

Young Working Saints Outing

Oklahoma City, April 5-6, 2024

Pre-reading

To begin Lord's day, March 31, and end Thursday, April 4, in preparation of the outing.

Reading the Bible and Pray-reading the Word

Day 1

Scripture reading

1 Pet. 2:2-3 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation, if you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Matt. 4:4 But He answered and said, It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God."

Coming to the Word to "taste" the Lord

In 1 Peter 2:2-3 we have a most important passage.... These verses are important to us because they tell us clearly how to taste the Lord: drink "the guileless [pure] milk of the Word." If we would taste Christ, we must take into us the milk of the Word. Then we will be nourished for spiritual growth. Praise the Lord, the Bible says tasted! It does not say that we know this aspect or that aspect about the Lord, but that we taste the Lord. When we drink the milk of the Word, we are actually tasting the Lord. Therefore, the way for us to taste the Lord is simply by drinking the milk of the Word. The Word is not only for us to study or learn, but even more for us to taste. The way the Lord nourishes His Body is by His Word. If we desire to enjoy the Lord and be nourished by the Lord, we must come to the Word to taste the Lord.

The main function of the Bible — to impart God into us as life

The main function of the Bible is to impart God into us as life and as the nourishment of life. It is not only to give us knowledge about God and His love, but to impart God Himself into us. Whenever we read the Bible, we should not merely try to know or understand it, but take something of God's essence into us just as we take our food. Then, like food, this substance will be assimilated into our very being.

The Scriptures contain at least three examples of those who ate the Word of God. The first is Jeremiah, who said, "Your words were found and I ate them" (Jer. 15:16a). To eat something is not merely to receive

it, but to assimilate it. To assimilate is to receive something into you, digest it, and make it a part of yourself. The second example of someone eating the Word of God is recorded in the book of Ezekiel, where the prophet Ezekiel ate the Word of God (3:1-3).

Jeremiah said, "Your word became to me / The gladness and joy of my heart" (Jer. 15:16b). This is a kind of enjoyment. The Word, after being eaten, became a joy and also a gladness. God's Word is an enjoyment; after it is taken into us and assimilated into our very being, it becomes joy within us and gladness without. [In the third example], David said, "How sweet are Your words to my taste! / Sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psa. 119:103). The Word is indeed an enjoyment; it is even sweeter and more pleasant than honey to our taste.

From these verses we realize that the Word of God is not only for us to learn, but even more for us to taste, to eat, to enjoy, and to digest. The Lord Jesus even speaks of God's Word as spiritual food: "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4). Every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God is spiritual food to nourish us. This is the food by which we must live.

Reading the Bible and Pray-reading the Word

Day 2

Scripture reading

John 6:55-57 For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

The Bible being God's food for us

Since we desire to be persons who eat, drink, absorb, and breathe in God, we need a drastic change in our concept concerning the Bible. We need to see that the Bible is the food God has given us. We read the Bible with the purpose of eating, drinking, absorbing, and breathing in God, because we know that the Bible is the Word of God. John 1 says that the Word of God is God Himself. God's Word is God's coming forth. When God is expressed and presented to us, we have the Word, the Bible. Since God wants to be our food, His expression and manifestation to man as the Word means that the Word is man's food.

Some people think that God's words are only precepts and commandments, but in John 12:50 the Lord Jesus said that God's commandment is eternal life. God's commandment is life because it is food. When we receive God's commandments, we receive them in the way of eating. When these commandments enter into us as food, we spontaneously receive life and nourishment from them. Those who have experienced this can testify that when we read the Bible with a heart to absorb God, it becomes food to us. Even a commandment such as husbands loving their wives can become food to us when we receive it in the way of absorbing God. When we do this, we are filled with God's supply and His presence as we love our wives.

The Lord Jesus being food to man through His word

The entire Bible, from the first word to the last, is God's word. It is God's expression and His breathing out. God's word is God Himself. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with

God, and the Word was God." This Word is our Lord Jesus. This is wonderful. The Lord Jesus is God's Word because He is God's expression and explanation. He manifests God; hence, He is the embodiment of God. When man receives Him, man receives God Himself. With the Word is life, nourishment, and supply. God is contained in the Word; hence, when a man receives the Word, he receives everything that God is.

When the Word came to the earth, He was received in the way of food. He said that He is the bread that came down out of heaven to be eaten by men. The hearers, however, were confused. The Lord sympathized with their weakness and explained to them, using the type of the offerings. When the Jews celebrated the Feast of the Passover, they slaughtered a lamb, shed its blood for the remission of their sins, and ate the meat of the lamb. Every Jew was familiar with this. The Lord said that His flesh is true meat and that His blood is true drink. This means that they were to eat Him in the same way that they slaughtered and ate the passover lamb. The lamb was slaughtered to meet the need of man's sinfulness and emptiness. When the lamb was killed, its blood was shed for the remission of sins, and its flesh was eaten for the satisfaction of man. Since the Jews understood the type, they should have also understood that the Lord was the Lamb prepared by God for them. He was killed, His blood was shed, and His body was broken. His shed blood redeemed man from his sins, and His broken body released His life to enter into man for man's satisfaction. His flesh is true food, and His blood is true drink. Those who eat His flesh and drink His blood eat Him, and those who eat Him will live because of Him.

Reading the Bible and Pray-reading the Word

Day 3

Scripture reading

Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found and I ate them, / And Your word became to me / The gladness and joy of my heart, / For I am called by Your name, / O Jehovah, God of hosts.

Reading the Word being to receive the Lord's Word as food

Prayer is to breathe in the Lord's Spirit, and reading is to receive the Lord as the Word. The Lord as the Word is our food. Man does not live by bread alone, because he is not composed of only a body; within man there is also a spirit. The physical body requires physical food, but man's spirit requires a different type of food. Physical food is not enough to make man live. Hence, the Lord says that man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). All the words that proceed out through the mouth of God are man's spiritual food. For this reason the prophet Jeremiah says, "Your words were found and I ate them" (Jer. 15:16).

Reading the Word with an attitude of eating and drinking God

Our attitude should be that the Bible is our food. The Bible is a book of food. When we read the Bible, we should eat this food. Whenever we read the Word, we should have the attitude that we are coming to eat and drink God. If our motive is merely to study truths, analyze teachings, or understand doctrines, we are not eating and drinking God, and the Bible is a book of doctrines and teachings to us. We must have a change in concept to see that the Bible is not a book of God's teaching or truth; it is God's food for us.

I hope that we would thoughtfully receive this word. This does not mean that the Bible does not contain teachings and truths. The Bible is full of teachings and truths. However, when we receive this book merely as a book of teachings and truths, and we attempt to study it only with our mind, we are but a student of truths and a learner of teachings. The Bible will merely be teachings and truths to us; it will

not be life and food to us. But if our view changes, and we consider the Bible to be God's expression and His breathing out, the Bible will be a different book to us. We will realize that since God is food to man, the Bible as His breathed-out word must also be food to man. When we come to the Bible, we must eat and drink God as our food; we must breathe in God Himself and enjoy Him. If we read the Bible this way, it will no longer be a book of teachings, commandments, truths, or doctrines. Instead, it will be God's embodiment, unveiling, expression, and exhaling. It will also be our rich food. We will receive nourishment, supply, and life from every word.

Not studying but eating and drinking

We are now clear that reading the Word is not for studying, in the same way that eating chicken is not the same as studying the chicken. Zoologists and biologists study the chicken. They spend all their lives studying, but still they may not understand everything about a chicken. We are not "zoologists" or "biologists" of the Word; we are not here to study but to eat. We do not read the Word in order to study it. Let the theologians study theology. Let the students of the Bible study the Bible. We are here to eat and drink God. We are the eaters, and we want to feast on the Word until we are filled.

In conclusion, God is Spirit for us to breathe Him in through prayer, and God is the Word for us to eat Him through reading the Word. The more we pray, the more we breathe in His Spirit, and the more we read, the more we eat His word. The Spirit is God, and the Word is also God. When we breathe and eat enough of God, we will be filled and satisfied with God. This is what it means to enjoy God through praying and reading.

Reading the Bible and Pray-reading the Word

Day 4

Scripture reading

Eph. 6:17-18 And receive...the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit...

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Pray-reading the Word

When coming to the Bible, having to prepare ourselves to enter into fellowship with God. When we come to the Bible, we have to prepare ourselves. We are getting ourselves prepared to read the word of God, not a newspaper or any secular book. First, we must pray, "O Lord, cleanse me with Your precious blood. Lord, I am sinful, forgive me. I am mistaken; forgive me. I do not love You; forgive me. Even I do not fear You; forgive me." We must confess all of our sins to make ourselves pure and clean, without any hindering thing between us and God. Then we are in God's fellowship. At that time we are in the Spirit of God, and when we come to the Bible, it is different.

Receiving the word by means of all prayer

Then we have to pray-read, not just read, the Word.... Throughout the centuries, all the devoted lovers of the Lord and students of the Bible practiced pray-reading in fact, though they did not have the term pray-reading. Some in the past pointed out that we have to read the Bible prayerfully. To read the Bible prayerfully is to pray-read.

The apostle Paul took in, received, the word of God by means of all prayer and petition. He not only prayed in a general way, but he also petitioned in a particular way. Prayer is general, while petition is particular. Not only so, Paul prayed with "all prayer and petition." All includes a great number of ways. You can pray loudly, or you can pray softly. You can pray quickly, or you can pray slowly. You can pray-read not only in one way but in many ways: by yourself, with your spouse, with a group, and in the meetings. Paul said that we should receive the

sword of the Spirit, the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition. This tells us that we pray all prayer and petition to take in, receive, the word of God.

What is the most profitable way to touch and deal with the Word of God? First, there is no need to close your eyes when you are pray-reading. Keep your eyes on the Word as you pray. In all of the sixty-six books of the Bible I cannot find one verse which says that we must close our eyes to pray, but there is a verse telling us that Jesus looked up to the heavens, saying, "Father..." (John 17:1). He was looking at heaven while He was praying....Second, there is no need for you to compose any sentences or create a prayer. Just pray-read the Word. Pray the words of the Bible exactly as they read. Eventually, you will see that the whole Bible is a prayer book!...Open to any page of the Bible, and start to pray with any portion of the Word.

In John 6:63 the Lord Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." The words, the Spirit, and life are three items, but the Lord speaks of them here as one. When the words are merely words, they are only black letters printed on the white paper; they are not the Spirit. But when the words get into your mind through your eyes and you begin to pray with your spirit, then the words become the Spirit. When the words become the Spirit, they are life.

When we pray in our reading of the Word, we turn the verses we have read into prayer. When we pray, we must forget everything else and have only the Lord and His word. Hymns, #389 says, "From morning to evening my one world Thou art." This means that when we seek the Lord, we have only one world: "O Lord, You are my world; I seek You."...Once the word enters your spirit, it becomes the Spirit and life. However, if you do not pray, then the word that you read will not become the Spirit, nor will it become life.

Reading the Bible and Pray-reading the Word

Day 5

Scripture reading

John 15:4, 7 Abide in Me and I in you....If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

When we take His Word into us, having the Lord abiding in us and being filled with the spirit

By comparing verses 4 and 7 of John 15, we can see that the way the Lord abides in us is by His words abiding in us. The practical way to have the Lord abiding in us is simply by taking His Word in. Whenever we touch the Word and let the Word abide in us, we touch the Lord Himself and let the Lord Himself abide in us.

It is clear from the Scriptures that the Word of Christ is nothing less than Christ Himself. This is proven from the verses we have read in John 15. The only way to have Christ abiding in us is to take in His Word.

When I was young, I read John 15 many times and wondered how I could have the Lord abiding in me. Then I found the way from the Word of the Lord. To have the Lord abiding in us is simply to take His Word into us, because the Lord is in His Word and is the Word. When we take His Word into us, we have the Lord abiding in us. To be filled with the Word in our spirit means to be filled with the Lord Himself as the Spirit.

Colossians 3:16 tells us that when the Word of Christ dwells in us, we will be filled with singing. Then Ephesians 5 tell us that when we are filled in spirit, we will be filled with singing. In other words, to have the Word of Christ dwelling in us simply means to be filled in spirit. The concrete way to be filled in spirit is to take the Word into you.

Let me illustrate this with some safety matches. We know that a match is the embodiment of phosphorus.... The phosphorus on a match will catch fire when it is struck in a proper way. But if you try to strike a safety match on the paper cover, it will not catch fire, because you are striking the match on the wrong spot. If you strike the match on the striking area, it will catch fire immediately. First, there is the phosphorus; second, the phosphorus is embodied in the match; and third, there is the fire.

Likewise, the Bible is the embodiment of the Spirit of Christ. And within the Spirit, there is the fire, which is the life. On one hand, we have the match, the phosphorus, and the fire; on the other hand, we have the Bible, the Spirit, and the life. Whenever you read the Bible, do you really catch fire? The problem is that we not only strike in the wrong way, but also at the wrong spot. Instead of striking the Bible in our spirit, we strike it in our troublesome mentality. If we analyze the match, we see that one part of the match is white, and another part is red. But do we get fire by knowing this? No, we must strike the match, and at the right spot. To study the match is wrong, and to strike the match at the wrong spot is also wrong.

Learning to pray-read with our spirit

When we strike it at the right spot we get fire! We must forget our mind and learn to pray-read with our spirit: "Lord, I praise Thee, 'In the beginning...'" (John 1:1). Simply pray this three times, and your spirit will catch fire. "Hallelujah, in the beginning." Really, this is good enough. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Hallelujah, I don't know much what this means, but how it nourishes me!"

When we are truly filled with the Word, we cannot help but sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. Whenever we pray-read the Word, it will become a singing in the spirit....Simply learn to strike the Word in the right way and at the right spot. Then there will be a real fire.