

Everyone Everywhere, Growing in Faith. Everyday Faith Event 2023 - Word

God wrote a book! Just think about how mind blowing that truth is. In our hands we can hold pages and pages of God! We can know his thoughts, words and heart. We can take it with us wherever we go. It is not as if the Bible is some historic account of God, like a biography of a distant figure from the past. No - the Bible is utterly unique because it is the only book where you actually encounter God himself - the living God, speaking to you directly. As the writer to the Hebrews reminds us, 'For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.' So when I open my Bible, I'm not to expect some academic study, or a nice piece of enchanting fiction, or an inspiring set of moral commands. No - when we open our Bibles, we should expect to meet the living God whose words will radically transform our lives. No wonder David in the psalms tells us that scripture is sweeter than honey from the comb and more precious than gold (Psalm 19). Indeed, John Piper is right to say, "Reading the Bible is one of the most important things we can do. It is more valuable than anything we own, sweeter than anything we've eaten, it is literally more important than breathing." So if we want our faith to grow, the Bible must be at the heart of our lives.

In this short reflection, I want to humbly consider two aspects to do with growing in faith through the word: firstly, how we go about growing in faith through the word, and secondly the different ways God promises to grow our faith through the word.

How often do you eat some bread? For most people it's daily. Sure there might be some of us embracing the latest "no bread" or "no carbs" diets, and others of us who have wheat intolerances. But for millennia, humanity has been nourished by daily eating bread. Bread à life. Jesus Christ wanted us to appreciate this truth. After forty days of fasting, when the devil tested him, Jesus proclaimed, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4). So as we consider how we go about growing our faith, we need to ask ourselves: am I daily feasting on the Bible? I might daily physically nourish myself with baguettes and bagels, but am I also daily spiritually nourishing myself by opening the Bible? Because Jesus says I cannot live on bread alone. The physical things the world offers me are not enough. If I want life to the full, the Bible needs to be at the heart of my day. That could mean a daily "quiet time" with the Lord - perhaps first thing every morning or last thing at night: reading his word, mulling it over and praying about what it says to me. It could mean plugging into some daily short podcast Bible reflections like the Lectio 365 App. Perhaps it might mean using some study notes, or meeting with a friend to listen to a sermon. Just as we all eat different types of loaf, we'll all have different ways of daily seeking to meet the living God in his word.

What might the result be of us daily feasting on the scriptures? What are the ways God promises to grow our faith through the word? Well, in 2 Timothy, Paul tells us that the scriptures are 'able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.' How incredible is that! God's word is the certain way that I am led to trust more and more in Jesus Christ, and so grow and grow in the redemption he provides. Not just that, reading the Bible grows my faith, because it thoroughly prepares me for the challenges of life. Later on in 2 Timothy, Paul says, 'all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.' If you like, the Bible is the sure-fire way of preparing to daily live a life of faith. It will highlight the ways we are failing to live for Christ. It will show us how to follow him more closely through life's celebrations and storms. It is the spiritual Swiss Army Knife we all need. No wonder our Lord and Saviour time and again quoted the scriptures throughout his ministry. Just consider what he said to the corrupt religious community occupying the temple? "It is written: my house shall..." If God on earth trusted in the scriptures having the power to transform and grow faith, then we can too! Indeed, that is my prayer - that we'd daily feast on the Bible and thus see our faith transformed by it.

Reflection by George Beverly

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