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# Church in Campbell Weekly News

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## THE WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD

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  - C. Eating, drinking, and breathing the Spirit and the life in the Word of God—Jer. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Tim. 3:16.
  - D. Going beyond the letter, historical events, and persons and things to explore and to receive the revelation of life—2 Cor. 3:6.

The previous message was concerned with the essence of God's Word. If we want to understand something, we must know its essence. God's Word is God's breathing out. It is also the spiritual milk and the food of life. It is spirit and life. Ultimately, the Word is Christ, and it is also God Himself. God's Word is not the sacred writing of a religion; it is not philosophy, ethics, or theory. It is God's breathing out of Himself; it is the spiritual milk and food; it is spirit and life. It is just Christ—God Himself.

### A MYSTERIOUS BOOK

Now we shall see the way to understand God's Word. How can we understand God's Word? This is an important question. The Bible is too mysterious. You may say that it is simple. Indeed, it is quite simple. For this reason, some say that the Bible cannot be regarded as the sacred writing of a religion. They say that it only talks about common things. They do not know how mysterious and profound the Bible is. Hu Shih, the modern Chinese philosopher who during the May Fourth Movement strongly promoted the change of Chinese classical literature into the spoken style of writing, once said that the Chinese Bible is a great reformation in Chinese writing. This proves that he studied the Chinese Bible. However, he did not know anything concerning the truth and the gospel in the Bible, because he did not believe in the Lord. This proves that high education and knowledge cannot help a person to understand the Bible.

For example, a chicken is covered with feathers. Under the feathers is the chicken skin, and under the skin are the meat and bones. Furthermore, there may still be dung in the intestines of the chicken. However, when we eat the chicken, we eat only the chicken meat. According to my study of the Bible, I can say that there are "feathers," "skin," "bones," and "dung" in the Bible. Do not think that I am wrong. In the first chapter of Romans there are over twenty kinds of sins. In addition, the second chapter of Ephesians mentions not only the fallen sinners on earth, but also the ruler of the authority of the air, that is, the

operating evil spirit, which is the power of darkness. Do you not think that these are "chicken dung?" Furthermore, the Bible not only has God's word but also the word of the old serpent, Satan. In chapter three of Genesis the serpent spoke to the woman.

The Bible is too mysterious. It is not like the books written by ordinary men. In it there are good things, bad things, heavenly things, earthly things, and even things under the earth. God is there, and the Devil is also there. Holy men are there, and so are sinners. The Bible includes everything. When we read it, it seems very simple. For example, in John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," and in John 6:35 He said, "I am the bread of life...and he who believes in Me shall by no means ever thirst." These are simple words, but within them are depths that men cannot comprehend. Therefore, it is not easy to study the Bible. For this reason, I would like to spend two messages on how to know the truths in the Bible. These messages are based not only on my studies but also on my personal experiences.

### Understanding the Word of God Literally

When we read the Bible, the first way to understand the Word of God is to comprehend it literally. We must comprehend whatever the Bible says and never be distracted from the main thought. When we read the Bible, we should not interpret arbitrarily a passage that we do not understand, thus departing from the meaning of the Word. Many people study the Bible and spiritualize their interpretation of it. For example, John 3:5 says, "Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit..." There is a group of people who feel that "water" here is difficult to interpret, so they take it as a sign, a symbol, and assume that the water refers to God's word. According to Ephesians 5:26, which refers to "the water in the word," they say that to be born again one must first hear the word of God. When God's word comes to us, the Spirit also comes. Therefore, they say that to be born of water and the Spirit is to be born of the Spirit through the word. Although this kind of spiritualizing in the interpretation of the Bible is not bad and seems to be consistent with the Bible, it does have its problems. If this interpretation of John 3:5 were true, why did the Lord Jesus not tell Nicodemus plainly at the beginning that a man must be born of the word, instead of telling him that a man must be born of water? By asking such a question, we can see that the interpretation of "water" as "the word" is unacceptable. Thus, we can see that we need to try our best to understand the Bible literally.

To understand the Word of God literally, however, is not simple, and it also has its problems. For example, there is a

group of people in the United States who interpret the new birth in John chapter three to mean that a person must be born twice, the first time from his mother's womb and the second time of the Spirit. This is the reason that the Lord Jesus spoke of these two things, the water and the Spirit. According to their interpretation, the water refers to the fluid that bathes the fetus in the mother's womb. A man, therefore, must be born first of the fluid in his mother's womb and then of the Spirit. Through these two births, he is born again. This kind of "literal interpretation" is very poor.

First of all, we must know to whom the Lord was speaking in John 3. He was speaking to Nicodemus. John 3:1 clearly indicates that Nicodemus was a Pharisee. When John the Baptist came to preach and to baptize people in water, he told the Pharisees, "I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance; but He Who is coming after me...shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 3:11). In his speaking John already had put the water and the Spirit together. Therefore, Nicodemus must have understood the word of the Lord Jesus. Because of this, the Lord Jesus spoke to him in a straightforward way. This is to not interpret the Word literally in a natural way but to interpret it according to its right meaning in the context.

As John the Baptist put all the repentant persons into the water, their old man was buried and terminated. The Lord Jesus then followed this to enliven them with the Spirit. The water is for burial, and the Spirit is for resurrection. When the two are put together, we have death and resurrection. This is the meaning of being born again. I have used this example to show you the right way to interpret the Bible. In the next message I will tell you the two criteria for this kind of interpretation of the Bible. The first is to interpret the Bible with the word of the Bible, and the second is to interpret it according to the context. Those who interpret the water in John 3:5 as the fluid from the mother's womb do so because they have not studied the Bible thoroughly and have not paid attention to the context. They merely interpret the Word according to their natural understanding, and consequently they make a serious mistake.

I am using this opportunity to give you these basic rules, especially for the sake of the young brothers and sisters who still have a long future on this earth. You need to labor on the Word of the Lord. This Bible has been in the hands of Christians for nearly two thousand years. Tens of thousands of scholars have studied this book, but most of them have interpreted it in their own way. If we want to know the Bible, the first thing we must do is to comprehend it literally; then we must pay attention to the context.

### **Pray-reading the Word of God with Our Spirit**

Second, we need to use our spirit to pray-read the Word of God. To comprehend the Word literally we first need to read the black and white letters with our eyes as well as with our mind. Second, we need to pray-read, converting all that we see and all that we comprehend into prayer.

When we pray, we use our spirit. At first, we may use our mind to pray, but after three to five sentences our spirit will rise up. This is a definite fact. Therefore, never forget that the essence of the Word of God is God's breathing out. When you read it, you should breathe it in. On God's side, it is a matter of His breathing out; on our side, it is a matter of our breathing in. The spiritual breath comes out of Him and enters into us. That which comes out of Him and enters into us is the spiritual breath. The Word of God is spirit and life. Our mind cannot touch the Spirit; only our spirit can touch the Spirit. If we do not touch the Spirit, we do not have life. Only by touching the Spirit can we have life. Ultimately, this life is Christ, and it is also God Himself.

In the previous message we pointed out the essence of God's Word. This message teaches us how to practice to touch this essence. At first, we do not need to explain what we read, nor do we need to understand it; we only need to pray-read the Word literally. When we pray-read, our spirit touches the Spirit of the Bible, and thus we receive life. Many of you can testify to this. For example, a newly saved person may read the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. He may not read the footnotes, and he may not read the Life-studies. He may simply begin to pray-read from verse one: "Oh, Abraham; Oh, the son of Abraham. O Lord, You are the son of Abraham, the son of David. Jesus Christ— Oh, Jesus; Oh, Christ; Jesus Christ. Abraham begot Isaac. Praise the Lord! Isaac begot Jacob..." If he prays like this for five or six minutes, his whole inner being will be very bright and clear, even though he may not understand anything. This is neither imagination nor superstition. We can prove this with the fact of our experience. The Bible is the Bible. Even if you pray-read Genesis 3:1-2, "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said..." your spirit will be nourished. This is truly marvelous.

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### ***Burdens for Church Prayers***

- Pray for the summer training
- Pray for Spanish speaking work
- Pray for spreading to nearby cities
- For daily exercise in GOW training: prophesying on Lord's day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth and attend Lord's day meeting on time.
- For gospel preaching on West Valley College campus, as well as for English-speaking testimony in Campbell.

### ***Announcement***

- Morning Revival: Central Line of the Bible
- YP in summer pursue program: Luke chapter 3-6.
- Prayer meeting 7:30PM at Campbell Meeting Hall.
- Chinese-Speaking Student Perfecting training:

July 29 ~ Aug 5 (Fri-Fri) in Franklin Park, NJ

Aug 4 ~ 7 (Thu-Sun) in Santa Clara, CA

Registration deadline: 7/10/2011, <http://www.mswe1.com>