

Part Two: Feed People's Souls

Scripture Reading: I Peter 1:3-25

I. **The Word of the Gospel**

I Peter 1:23-25 tells us that we were born again by the Word of God. Even as God is eternal, so His word is divinely powerful and is of everlasting meaning. Some think that the Scriptures are too old and outdated to be relevant to us. However, Peter is telling us that the Scriptures, when rightly handled, are of eternal usefulness because God's Word reveals the Gospel of Jesus Christ to us (John 5:37-47; Luke 24:44-48; Romans 1:1-5, 3:19-24, 16:25-27; I Timothy 1:3-11; I Peter 1:10-12, 23-25 cp. I John 5:10). This is the timeless, perpetual need of every person that ever has or ever will live. It is not merely the Scriptures, but the "Gospel-method" of interpreting the Scriptures (I Peter 1:25) that must be used to feed people's souls (I Corinthians 1:18-24, 2:1-5; II Corinthians 4:3-6; Ephesians 3:1-11, 4:20-21; Colossians 2:1-8). The following thoughts should help you to see that the entire Bible is a book about Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

- Moses wrote of Christ (John 5:46; Deuteronomy 18:15, 17-19). Can you find Christ in the following passages? — Genesis 3:15, 12:1-3, 22:18, 26:4, 49:10; Exodus 12:21-23; Numbers 21:4-9.
- The Prophets were led by the Spirit of Christ (I Peter 1:10-12). Consider a few of the prophecies: Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7, 40:5, 10-11, 50:6, 52:13-53:12; 61:1-3; Micah 5:2, 7:18-20; Daniel 9:24-26; Zechariah 12:10, 13:6-7; Malachi 3:1, 4:2.
- The Psalms are called "The Word of Christ" (Colossians 3:16). David, King and Psalmist of Israel, is also considered a prophet (II Samuel 23:1-2; Acts 2:25-36, 13:26-41). The Gospel of Christ can be found in the book of Psalms (Psalm 2; 16:8-10; 22; 69; 110; 118:22-23; 89:19-37 cp. 132:11).

A. **Salvation must be preached.**

Using the Bible just for ethical debates, practical instructions and general encouragement is insufficient for meeting the needs of the human soul. A personal relationship with God through Christ must be established (Romans 1:14-18, 10:1-4, 10:9-17, 5:1 cp. Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11). See also Mark 16:15; Timothy 2:8-10; I Corinthians 9:16 cp. Ezekiel 33:1-11; Isaiah 55:1-11.

B. **Scriptures must be used skillfully.**

See II Timothy 2:15. Your good example; your love and compassion and your personal testimony must be backed-up by the clear teaching of the Gospel message (Philippians 2:14-16). When you diligently work on the proper understanding of Scripture, you now have equipped yourself for spiritual warfare, so that you can deliver others from eternal death (Ephesians 6:15-17; James 5:19-20).

The Word of the Gospel — Continued

C. Selected Scriptures for Example.

Many times you can only interject a helpful thought into a conversation. When you are trying to just get a Gospel concept started, you can only use one or two verses. Also, if you are trying to memorize Scripture, it is good to start with something smaller. Here are some great verses to memorize and use: John 1:29; 3:3,16,36; 5:24; 8:12; 10:11,27,29; 11:25-26; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5; I John 5:12. Please note the series of verses, commonly known as "The Romans Road": Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10, 13; 5:1; 8:1, 38-39.

After you learn these verses, then try to get yourself familiar with the whole chapter in which they are located, so that you understand the context and can explain them more fully (Romans chapters 3-8 is especially rich). Sometimes the verse is in the middle of a good story that you could tell (The verses from John's Gospel will provide many stories). Let's focus on three chapters of Scripture. We'll call them "The Three Threes:" **John 3, Romans 3, and Philippians 3.**

John chapter 3:1-21 shows the story of a religious man, who is even a teacher and leader, who needs to know that he **must be born again**. Religion cannot save!

The reference to water in **verse 5** is certainly not talking about baptism (*think about the symbolism of water in John 2:1-11 and 4:5-15: it is not the water of baptism*). The phrase, "born of water and of the Spirit" is descriptive of the work of God's Spirit and the Scriptures in producing the new birth (Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:22-23; Ephesians 5:25-26).

The example of wind in **verse 8** shows that the new birth is the sovereign and mysterious work of the Holy Spirit. Man cannot reduce it to some religious system or ceremony and manage it.

Verses 9-15 shows that that you can have a great knowledge of Scripture and still not understand Christ and the Gospel. **Verse 14** (Numbers 21:4-9) provides the background for a great Gospel concept: God saves only through faith.

Verse 16-18 show that what you think about Christ is the vital question with eternal consequences.

Verses 19-21 help us understand that heaven and hell are not the only issues. Salvation is designed of God to deliver us from sin. The new birth will produce a change of life (Ephesians 2:10; II Corinthians 5:17). Truth is not just something you believe. It is something you do.