



April 2002

The words that I (Jesus) speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63)

This "teaching" newsletter goes to 120 families, not to convince anyone to think the way I do, but simply to share words of LIFE. It is a grand experiment for me as I seek to learn my own God-given ways to share LIFE. These words are from the Bible which is God's Word breathed by God through men who first scripted the words, and breathed by God through anyone now who receives them as LIFE.

Here are some of the reasons why I believe the Bible is God's perfect (inerrant) Word: *43 authors spanning 1500 years produced one amazing story...all authors received communication directly from God and Jesus, or from one of the original 12 disciples...100s of specific prophecies have come to pass...modern archeology affirms it historically true.* Knowing that the Bible is inerrant is vital, however even the Pharisees (the religious theologians of Jesus' day) believed this and they still totally missed the LIFE of Jesus before their very eyes! Why? They sought to find "life" in their own good efforts in following Scriptures...they didn't receive Jesus' words as LIFE.

The foundational reason why the Bible is indeed God's perfect Word is Jesus. Jesus endorsed the Old Testament Scriptures...He said that "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). And Jesus promised the New Testament Scriptures...He said, "The Holy Spirit will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26). Christ Himself IS the perfect Word of God (John 1:1)! And Jesus is the only true LIFE (John 14:6). So, the words of Jesus are LIFE breathed by the Holy Spirit (John 6:63)!!

This foundation sheds a much glorious light on LIFE. When I don't see biblical truths as LIFE, I strive to make "life" come out of my efforts to fulfill the truths (including commandments). That is the lie Adam fell for. However, when I do see biblical truths as LIFE (and what a beautiful sight that is becoming! ☺), then the words I receive from Christ are already alive in me...He breathes through me, so to speak ☺. His real LIFE in me is the source of Scriptures being fulfilled, not my efforts. As a result, Jesus enables me to be REAL and not RELIGIOUS.

Following is an excerpt from an article by Dudley Hall (www.sclm.org) that has been helpful to me, and I hope will be to you, too.

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40).

Some see scriptures as valuable history from which we can learn great life-lessons...not much more than a collection of moralistic stories and wise proverbs. Others see scriptures as a manual containing principles for successful decision-making. Others see it as a magical book that records the future as history already written. Still others see the scriptures as a book about a plan of salvation...and when someone buys into the proposition that God has given his Son to be a savior, they are considered "saved".

Certainly the scriptures contain history...as interpreted by the Holy Spirit. There is great wisdom in the principles given...but to many, righteousness is determined by a "touch not, taste not" mentality. The scriptures are prophetic, but the end of the prophecy is the revelation of the Son, not the next event on the world's political stage. The scriptures tell of the great salvation, but it is not in a proposition...it is all about a personal relationship with the Son of God who is Himself LIFE.

Those who cling to scriptures but never get to the abundant life of Jesus are deceived. All of God's words lead to the WORD...Jesus.

Here are just a few of the many ways I have recently witnessed LIFE.

- Several men were witnesses of this LIFE as they were moved to repair my and Joy's house gutters.
- LIFE was manifested in 6 people at a Grace Life Conference in Hendersonville April 12-13 as they testified of hope and love.
- I introduced six men at a prison chapel service on April 20 to John 6:63, and I then watched LIFE overflow them as they honestly and joyfully shared how true LIFE in Christ has come to them and as they prayed for all the other men in the prison.
- A single mother's tears from past hurts are being transformed to a countenance of joy because of LIFE being revealed in her.
- An excerpt from one of my newsletters is now posted on the website of EternityNow Ministries that provides excellent Bible studies to 10,000s of people around the world. The post is at www.eternitynow.org/5.htm?gibg0205-wemustbe.shtml, and more of my articles will be posted. On the back, I have included some practical guidelines for studying the Bible from this website.
- I spent many hours developing this newsletter...not to boast at all, but to testify of the LIFE that energizes me. It's not just an activity I try to do as a part of a ministry, but, by the grace of God, it is an extension of who I truly am (1 Corinthians 15:10)!

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Practical Bible Study Guidelines by EternityNow Ministries

Following are excerpts from articles from the website www.etsnow.org and are used by permission. The titles of the articles are noted in brackets. I have added the title for each guideline.

Grace is the FOUNDATION of Bible Study

To understand any scripture, we must understand God's grace. We avoid being carried about by diverse and strange doctrines by establishing our hearts with grace (Hebrews 13:9). When we fall from grace into self-righteousness, it is because we have lost touch with the message of the grace of God and have begun justifying ourselves based on our performance (Galatians 5:4). [*How Do I Renew My Mind?*]

When we read the Bible with the opinion that we must earn God's favor by our performance, we've stopped reading the Bible and started using it to support our own self-righteous assumptions. We've rejected the obedience of Jesus, being more satisfied with our own (Romans 5:18). [*A Little Bit of Knowledge*]

The Gospel of Redemption with a New Identity in Christ is the FOCUS of Bible Study

When studying the Bible, it's essential to stay focused on the right thing. How can you guard your mind from confusion? The starting point is to trust God and to trust His word. We must find out what Scripture itself focuses on as the goal, and adjust our vision accordingly. The best tool for interpreting the Bible is the Bible itself (2 Timothy 3:16).

The apostle Paul understood the importance of staying focused on the right goal. He always began his letters by introducing himself as a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, set apart for the gospel of God (Romans 1:1). He focused his identity on who he was in Christ and his agenda on promoting of the good news about Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:2-4).

The Person of Jesus Christ is the central theme of all Scripture. We always teach people to see the importance of understanding any portion of Scripture within the context of the redemptive work of Christ. This way, when people see the Bible's condemnation of sin, they understand it within the context of Jesus' victory over sin. For example, have you noticed the Bible never identifies you as a "sinner saved by grace?" In every case, the New Testament describes you as a saint saved by grace. Any Christian whose relationship with God isn't characterized by love, affirmation, and acceptance is truly suffering. [*Stay Focused on Your Hope*]

Interpretation based on Context is the KEY for Bible Study

Do you want to know what the Bible says or what people think about the Bible? The text itself is the key to applying scripture in ways that are meaningful. For example, let's read one popular verse and apply its context:

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him," (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Most of us are conditioned to think of heaven immediately when we hear this verse. If we apply the text to the context, we see that the promise has nothing to do with heaven. The revelation that Paul is referring to comes with the hearing of the gospel (read this from verse one). We don't have to wait until we get to heaven for this glorious revelation. The kingdom of heaven is upon you! This verse is saying (implicitly) that the gospel is even more wonderful than any of us could ever have imagined. [*Scripture Con Carne*]

Revelation of Life in Christ is the REASON for Bible Study

The Bible is the word about the Word. Don't stop at the verse -- believe it and let it lead you to real life in Jesus Christ. [*The Bible Says It -- I Believe It!*]

GRACE NOTE

That is the way to look at the Scriptures and understand the thoughts of God...to see in them the face of love, shining through and through; **not ideas, nor doctrines, but Jesus Himself as the Life and Source and sustaining Presence of all our life.**

(A.B. Simpson -- London, 1885)

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