundant life on earth or to being in heaven with you, forever.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

- 1) What is the best book you ever read (besides the Bible)? Why would you choose that one?

- 2) How practical *is* God's Word to life in the 21st century?
 - a) It has some good stuff but it's also outdated and sometimes irrelevant.
 - b) One has to "pick and choose" because life in America is so different than it was for the writers of scripture.
 - c) I find it to be very practical and instructive. It helps me better than any book written by a man.

- 3) It is a sign of personal strength, or weakness, to look for help in the scriptures when we find ourselves in need?

- 4) Does the typical American Christian run to the Bible for help in dealing with everyday issues including finances, relationships and conflict?

- 5) Does the typical American Christian think of the Bible more as telling us how to go to heaven when we die; or of revealing the person and work of God and telling us how to live for Him in our years on earth?

- 6) What kind of "other words" have you heard lately that could draw a Christian away from God?

- 7) What is it about man, or about life, that can diminish the way we treasure God's Word? (Both the Bible and the truths it contains.)

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