

BFF397 Living in the Word

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I am well. How are you?

Scott: Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, man. Let's do this.

Steve: This is our last episode on the series, "Encouraging Bible Reading." I'm going to bring in a couple final thoughts before we start on our pre-Passover, pre-Easter, pre-Crucifixion series that we're going to do. Let's pray.

Father, thank You that we are bright-eyed this morning. Thank You for Your Word that never changes. It's the same. You're the same. We have our ups and downs, and the weather goes this way and that way, and our culture goes this way and that way, but You remain the same, and so we draw near to You this morning. Thank You for Your good, solid, reliable, true Word that You've given us. Help us to grasp it afresh in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: I think we can maybe wind these together, but I'm going to start with a new word for me. It's the word enoikeo in Greek. It's based on two words, oikeo, which is "house," and en, which is "in." So it's "in the house," or "indwelling." Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." Let the Word of Christ live in your house. Let it be right inside of you, and let it be there richly. I really like that expression.

Closely related to that is another word that has to do with living in, staying, remaining or tarrying -- it's a word we don't use much anymore -- the word meno, which means "abide." John 8:31, "Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, 'If you abide or remain, or continue, or stay -- in My Word, you are truly My disciples.'"

You can see where we're going with this. It's not enough just to read the Word of God, but is the Word of God dwelling in us, finding a home in us? Is it richly embraced? Are we continuing in it? That's where I am now. I wasn't always there.

I'm not going to say that I started off on this journey with these high and lofty expectations or ambitions. I simply wanted to read the Bible every day. That took discipline. It took time before it became part of the warp and woof of my existence.

Now it's who I am. I like the Word of God. I'm going to read a longer passage about that word "abide," because it's significant.

John 15:4, "Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me."

Reading the Bible is not something that's extra. It's not peripheral. It's our life. We need to live in it. This needs to be where our house is. We need to stay in it. John 15:5-10, "I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides, tarries, remains in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit for apart from Me, you can do nothing. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this, My Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love.

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." 10 times the word abide is used. This is Jesus, in the 15th chapter. This is the night before He's going to be crucified. This is the consummation of His teaching. "Stay in My word. Let My words stay in you. Let them dwell in you richly."

When we do, we experience a reviving. We find life. We find encouragement. Psalm 1, the very first Psalm out of 150 says, "Blessed – or happy – is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and on His law he meditates. He thinks about it day and night. He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither, and all that he does he prospers."

I was thinking about that verse the other day. If we will abide in the Word of God, we'll be like a tree planted by water, and everything we will prosper. Our leaf won't wither. We'll bring forth fruit.

The bottom line is, we all do what we like to do. That's a fact. There are things that we do because we should do them. There are things that we do because we have to do them. But the things that we delight in, we find a way to do.

I did not always like to read the Bible. I did not always like the words themselves. I remember reading part of Psalm 119, which is a big love poem for God's Word. It says, "Oh, how I love Your law. It is my meditation all the day." A few verses before that, "I will never forget Your precepts, for by them, You have revived me." Wow.

At the time, not only was I reading my Bible, trying to make a habit of it, I was also reading missionary biographies. These guys were bearing fruit for God, which is why they wrote books about them. All of them put a premium on what they called their quiet time. Their regular daily devotion, their times when they would read the Word of God, when they would seek God, when they would wait on God, when they would pray, this was a common denominator. You can't read about a Christian that has borne good fruit that didn't read the Word of God.

Billy Graham, towards the end of his life, was asked what would he do differently? He says, "I'd read more scripture, and I'd read more missionary biographies." I thought that was interesting. I never forgot that. Here's a man that preached the Word diligently, and wonderfully, and anointedly, for a long time, and looking back he wished he had spent more time in the Bible."

When I read that verse in Psalm 119, "Oh, how I love that law. It is my meditation all the day." I thought to myself, I don't. Not like that. I can't say that. I remember I was meditating on this in my head. "You're reading the Bible, but do you love the Bible? Do you really love the Word of God?"

Moses declares in Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength." Then in the next verse, "And these words which I'm commanding you today shall be on your heart." That means they shall be deep inside of you where things are important.

These are what you value. Your heart is the key. These words shall be in your heart. Then I was reading 2 Thessalonians and the 10th verse came off the page for me. "They received not the love of the truth that they might be saved."

I saw that word "received" and I went, "Ooh." That word seems like receiving Jesus into your heart, receiving forgiveness. In order to receive something, you simply have to ask for it. It was as if God was holding it out to me and saying, "Would you like to love the truth?" I thought "Yes, I would," but I don't know how to make myself love the truth. I don't know what to do.

When I saw that word, "receive," I thought, "I simply need to ask for it." Almost immediately, I prayed and said, "God, give me a love for the truth," and He did. Now I can say with David, "Oh, how I love Your law." I can tell Moses, "Yes, His words are on my heart," but it was God that did it.

I can't say this enough. You and I can't manufacture a love for the truth. We can't fake it. We simply need to ask God to help us to love the truth. There's my testimony.

We've got one more little chunk, but I'm going to give you a chance, Scott, to jump in here now. If you think of anything else that would be pertinent to this, that you'd like to bring up, here's your chance.

Scott: I'm just looking at that verse, 2 Thessalonians 2:10. My translation I'm looking at says, "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved." I'm like, "Wow, that's a really active stance to refuse to love something." It's like God says, "Love my truth." You're like, "No, I refuse."

How dark does your heart have to be to do that? He gives us His Word, and it's so beautiful, helpful, life-giving. I don't know how you refuse it, but people do all the time. I feel like at this point, in this series, if you haven't figured out how good the Word is, I don't know how to help you.

Steve: Yes. It says in another place, "They heaped up to themselves teachers after their own desires." That always struck me, because there are parts of the Bible that are hard to read. They don't bless my socks off when I read them, but it's part of God's Word and I need to receive it. I don't need to refuse it.

I don't need to quit reading it. I still need to read it every year. I don't want to live in my favorite parts either. I don't want to refuse the hard parts. That's a good word.

Scott: The reading all of it is really helpful too. God will speak to you through this. If you only stick to the verses you know, you'd be surprised if then you read something new that you haven't read in a while.

I'm amazed at how many times I've read a certain passage. I know I've read this passage many times, but something jumps off the page like I've never seen it before. That's when you're like, "Oh, the Word of God is living and active." The Holy Spirit will bring it alive to you. That's awesome.

Steve: When I was really in a dark place for two years after my special needs son was born, who had all kinds of surgeries and I was burned out, I knew I needed to read the Bible. But, boy, it was hard to read Proverbs because I was always the fool. I was pretty fragile at the time, but I liked the Psalms. I would read the Psalms over and over and over. Then once I got my feet under me again, then I began reading the whole Bible through every year. Sometimes there are seasons when you need to be healed and you're fragile, but every Word of God is inspired and profitable.

Here's a math verse now. You know I enjoy math. Here are two verses that discourage me from adding and subtracting. How do you like that for an introduction? The first is

found in Deuteronomy 12:32, "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it."

Don't add to scripture just because you want to add something you think should be in there, and don't take away from scripture. Scripture is complete. In Revelation, "Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." They are wise men. They obey it, they put it into practice.

Then he goes on to say, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

God help us to not add to the Bible, nor take away from the Bible.

I had lunch with a friend the other day, and he was talking about a sermon that He had preached on walking in the light, from 1 John 1:7. As he said "walking in the light" he opened up his hands and his arms, and spread them wide, and he said, "I want to walk in the light of His Word. I want to be open to it. I want to let it have free course in me," that was the idea.

I had never thought about walking in the light that way, but that's the idea. Let the Word of God enlighten every aspect of our being. Let us not be afraid of it. Let's not add to it, take away from it, reject it, or refuse it. Let's welcome it because it's God's Word. God is the Word made flesh.

I'm going to close with Revelation 1:3, "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy. Blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it for the time is near." I believe that.

Scott: The only other verse I was thinking of is John 21:25. "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."

I know I mentioned this recently, but that one just hits me right between the eyes, for some reason. This is just the cliff notes of what Jesus did. I want to read all the other stories too, but we'll get those in heaven. This is just the tiniest bit of what He did. I want to devour it. If you love Jesus, you might want to pay attention to that verse. I don't know how else to say it. He did so much.

Steve: Amen. The Holy Spirit chose what's in there. He's the one that selected it and pulled it all together. You're right. I like that part in John 20:31, where it says, "These things are written that you might believe." The Gospel of John was written to inspire faith. The Holy Spirit brought things together just the way we need Him.

Amen. Let's just not talk about it. Let's do it. Father, thank You for Your truth that You want us to live in, and dwell in, and abide in. You want us to build a house and just let the Word of God be everything to us, but we also know that we have a heart and we have desires. I pray that You would give us a desire to love the truth. Help us to love the truth.

Help us to not refuse it. We want to acknowledge that sometimes we're not thrilled about it. I pray that you'll take our devotion to the truth to a different level.

Help us to embrace and love the truth, all the truth, and revive us according to the truth. Bless us and prosper us as we live in Your Word and Your Word lives in us. I pray that You will save us from adding or subtracting to it and just simply open ourselves up and receive it just the way it was written.

You said that we'd be happy if we read it. We'd be blessed if we hear it and keep it. Help us to be happy, and blessed, and fulfilled, and let our heart beat with Your heart as revealed in Your Word, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.