

Earnest Desire For God's Word

Joe Slater

My school bus driver when I was in fifth grade gave me a "bum lamb." When an ewe gives birth to twins, she often abandons one of them because her milk is insufficient for two. Rather than let it die, a shepherd cares for the abandoned ("bum") lamb using powdered "milk replacer."

I named my lamb "Sam." Since he was male, he was Sam the ram lamb! Every morning and evening for several weeks I mixed a soda bottle of milk replacer to feed Sam. He was always excited to see it coming, greedily sucking the bottle dry and begging for more!

Peter wrote that "*as newborn babes*" we should "*desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2). This word means to long for, to earnestly desire. Poor Sam didn't even have real milk, but he craved what I gave him. And he grew!

We are blessed to have the pure word of God. There is no suitable replacement for it! The question is, "Do we earnestly desire it?" Are we, like Sam, begging for more? Or are we content with an occasional snack?

Busy schedules challenge us to find time to read, much less study, the Bible. We make time to feed our physical bodies, knowing we can't function for long otherwise. Shouldn't we make time to nourish our souls daily with the Bread of Life? And supplement your personal reading and study with Bible classes and hearing the word proclaimed in the assembly.

"How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103).

Droopy Christians

There's an interesting passage of scripture found in Hebrews 12:12-13. It says, "Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed."

To better understand these verses, one must read the preceding text which explains the reason this Christian is all droopy. Having just been disciplined by the Lord, (v. 5-11) they are now deflated, with head and hands hanging low and standing on shaking knees. Just as a child who has been disciplined by a parent, this Christian has been humbled to the lowest degree.

As we grow and mature in Christ, there will be times when we discover an unrealized sin. God's word will convict us, and we'll understand that repentance is needed. We may become discouraged, now knowing that an addiction, habit, or relationship is not pleasing to God and that there must be a change in our lives in order to be in good standing with Him.

But as hard as some changes may be, it will be worth all of the pain. "*For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*" (Heb. 12:11) Just as the whimpering child learns from the spanking, we too must learn from the chastening of the Lord. The scriptures go on to tell us to lift ourselves up, brush ourselves off, and renew our spiritual vitality so that we can once again be fruit bearing and will pleasing to our God.

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

FEAR

False Evidence Appearing Real

Living Faith

Someone said, "Faith is the daring of the soul to go farther than it can see." The Christian life is guided by spiritual rather than physical sight. Paul writes, "*we walk by faith, not by sight*" (2 Cor. 5:7). Faith is elsewhere described in Scripture as "*the assurance of things hoped for [and] the conviction of things not seen*" (Heb. 11:1). Indeed, the Christian life is a walk of faith.

Inspiring examples of faith abound, encouraging us to trust in God even when human wisdom would have it otherwise. Human wisdom will not lead us beyond the present world. Jeremiah reminds us that it is "*not in a man who walks to direct his own steps*" (Jer. 10:23). Does that mean we should stop making decisions altogether? Of course not. What it means is that God must be the guiding force in our decisions. We must not turn a deaf ear to God's word in preference to listening to the advice of the world (cf. Prov. 14:12).

Faith in God is measured more by what we do than by what we say. It is never enough merely to profess our faith – we must live our faith. Faith is acting on God's instructions. "*Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*" (Rm. 10:17). If we really want to grow in faith, we must begin with the word of God.

Once we have heard the word of God, we must act upon it. Faith is not alive until it springs into action. In his lengthy discussion about genuine faith, James says, "*faith without works is dead*" (Jas. 2:26). We need a living faith, the kind of faith that expresses itself in heartfelt obedience to the will of the Lord. Paul expresses the importance of an obedient faith saying, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast*" (Eph. 2:8-9). We are saved by the grace of God. But, His grace is conditional. It must be accepted by faith – a faith that expresses itself in obedience to the word of God.

-- Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)