

“GOLD AND HONEY.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Psalm 19:7-11

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations and thoughts of all our hearts be pleasing and acceptable to you and fruitfully applied to our lives by your Holy Spirit.

Introduction.

As I mentioned last Sunday, it is my custom to begin each new year with a reminder and call to prayer and Scripture reading.

I feel a burden and a challenge this morning. How can I impress on you the infinite value in knowing God’s Word? How can I convince you to read your Bible regularly, daily? How can I persuade you that it is not as boring as you think? How can I help you to see real benefit and fruit and blessing in your life by spending time reading your Bible?

We don’t have to convince King David, it is clear he values his Bible as a priceless treasure filled with incomparable gems. It revives his soul when he’s weary, it makes him wise when he is plagued with questions and doubts, it gives joy to his heart and light to his eyes. To this rich king his Bible is better than great quantities of pure gold and it gives more pleasure and delight than the sweetest honey. It was his life and his lifeline.

But who thinks of the Bible that way today? Who of us would nod in agreement with what David said? Who of us would say this is our experience when we come to the Bible? Better than gold? Sweeter than honey? Really?

Why isn’t it? Have you thought about that?

Did God really say? Satan’s attack on the Word.

Well let’s start by putting the blame on the primary cause. Satan.

Satan has been feverishly conducting a campaign against the Word of God. Satan has been saying, “Did God really say ... ?” ever since the Garden of Eden. He has not stopped.

A clear way you can tell the Bible is the holy and divine Word of God is by the way Satan has relentlessly attacked the Word of God from the very beginning. No book has been more relentless attacked and assaulted and mocked and vilified and hated.

He takes every opportunity to subvert, undermine, get us confused, get us to question and doubt, “Did God really say that?” Does it really mean that? Is that still relevant, applicable to our day? Satan tries every tactic possible to relentlessly erode and tear down our confidence in the Bible as the infallible, inerrant, trustworthy Word of God.

Matthew 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

II Corinthians 4:4 The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Scholars debate what parts of the Bible are original and authentic. Skeptics search for proof of a historical Jesus. Some say the Bible only “contains” the revelation of God, but not all of it actually is.

We see the erosion of trust in the Word of God by the back seat it is taking in churches today to visual presentations, dramatic performances, self-help oriented messages and watered down talks on how to have a better life and be a better you.

Satan gets us to be like Pilate, “What is truth?” Christians are divided and drifting, following the wisdom and ways of the world, being conformed more by culture than by Christ and His Word.

Why is it boring?

But what is Satan’s biggest tool he uses with us? Satan tries to make the Bible boring and one of his best tools is *distractions*. We don’t find gold and honey in our Bibles because we find attractive and sweet things in other places that compete with our attention and interest.

Ever have a child come to dinner and not be hungry at all, only to find out they have been snacking on junk food and sweets? So it is with us, we don’t come to the Word of God spiritually hungry because of the world’s junk food, endless distractions.

I have to fight for time and fight against distractions, against the newspaper, against email and text messages and that one thing I need to get done before I turn to Scripture and prayer.

The title of Neil Postman’s book says it all, we are amusing ourselves to death. Screens are making us illiterate, dumbing us down. How many conversations begin with, “Hey have you seen this latest YouTube post” or “Have you seen this funny meme?”

As Aldous Huxley once said, we have “failed to take into account man’s almost infinite appetite for distractions.”

Helping fuel all of this is a fear that was first coined about 15 years ago, the fear of FOMO, the fear of missing out. It is what drives our social media addiction.

It might have started in the garden of Eden, fear of missing out on some good fruit landed us in sin.

Isn't this what advertisements and commercials and marketing appeals are based on, creating in us a sense that if we don't have this or that, we are missing out.

What does it profit a man to be up on the latest new shows on Netflix or conversant in what is trending on Twitter or having up to the minutes sports scores, and drowned in a sea of triviality and irrelevance and lose our souls and miss out on eternity, miss out on the glories of salvation and heaven and eternal pleasures and joy?

I wonder if God has considered repenting of ever creating humans with opposable thumbs. This huge gift that sets us apart from 95% of the animal kingdom, we are using to fuel our distractions and our fear of missing out.

How can we overcome boredom?

Who yawns their first time at the Grand Canyon or Yellowstone or Mt. Everest or the aurora borealis? Who says the vastness of the Pacific Ocean or the Milky Way is boring? Who does not stand in awe at the natural wonders and even some of the man-made wonders in our world?

How is it we yawn at the Bible, the greatest book ever written, the book that contains truth and eternity, the book that will outlast everything in creation.

It is the only perfect book, the only living and active book, the only book breathed out by God Himself. The only book that will survive the fire at the end.

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Bored Bible reading is a spiritual problem with a supernatural solution.

Pray for Bible reading grace.

In other words, own up to the fact that boredom with the Bible is not the fault of the Bible, that's not where the problem lies, it lies with us, in our hearts. We have not because we ask not. So pray and ask for the Spirit's help.

Pray for Psalm 19 to become true for you, more desirable than gold, sweet like honey.

“Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for revealing yourself to us. I confess I don't want to read the Bible. I have no real interest in memorizing it. Sometimes I just read out of

guilt. Forgive me, and give me a love for your Word. Help me to desire it more than money or the sweetest dessert (Ps. 19:10). You know my heart, give me the love I don't have."

Why do I say pray for this? Because overcoming boredom can only happen *supernaturally*. It can't happen by the flesh, it can't happen by your will power. It can only happen by the Spirit.

This is the perfect, holy Word of the living and eternal God. Don't try to read it without divine help, without the help of the Holy Spirit of God who inspired and wrote it and preserved it for us.

II Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:17-18 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know...

Ephesians 3:18-19 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

"When Peter confessed Jesus to be who he really was — the Christ the Son of God — Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). It was a miracle.

"After the resurrection, when the disciples proved too foolish and slow (Luke 24:25) to penetrate Scripture, Luke says, "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). It was a miracle. Seeing the divine glories that are really there in Scripture is always a miracle. Always supernatural" (John Piper).

Pray your Bible becomes like gold.

Psalm 119:72 The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

"You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God hath spoken much to you in the Scripture; labor to understand as much of what he saith as you can. ... let it be ... your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labor with which men are wont to *dig in mines of silver and gold*" (Jonathan Edwards).

Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Back in the gold rush days, people were willing to risk everything for gold. Who pursues God's Word which is infinitely more valuable with that same passion? Wisdom is more precious than gold. Don't use a rack to scratch the surface, bring a shovel to dig and search.

Pray the Bible becomes like honey.

Tasting the goodness of the Word of God is a supernatural ability, it comes only from the Holy Spirit. It is not an acquired taste, it is a given taste. It is a miracle, it is supernatural.

Pray for spiritual taste buds. Pray for spiritual eyes to see wonderful things in God's Word. Pray to taste and see the goodness of God in His Word.

“The Bible is like medicine. You know it's good for you, but you hate the taste. After a while, it's like oatmeal. You don't hate it, but it's not the best thing in the world either. But finally, it becomes like honey. Sweet and delicious” (Katherine Forster).

Psalm 119:103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Proverbs 16:24 Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

This is better than dessert, better than the sweetest pleasures of this world. Nothing the world offers compares. But you will need supernatural help to know this is true.

Implications and application.

1 Peter 2:2–3 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation — if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Why if? Because if you haven't tasted that the Lord is good, if you don't know the Lord then you are still dead, and dead people can't taste.

How can we experience our Bible reading this year as gold and honey? First, by making your calling and election sure (2 Pet 1.10), because unless and until you are really born again, this is impossible for you. Second, pray God will supernaturally bless your reading. Third, be diligent in using the means of grace, especially those involving Scripture intake (i.e., Bible reading, studying, meditating, and biblical preaching).

Read the Bible. Just start. Just do something. Fail forward, fail in the direction of reading more.

Help your kids do this. Use this reading plan or one you like better at meals.

If you want your kids to read, you have to start them early and seriously limit screen use and time. Two tips: start early, and get rid of the distractions.

Remember, when you read the Bible, it is God talking to you. Listen to Him and what He is saying to you. Let it convict you, let it stir your heart to obedience.

John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Out of God's Fatherly love and special care *for us and for our salvation* He has revealed secret things. Love what the Father has given to us out of love.

"... which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

Psalm 19:11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Let us pray:

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (Psalm 119:18).

Psalm 119:33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end.

34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

35 Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

37 Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.

40 Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!