
Church in Campbell Weekly News

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THE WAY TO UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD

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 - A. Understanding the Word of God literally.
 - B. Pray-reading the Word of God with our spirit—Eph. 6:17-18.
 - 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.

Eating, Drinking, and Breathing the Spirit and the Life in the Word of God

The matter of pray-reading to eat, drink, and breathe the Spirit and the life in the Word of God is seen in the word of the Bible; hence, pray-reading is not superstitious. When we pray-read, the word in letters becomes spirit and life, that is, the Lord Himself. To pray-read is to receive “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition” (Eph. 6:17-18). Whenever we receive the Word of God by pray-reading, the result is that we eat, drink, and breathe in the Spirit and the life in God’s Word. Even an Old Testament saint, Jeremiah, also said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them” (Jer. 15:16). The Word of God is edible; hence, it is our food. Therefore, we must “long for the guileless milk of the word” (1 Pet. 2:2). In Hebrews 5:12 we are told that the Word of God is of two kinds: milk for those who are babes, and solid food for those who are mature. In addition, God’s Word is also God’s breathing out. When we breathe in God’s Word, breathing in what God has breathed out, we receive Him. It is clear, then, that to pray-read is to eat, to drink, and to breathe, and the more consistently we practice it, the better. If we eat a little, drink a little, and breathe a little, as time goes on we will be purified. Furthermore, we will go beyond the letter, the historical events, and the people and things, and we will obtain the revelation of life. The Bible does have some “skins” and some “feathers,” but within these things is the revelation of life. However, when we read the Bible, we are often hindered by the outward things. This is especially true when we read the Old Testament. For example, a man may read Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” He may then read concerning God’s creation of Adam and Eve. Up to this point his understanding may be quite good. However, when he reads about Abraham, he may not be able to understand, and he may think, “Abraham is a holy man seeking after God. How could he treat his wife in this way? His wife is Sarah; then how could he take Hagar as his concubine? Having done this, how can he be the father of the saints?” Therefore, he has problems in studying the Bible. Later on he may read about the Israelites coming out

of Egypt, entering into Canaan, and destroying the seven tribes in Canaan. Then he may think, “God is not fair. How could He have helped the Israelites to kill the seven tribes in Canaan?” I have heard all these questions, and I have also had to answer them.

This also applies to the reading of the New Testament. People either read it wrongly or become obsessed with certain matters in their reading. For example, John 13 mentions that we should wash one another’s feet. There are people who insist on the practice of foot washing and cannot do without it. Because of this, they have a foot washing group and wash one another’s feet every Sunday. This is going too far. First Corinthians 11 speaks of the need for women to cover their heads. Some people consider this to be merely an ancient custom, and they maintain that it should not be regarded as a commandment to be taught to others. Furthermore, some people speak against what they consider to be the unfair treatment of women in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, which says, “Let the women be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak.” Again, they consider this as an old religious practice that is now out-of-date. Indeed, the study of the Bible does present these kinds of difficulties. Not only so, but there are people who even find fault with the Lord Jesus. For example, at one time Jesus said to His mother, “Woman, what have I to do with you?” (John 2:4). Many Chinese readers would feel that, since their country was founded upon human morality and ethics, they would never teach their children to speak to their mothers as the Lord Jesus did. Furthermore, on another occasion, when someone told Jesus that His mother and His brothers had come to seek Him, He answered by saying, “Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?...for whoever does the will of My Father Who is in the heavens, he is My brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12:48-50). When they read this passage, some people think that Jesus was insane. From these cases we can see that many people’s way of studying the Bible indeed has these difficulties.

Going Beyond the Letter, Historical Events, and Persons and Things to Explore and to Receive the Revelation of Life

In order to study the Bible, we must go beyond the letter, that is, the letter in the law. For example, the Seventh Day Adventists hold on to the letter in the Bible: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” However, Paul said, “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). This word should be applied to the matter of the keeping of the Sabbath. “The letter” requires people to keep the Sabbath, but the spiritual meaning of keeping the Sabbath is that God wants whoever is laboring and is burdened to obtain rest. Hence, it is not a matter of keeping the letter, but of receiving the Spirit. According to the spiritual meaning, the Sabbath is the rest that God has established for those who are heavily burdened, and this Sabbath is just the Lord

Christ. It is not surprising that the Lord said, "Come to Me all who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). This is today's Sabbath. Similarly, regarding the matter of circumcision, to require people to be circumcised on the eighth day is merely the letter. The spiritual meaning of circumcision is to terminate our flesh, to deny our natural life. The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. The Spirit goes beyond the letter and also beyond the historical events.

Although Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and Hagar, Abraham's concubine, did not have positive histories, Paul went beyond the historical facts to see the revelation contained within them. He spoke of these two women as two covenants. Galatians chapter four reveals that Sarah, the wife of Abraham, represents the covenant of grace, whereas Hagar symbolizes the covenant of law. From this we can see that in the Bible the position of the law is like that of a concubine, whereas the position of grace is like that of the real wife.

Let us return to the incident recorded in John 2:4, in which the Lord Jesus called His own mother "Woman." When we go beyond the historical events, we can see the spiritual revelation of life. The Lord Jesus was God incarnated to become flesh; He was the Son of God. Outwardly, He was born of Mary according to the flesh; hence, He was the Son of Man. However, He was in fact the Son of God inwardly.

The Bible is mysterious. We all must go beyond the historical events and persons in order to see the revelation of life hidden within them.

III. The way to understand the Word of God:

5. Taking care of the context.
6. Expounding God's Word with God's Word.
7. Learning from the saints of the past:
 1. Relying on the teaching that the Brethren have received (the higher theology).
 2. Knowing thoroughly the inner life teaching.
 3. Receiving Calvin's revelation concerning predestination.
 4. Refusing the insistence of Arminianism on human responsibility.
 5. Holding the balance of the truth concerning the kingdom reward and punishment.

GOD'S DISPENSING BEING THE CENTER OF THE REVELATION OF THE BIBLE

In this message we shall learn how to read the Word of God practically. We all know that the Bible is the Word of God and that it is extremely mysterious and all-inclusive. Its most central point is to reveal God Himself to us. The purpose of this revelation is not merely that we may know God, as is often emphasized by Christians, but much more that He may work Himself into us. The way He accomplishes this is through dispensing. Even though we cannot find the word "dispensing" in the Bible, still the fact of dispensing is in the Bible, just as the term "the Triune God" is not in the Bible, yet there is the fact of the Triune God.

How can we prove this? Second Corinthians 13:14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Here we can see that when love comes, this love becomes grace, and when grace comes to us, it comes through fellowship; this is dispensing. Moreover, in Romans 8 we can even see the steps of this dispensing. First, Christ, the life-giving Spirit, who is God Himself, comes into our spirit, causing our spirit to have the life of God (v. 10). Then He desires to enter into our mind, which is the major part of our soul, so that our soul may have the life of God (v. 6). Last, He supplies His life to our body (v. 11). Thus our spirit, soul, and body all have His life. This process is God's dispensing. This is the central and major point in the Bible. The divine Trinity is for the dispensing of God Himself into us.

GOD PASSING THROUGH FIVE STEPS

God desires to dispense Himself into us. However, this is not so simple that it can be accomplished in one step. In order to do this, God had to pass through steps and processes beyond human imagination. He had to take at least five steps, and He had to complete some great accomplishments. The first step was incarnation. God became flesh, which was not a simple matter. The Creator of the universe, almighty God, has now become flesh! We must realize that in the Bible, the word "flesh" does not mean the untouched, undamaged man; rather, it refers to the fallen, defiled, and damaged man. This Triune God, the Creator of the universe, came in the likeness of such a man—in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3)—through incarnation. No wonder the Bible says that He had "no form nor comeliness" (Isa. 53:2).

Burdens for Church Prayers

- Pray for the young people to sanctify their time in the summer to pursue the Lord with their companions.
- 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 week 2
 - YP in summer pursue program: Luke chapters 5-6.
 - Prayer meeting 7:30PM at Tai's home: 12137 kristy lane, Saratoga, CA 95070
 - 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>