

Finding living water in the Word again.

Why does the Word become dry and empty to us? It seems a common experience that the Scriptures that once poured life into us, now seem boring and uninspiring. It is as if the well has dried up. In pondering on this lately, I have come to the following conclusions. The first is centred on our belief about the Word, and the second is in how we handle it, how we read it and pray it.

Do we, firstly, believe it is the ‘living and enduring Word of God?’ Where we start, that is, the ground on which we stand is all important. If we are absolutely convinced it is a ‘living word’ and able to do all it says it can, then we will pursue the life it holds and do all we can to encounter it. It would appear that some give up reading and praying the Word because this core belief is shaky. It is as if it is ‘alive’ only if it comes alive to me now. They have a ‘circumstantial’ belief about this, and if the circumstances don’t evidence its life right now to me – then I give up! This as absurd as having a car, which one day does not start as it used to, so we give up and get rid of it, instead of exploring why it did not start that day and getting it going again. Unfortunately, this seems a common attitude to spiritual things. If they don’t ‘work’ for me right now – then I will let it go and try something else. We are not making choices based on what God says about his Word. God loves a seeker, an explorer, someone who batters on the door and says, “Open up, I need to get in!” When we are convinced that God has given us a ‘living Word’ which can feed our hunger, bring the reality of Christ to us, and give us wisdom and insight and understanding, then we will approach dry times as a challenge to explore, to dig, to search, to knock, to cry out UNTIL... our hearts are satisfied again.

The second conclusion I have come to is that **it is not common these days to teach disciples a variety of ways of soaking up and praying and feeding on the Word.** The most common way we show new believers is to read, answer some questions, or read someone’s comments on the passage, then pray. Perhaps they progress to reading silently, expecting the Spirit to ‘highlight’ something for them, and then praying from that. These can be helpful for a time, but there is so much more to discover.

A key one is that saying the Scriptures OUT LOUD so we hear them, as well as say them, is much more effective than silent reading. This was the way the Hebrews read and prayed the Scriptures they had - always out loud, and often with physical movement as well. Mostly they would memorise a passage, because in a village there would only be one copy of the Scriptures at the synagogue. The men would go and recite Scripture daily and come home and teach it to their family. Then it would be recited as praise and prayer and story daily. It would fill their minds and touch their hearts.

For many centuries the Church had this practice of saying out loud the Scriptures at various times of the day. It was their ‘prayer’, because it included praise, and calling on God. The liturgy used today in churches is a continuation of this habit. Wesley and Stacey Campbell have produced a really helpful book - ‘Praying the Bible’ as an aid to encouraging us to pray the Word out loud daily as individuals and as families and so become soaked in Scripture. As we do it with care and emphasis, our minds are washed, and our thinking is aligned with God. As we do we can begin to ‘see’ more of Him and more of our inner being becomes available to him. It is common to have personal encounters with the Lord as we do this, or have words highlighted for our current needs. This is a simple but very effective way to dig into Scripture and let it feed us.

Psalm 1 describes the blessings of ‘meditating’ on God’s law day and night. We will be like a tree planted by a stream which is always fruitful and green. Our lives will prosper. What a promise! What an incentive to discover what ‘meditating’ on the Word is all about.

This is not mulling things over in our mind. The word 'meditate' means to mutter aloud, say over and over, like a cow chewing cud! It is another form of speaking out the Word and allowing the Spirit to draw our attention to a phrase or verse. So we say a passage out loud slowly two or three times, and then zero in on a phrase or verse that has caught our attention. Then **we say those words slowly, savouring them phrase by phrase.** As we do, they reveal more to us because the Word has layers of truth and meaning, and we do not see that by just reading once or twice.

e.g. Psalm 1:2 "His delight is in the law of the Lord..." My delight is in your law O Lord. I love your Word. I delight in it. It is your heart beat. My delight is in your law O Lord. It is food to me. Forgive me for neglecting the feast you have for me. Your instruction is my delight. Your will is my delight. Your joy fills me. Thank you Lord.

You may recall other Scripture, or a hymn or song and say it to him. Very simply, the Scripture has helped you encounter him, repent, remember things and rekindle joy. This is meditating on the Word. And as we do this, we will find that that phrase or word will roll around our heart and mind for hours. It feeds us and opens up more understanding even after we have stopped consciously meditating on it. Our heart continues to chew on it. And the Lord can continue to speak to us through it, even as we go about our daily business.

Teaching each other these two ways of declaring and meditating on the Word will enliven it to us, and awaken our appetite for his living word again.

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