

Week 9
Home Page Summaries, Days 2-5

Day 2

God's Identity

Whose Mold Are You In?

An old parenting adage says that the dangerous thing you warn your child against is probably what she'll try next. Why do we insist on being burned in order to learn about heat? In Leviticus 18:1-5 (p. xxx) you'll read about God's effort to protect the Israelites from being burned spiritually. All they had to do was trust his word.

Day 3

My Identity

Eating Abstract Bread

The puzzled look on a child's face when hearing about an abstract concept is the same look Jesus' disciples gave him on occasion. It happened more than once when Jesus presented the concept of spiritual food versus the physical food they were used to. But in John 6:63 (p. xxx) the disciples discover that spiritual food is where real life is.

Day 4

Impact

How To Be Right With God

Perhaps no question occupies the human conscience more than how to be right with God. Two men, 3,500 years apart, discovered the same answer in totally different ways. But in both cases, they discovered there was nothing they could do to be right with God; yet they still were declared righteous. Discover how in Romans 1:16-17 (p. xxx).

Day 5

Implication

Rooted In the Word

In the arid environments of the land of the Bible, water was the key to physical survival. No person or animal could live long without it. Because it was a symbol of life, a psalmist used water to illustrate the key to spiritual survival. In Psalm 1:1-3 (p. xxx), you will discover what the life-sustaining key to the spiritual life is.

Week 9, Day 1
Deuteronomy 32:45-47
361 words

The Promise
The Link to Life

Deuteronomy 32:45-47 Often one thing serves as a bridge to get from where we are to where we want to be. Say a college student desires an invitation into an honor society, and all that stands between him and that goal is his final grade on a critical exam. Or perhaps a newly formed company is teetering on the brink of financial ruin. Securing a key contract will prevent their bankruptcy. These scenarios, some large and some small, occur in all of our lives daily. Most are very inconsequential—there is more than one way, in other words, to achieve the desired goal. Others are totally dependent on one, and only one, event coming to pass.

All human beings share one critical link, one defining reality that stands between success and failure both in time and for eternity. It is not one of the inconsequential “either/or” kinds of links. It is THE most important “if/then” link that will confront any person in life. It was first expressed by God through Moses to the Israelites. God told Israel, “IF you will obey the words that I have given you (the Law, or the Covenant), THEN you will live. IF you don’t obey them, THEN you will not live.” Therefore, the defining variable in the Israelites’ equation for life was obedience to God’s word as expressed through the Law. In fact, life was so bound to the keeping of the Law that Moses told the Israelites, “. . . (the words of this law) are your life” (Deuteronomy 33:8). Moses had just told the Israelites that the Lord was their life (Deuteronomy 30:20), and because the Lord and his word are inseparable, his word is their life as well (Deuteronomy 32:47). Life was literally a choice for them: embrace God’s words and live; ignore God’s words and die.

While the Mosaic Law is no longer the form of God’s word that is the believer’s link to life, God’s words are no less the key. Christ, the Living Word, came to bring life (John 10:10), and it is through his words that we gain it (John 15:7). Life is still a choice—now and for eternity.

God’s Promise to You: “When you obey my word, you choose life.”

Week 9, Day 2
Leviticus 18:1-5
359 words

God's Identity Whose Mold Are You In?

Leviticus 18:1-5 While there are many differences between Israel's spiritual experience in the Old Testament and that of the church in the New Testament, here is an important one: the church is made up of people who become believers *after* being part of a pagan culture. Believers in Christ come out of a pagan, non-Christian life and learn to live as Christians. On the other hand, Israel was prepared by God to move into a pagan environment *as* believers. They were taken out of Egypt and then instructed by God in the desert before moving in and confronting a very pagan and immoral group of tribes in the Promised Land.

The famous rendering of Romans 12:2 by the J.B. Philips New Testament—"Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold"—was perfect for the Christians in Rome. They were surrounded by a pagan culture, susceptible to the pressure all around them to revert to their pre-Christian lifestyle. Israel, however, was about to move from the desert into an arena (Canaan) where they would encounter many vile practices—especially in the realm of sexual immorality and perversion. God's basic instruction to his chosen people in Leviticus 18 was this: "When you enter Canaan, your jaws are going to drop. You're not going to believe some of their practices. They may look enticing, but they are a death trap. If you copy the Canaanite lifestyle and get involved in their perversion, you will disintegrate as a people. Trust me on this; I am the LORD. If you keep what I am about to tell you, you will live. If you do not, you will perish."

The key element for the Israelites was "trust." It was not necessary for them to experience sin in order to discover that God's words bring life. Nor is it necessary for us. If we will take God at his word—"the man who obeys [my words] will live"—then we will never experience the heartache that comes from being squeezed into the world's mold. Unlike Israel, we are already living in the midst of the world. Obeying God's word will keep us from dying spiritually in it.

God's Promise to You: "Obey my words and you will be spared the world's heartache."

Week 9, Day 3
John 6:63
361 words

My Identity Eating Abstract Bread

John 6:63 Children can understand their own age: “Today is one day. When you live 365 days like today, that’s one year. And when you do that five times, you’re five years old! Got it?” But when you don your professorial hat and try to explain to a child that God doesn’t have an age, that he’s always existed, that he wasn’t born, that he lives in eternity—you stop when you realize the child is looking at you like a puppy with its head cocked to one side. Moving from the concrete to the abstract is difficult for children—even spiritual children, like Jesus’ disciples.

As Jews, the disciples were thoroughly versed in the Old Testament accounts of the miracle of manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16). Though it was indeed a miracle, it was still concrete; the Jews could touch and eat the bread that Moses provided from heaven. But when Jesus began talking to them about “food that endures to eternal life,” (John 6:27) neither the disciples nor the Jewish crowds understood. And when he referred to himself as the “bread of life,” they were underwhelmed. After all, Moses had supplied bread for hundreds of thousands of people for 40 years; Jesus had done it once for 5,000. Moses’ bread was truly from heaven; Jesus’ was ordinary bread. They were still focused on the concrete, and it only got worse.

When Jesus began talking to them about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, many of the Jews got offended and left. This was heretical language for a Jew! Ultimately, Jesus had to remind the disciples that physical, fleshly things have no eternal importance; it is only through the Spirit that true life is found. The words he was speaking were “spirit” and needed to be “spiritually discerned,” as the Apostle Paul would say years later (1 Corinthians 2:14). Physical bread sustains physical life, but only spiritual bread (words of truth) can sustain spiritual life.

As fleshly people who have become spiritual children, we must learn to comprehend spiritual words in order to obtain spiritual life. In other words, do we live to eat or do we eat to live?

God’s Promise to You: “If you will consume my words, you will never be hungry again.”

Week 9, Day 4
Romans 1:16-17
352 words

Impact
How To Be Right With God

Romans 1:16-17 Separated by 3,500 years and radically different circumstances, two great men of faith reached the same conclusion about how to be “right” before God. Standing midway between them was the Apostle Paul whose story about the first one became an object lesson for the second one.

First in line was the father of faith, Abraham. Around 2,000 BC, God told Abraham that he would be the father of a nation as numerous as the sand on the seashore and the stars in the sky. God made a covenant with Abraham which guaranteed the fulfillment of this promise. Though Abraham did not even have any children when the promise was made, he took God at his word. When he “believed the LORD” (Genesis 15:6), his faith secured his righteousness before God, and he became the father of all who believe God’s word (Romans 4:11). Abraham did nothing to earn his acceptance by God; he simply believed what God said.

Now fast forward to 87 AD when the Apostle Paul, in Romans 4, uses Abraham’s story to illustrate the profound truth that he has stated in Romans 1:16-17: Revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ is a righteousness that can only come by faith—the same faith that Abraham exercised. Fast forward again to 1519 when an Augustinian monk in Germany named Martin Luther is agonizing over how to attain the righteousness before God that he reads about in Romans. He meditates on Romans 1:17 continually until he finally sees that righteousness is a gift from God that comes by faith. It is the word of God, the gospel, which reveals the gift of righteousness. “All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates,” Luther wrote. The light and life of the word had dawned in his heart.

The word of God in the gospel—that Christ died as a sacrifice for sin to secure righteousness for all who believe—was the same for Abraham, for Paul, and for Martin Luther. Has that same faith, by which the righteous live, become your faith as well?

God’s Promise to You: “New life requires only one thing: Faith in my promises.”

Week 9, Day 5
Psalm 1:1-3
358 words

Implication
Rooted In the Word

Psalm 1:1-3 Between 50 and 90 percent of the weight of living things is made up of water. Imagine yourself reduced in weight by 70%; as if all water were removed from your body. Imagine the huge tree in your yard reduced in weight by the same percent. Imagine all living things around you reduced in weight and size by 50 to 90 percent and you get a graphic image of the importance of water to life. Another way to picture our dependence on water is to realize that, in the United States, the average daily consumption of water per person is 100 gallons.

While water is precious to those living in the developed nations of the world, consider how much more precious it was in the arid, desert regions of the Old Testament. There, water represented life. To go without water for very long would result in certain death. The most valuable pieces of property in the Biblical world were those having wells or springs. People and animals could not survive the desert heat without consistent and abundant supplies of water.

Given that reality, it is all the more significant that the author of Psalm 1 uses life-giving water as a metaphor for the word of God. Just as water provides life to a tree, causing it to have verdant foliage and luscious fruit in season, so the word of God bears fruit in the life of the one who drinks deeply of it. As the roots of the tree are continually absorbing moisture from the soil, so there must be constant meditation on the word of God. It must provide the same delight and refreshment as a skin of cool water would to a weary traveler. And if one chooses not to consume the word of God—by listening to the words of the wicked, going in the direction of sinners, or fellowshiping with mockers—he or she will dry up and be blown away like chaff.

Are you thirsty? Ready to bear fruit for God? Then drink deeply of the word of God, sinking your roots into his truth. And get ready to gain some spiritual weight!

God's Promise to You: "Your spiritual vitality comes and goes with your consumption of my word."