

“Got Milk? -
 “Fighting Spiritually Anorexia”
 1 Peter 1:22-2:3
 October 22, 2006

Anorexia is a sad and deadly disease.

It is a prolonged loss of appetite.

The inability to eat may lead to weight loss and contribute to a wasting away of the muscles as the body eats itself.

It comes from inadequate consumption resulting in fatigue and weakness.

The picture I show you illustrates this sad disease and is somewhat shocking in its extreme.



Now I want you to think not of your physical body but your soul.

What do the results of **spiritual** anorexia look like?

Do the words “weakness, atrophy, and fatigue apply?

Last week from our study of 1 Peter we saw that some of the attitudes and actions to which we are often tempted are relationship-destroying attitudes: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander.

Is it not also likely that those negative characteristics are symptoms of spiritual anorexia?

From 1 Peter we have already seen that in light of our new relationship with God, a relationship based on his grace and guarded by his power, we have a living hope and an inheritance that can never fade away.

We have also seen that, due to this new relationship we have with God, we are called to imitate God in our lives – “be holy for I am holy.”

The first command God gives in this call to holy living is, “Love one another deeply from the heart.”

In the context I tried to demonstrate that this command is not only to love the lovely, but maybe especially a command to love those fellow Christians who offend us, who hurt us.

I suggested that the command is given with two things to remember and two things to do.

- First we are to remember that we already made the decision to follow Jesus when we first trusted him, therefore whether we will love one another from the heart has already been decided.
- Secondly, we are to remember that we have been born again – God’s life has been poured into us so that we can think and act like Jesus.

Until God gives us new life, we are like John Bunyon in his little poem:

Run, John, run, the law commands
But gives us neither feet nor hands,

But when God regenerates, when he gives life, new possibilities exist:

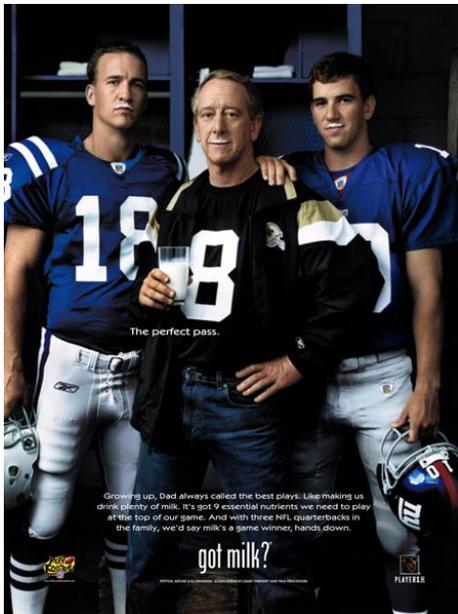
Far better news the gospel brings:
It bids us fly and gives us wings.

And so with new-life-ability we are called on to do two things:

- Rid ourselves of those attitudes and actions, that we looked at last week, that destroy our relationships with others.
- And we are to “crave pure spiritual milk (God’s Word) so that by it we may grow up in our salvation.”

Instead of anorexia, the American Dairy Association suggests that their product makes for healthy bodies.

So the Manning NFL stars ask, “Got Milk?”



So the theme today is the role and the importance of the Word of God in our lives.

I want you to see and hear how Peter says it in 1 Peter 1:22-2:3

Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

1:22-2:3 "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. ²³ For you have been **born again**, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, **through the** living and enduring **word of God**. ²⁴ For,

"All men are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,
^{1PE 1:25} but the **word** of the Lord stands forever."

And this is the **word** that was preached to you.

^{1PE 2:1} Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ² Like newborn babies, **crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,** ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."

Very simply stated, the Word of the Lord is essential in our becoming Christians and living as Christians.

1:23 – You’ve been born again through the Word of God.

2:2 – By it you may grow up in your salvation.

Peter mixes metaphors and similes throughout this passage: “born again,” “seed,” “grass and flowers,” and milk.

He starts his thought with birth and ends it with babies.

In between he writes of seeds and plants – even quoting from the OT.

So first of all, what is the role of the Word of God in our being born again – the beginning of our Christian life?

1:23 “You have been born again...through the living and enduring word of God.”

The Word of God is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to bring about our new birth.

When Jesus was describing new birth to Nicodemus he said in John 3:6 “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”

In other words, the Spirit of God is the one who brings about our new birth.

God is the one who creates and he does so with his word.

In Genesis, God speaks and things come into existence.

In Isaiah 55:11 it is God’s word that accomplishes what he desires:

“so is my word that goes out from my mouth:

It will not return to me empty,

but will accomplish what I desire

and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

It is necessary to digress for a minute and clarify what is meant by the Word of God.

The Word of God is the truth about God, about us as lost and dying, about Jesus as God in human flesh, about his sacrificial and substitutionary death for us, about his offer of forgiveness and an everlasting relationship with God by grace through faith.

Or in fewer words – the Word is the Gospel, the good news about God and his grace.

You might say, “I thought the Bible was the word of God.”
You are right but the Word of God is more than the Bible.

Jesus is the Word of God – he was and is the embodiment of truth and the NT writers saw that with their own eyes and recorded it.

John 1:14 “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory.”

The Bible teaches us that something of God is seen in creation. The Psalmist David and the Apostle Paul alike say that we can know that God exists and that he is powerful by just observing the created universe (Psalm 19 and Romans 1) **but we can't know about his saving grace apart from the Bible.**

But it is the Bible that reveals Jesus to us today and it is the Bible that makes sense of all else that we see about God in creation and life.

So while the Word of God is more extensive than the Bible, the Bible is the Word of God.

We were not with Israel at the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and we were not with the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus.

The Bible is God's means of communicating himself to us today.

So the Bible is not just history or words about God.

In fact it is called the **Word of God** because it is living and dynamic; it is God-breathed, God's creating Word.

There is power in the Word of God because it is the voice, the Word of **God**.

Don't separate God from his Word.

God is actively revealing himself through his Word, and doing so today.

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is living 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.”

Yes, the Bible is words, sentences, paragraphs and books but is living because it is the expression of God himself.

Edmond Hiebert wrote, “The true aim of Bible study is never a mere mastery of its contents but a transforming experience with the Lord who reveals himself in his Word.”(D. Edmond Hiebert, *First Peter*, 116)

Now we come back to the issue of God recreating us, giving us new birth, by his Word.

In ways that we don't fully understand, the Holy Spirit takes the truth about God, the Gospel, the Word of God, and implants it in our hearts so that we respond by believing.

That's why Paul could write in Romans 10:8-15 "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved... Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

Two women hear the same good news about God but only one responds in faith. Why?

In the one, God's Spirit implants the Word so that she can believe.

That's also why the Apostle Paul would write in Romans 1:16 “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”

And that is why we proclaim the Word of God, the Gospel, to all who will listen.

Robert Leighton, whom I've quoted before writes, "Most of us esteem the preaching of the Word as a transient discourse that amuses us (or bores us) for a few minutes. We look for no more, and therefore we find no more... We receive the Word of God not as the immortal seed of our regeneration, as the engrafted word that is able to save our souls. Oh! Learn to reverence this holy and happy ordinance of God, this word of life, and know that they who are not regenerated, and so saved by it, shall be judged by it." (Leighton, 108)

But Peter doesn't just say that the Word of God is essential to our new birth, he also says something about the Word of God that ought to confirm the hope we have in God.

He says that the Word of God is imperishable, living and enduring.

In this verse, the Word of God is likened to a seed – and the word he uses is the one from which we get the English word "spore," as in plant spores.

I would have expected Peter to liken the Word of God to sperm since he is talking about new birth, but because he plans to next contrast the Word of God to plants and flowers, he switches metaphors.

Physical seeds produce grass and flowers but this seed produces something far more enduring – eternally enduring.

Think of it this way: Peter is writing to people who have become Christians in a culture hostile to their faith.

The Roman Empire is mighty beyond description and openly opposed to Christianity.

To stand against the culture seems hopeless.

But Peter, quoting from Isaiah, says I want you to realize that the culture around you is like grass and flowers – it will wither and fall.

But the Word of God in you, that word implanted by the Spirit that has brought forth new birth in you, will never fail.

Your hope in God instead of the culture is well placed.

One man wrote, “The contrast between what is transitory and what is permanent embodied in the quotation would be highly appropriate for a beleaguered community of Christians facing what gave appearance of being the permanent, even eternal, power and glory of the Roman Empire. In such a situation, the announcement that the glitter, pomp, and power of the Roman culture was as grass when compared to God’s eternal word spoken in Jesus Christ, available through the gospel preached to and accepted by the Christians of Asia Minor, would give them courage to hold fast to the latter while rejecting the former: Even the hostility of that overwhelming power becomes more bearable when its ultimately transitory nature is revealed and accepted.” (Paul Achtemeier in Jobes, 129)

If you are facing a choice of loyalties – this life with all it offers or the life of God – remember that only one of them lasts forever – and that is the powerful, life-giving Word of God that has been implanted in you!

But not only is the Word of God essential in our becoming Christians but it is also essential in our living as Christians.

God, through Peter, commands, 1 Peter 2:2 “Crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”

Peter is saying, I want you to have an **intense desire** for the truth about God.

Certainly in the context, “pure spiritual milk” is equated with the Word of God.

Or in other words, I want you to get to know God and his grace.

It’s why Paul would write, Colossians 1:9-10 “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and **asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding**. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, **growing** in the knowledge of God.”

And again in Colossians 3:16 “Let the **word** of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...”

Like Paul, Peter said the Word of God is how we grow up in our salvation.

As most of you probably know, salvation is a broad term that covers the whole of the Christian experience:

- We have **been** saved - Ephesians 2:8 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...”
- We are **being** saved - Philippians 2:12-13 “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.
- We **will** be saved - 1 Peter 1:5 “shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

We tend to emphasize the completed aspect of our salvation but in 1 Peter 2:2 it is the on-going process of our salvation that is being emphasized – the transformation of our character.

Colossians 1:28 “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

Or as Paul said it to the Galatians 4:19 “I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.”

1 Peter 2:2 “Crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”

And how important is this growth in the knowledge of God?

God says, Hebrews 12:14 “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

The Bible teaches that spiritual growth is necessary for eventual salvation when Christ comes again.

The evidence of true spiritual life is spiritual growth.

In his next letter Peter would say it this way, 2 Peter 1:5-11 “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-

control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Those who believe “once saved, always saved” get nervous around such verses, but they shouldn’t.

What God emphasizes is that those whom God saves, he really saves; real conversion results in real change.

Those who **are** saved will **keep on being saved**, growing, until the day they **will** be saved, when Jesus comes again.

And so Peter commands, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

Until very recently, if my grandson Ben had even a faint hint of hunger he changed into a very focused, single-minded person, intent on one thing only – milk!

An infant doesn’t need to be told to desire milk.

But Christians do need to be commanded to desire the sustaining nourishment of Jesus by his Word.

Paul wrote, 1 Timothy 4:13-16 “Until I come, **devote** yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching... Be diligent in these matters; give yourself **wholly** to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Joshua 1:8 “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.

The Bible is the best-selling book in the history of the world?

The 1830s McGuffey Readers sold 62 million.

The 1940s Benjamin Spock's book sold 50 million.

The 1950s Chairman Mao's quotations sold 900 million.

The 1990s John Grisham's books sold 100 million.

Tom Clancey, Harry Potter, Left Behind, and The Purpose Driven Life have all sold millions.

But the Bible sells at the rate of 100 million every year.

One British newspaper read, "Forget modern novelists and TV tie-ins, the Bible is the best-selling book every year. If sales of the Bible were included in best-seller lists, it would be a rare week when anything else would achieve a look in. It is wonderful, weird ... that in this godless age... this one book should go on selling, every month." (British TIMES newspaper)

But is it also true that the Bible is the most unread book?

How can that be?

Don't we believe our God?

Mark 4:4 "Jesus said, "It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

Every human being is spiritual and your spirit is being shaped.

What or who is shaping it?

We care what little children watch on television or in movies.

We select the books we want them to read.

We don't just want them to know more but we want them to be certain kind of people; we know that what goes in shapes them.

Not only children are being shaped but adults as well – what is shaping you?

What is forming your opinions, your beliefs, and subsequently your actions?

You have a worldview - a set of presuppositions, of assumptions, on which you make your everyday decisions.

You feel happy, sad, delighted or depressed based on your assumptions about life.

What shapes those presuppositions; what shapes your worldview?

Art Farnsley is a researcher with the Center for Study of Religion and American Culture at Indiana University.

He recently wrote of his experience of talking to people over the past 20 years.

He discovered that his subjects overwhelmingly believe the Bible is God's word-for-word revelation.

They believe in Adam and Eve, in the virgin birth of Jesus and his resurrection.

When asked if they read the Bible, less than 20% did.

Farnsley writes, "It appears...they believe the Bible in a general sense – they think believing it is the right thing to do –but they do not know much about what is in it, because they neither read it or pay attention to others who do. When I asked whether their religious beliefs shaped (them), most assured me they did." (Arthur Farnsley II, *Flea Market Believers*, Christianity Today, October 2006, p114)

But Farnsley went on to discover that their views on social, personal, economic and political issues were the same as the culture around them.

Has your worldview, your presuppositions and assumptions, been shaped by the Word of God or by the culture?

What is really real, ultimately real, eternally real – the material universe or God?

The Word of God says, Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God!"
Acts 17:28 "For in him we live and move and have our being."

Where does life come from and is it chaotic or orderly; is their purpose or is it all just chance?

Colossians 1:16-17 "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth... all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

What is a human being: a biological accident or made in the image of God?

Genesis 1:26 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

How do we know right from wrong and can we; are ethics based simply on consensus or on some objective basis?

Deuteronomy 32:47 "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you--they are your life.

What is the meaning of human history and my history?

1 Corinthians 15:24 "Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

That's a worldview shaped by the Word of God.

Your worldview affects everyday life:

Is work a necessary evil or a gift from God?

Is life about personal enjoyment and fulfillment or about God's Kingdom and glory?

Is truth simply what works or is truth God and his word whether it seems to work or not?

Is forgiveness conditional, if the person deserves it, or is forgiveness unconditional, based on my choice to forgive?

Is love something you earn or something you give?

Is success better jobs, bigger houses, farther vacations, and more toys or is success faithfulness to God's calling on my life?

If you have your health you have everything or if you have God you have everything?

The Psalmist said in Psalm 119:11 “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

It is the Word of God, fresh in our minds; available to influence our thinking that makes a difference.

Peter said we are to love one another deeply from the heart.

The Word of God aids us.

Ephesians 4:29 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 1

Peter 2:1 “Put off malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander.

Philippians 2:4 “Put the interests of others ahead of your own.

Exodus 20:16 “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

Are you drinking in the Word of God?

It is no wonder that many who call themselves Christians live unchristian lives – they are spiritually anorexic.

Their spiritual intake is maybe a sermon every three or four weeks, and a fast-food devotional from some on-line service.

Is craving pure spiritual milk important?

It seems to me that it is life or death; either grow up in your salvation or suffer spiritual anorexia.

“New times demand new companions who share in the new situation. So it is with Christians. New creatures born of God’s own creative word, Christians are to cling to one another as to members of their own family. That is what the church is meant to be. That fellowship alone abides, though all else fails. The author returns to the first metaphor: newborn babes. Abandoning the evil and futile practices of their former lives, Christians are now to seek, indeed yearn for, that living and abiding word of God that conveys his love and his kindness in the same way a baby yearns for its mother’s milk. That nourishment, that word, is what sustains the Christians in their new life; it alone sustains them, and it is all they need.” (Paul Achtemeier in Harper’s

Bible Commentary, 1 Peter)

OTHER NOTES:

“Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

You have experienced (“tasted” is not only OT language but it fits the metaphor of drinking milk) the goodness of the Lord in your redemption – that first experience of sins forgiven and the freedom you felt.

“Now that (“if” NASB) you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

They had become Christians; they knew the sweetness of forgiveness and assurance of life and God’s presence.

This came with their new relationship with God when they were born again by the Word (1:23).

This is not a moralism, but an appeal to what they’ve already experienced and how good it was – surely you want more!

Psalm 34:8 “Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

I love thy word! See David Psalm 119

A young woman reads her lover’s letter over and over again.

In it she hears him, she learns about him, she delights in him.

Now that I’ve been born again the Word teaches me, shapes me into his likeness. Before, the Word was condemnation, now it is life.

We love the Word because it testifies of Him.

It is the “mirror” that reflects Christ to us.

Christ is the exact representation of the Father and the Word is the written representation of Christ.

In all of these verses the Bible is spoken of as the Lord’s, as, indeed all through the Psalm. Who is the author of Scripture? God. What is the subject of Scripture? God; it was not fit that any should write of God, but God himself. What is the end of Scripture? God. Why was the Scripture written, but that we might everlastingly enjoy the blessed God? As Caesar wrote his own commentaries, so God, when there was none above him of whom he could write, he wrote of himself; by histories, laws, prophecies, and promises, and many other doctrines, hath he sent himself forth to be the Creator, Preserver,

Deliverer...” (Thomas Manton in Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, VI, 235)

“Scripture is not only a place where we find ourselves encountered by God, but a place where God probes the nature of our relationships with others.” (Robert Mulholland Jr, *Shaped by the Word*, 30)
The test of our Christ-likeness is in our relationship with others.

“Once you have begun to grow in holiness so that you have a genuine affection for one another, make you love for each other earnest, deep, and strong.’ This is Peter’s first specific application of the general command to holiness in verses 13-21. It is a reminder that one of the first marks of genuine growth in holiness in individuals and in churches is earnest love for fellow Christians. It also give encouragement that human personalities, far from being immutably fixed early in life, can be dramatically and permanently changed through the power of the gospel.” (Grudem, Tyndale, 1 Peter, 89-90)

How does spiritual maturity come about?

Many ways but primarily through the Word.

Suffering only produces maturity if it is shaped by the truth of Jesus in the Word.

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, Worship, Fellowship, etc only take on proper meaning and power when combined with the Spirit through his Word.

1 Peter 2:1-3 “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. ² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual (logikon – logical, spiritual Rom 12:1-2, from logos – word) milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that (“if” NASB) you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

“Crave pure spiritual milk”

This is an active seeking not just a passive reception.

“Crave” an intense personal desire” (Grudem, Tyndale, 1 Peter, 94)

Crave unadulterated spiritual teaching – the Word of God, read, preached, taught, meditated on, lived out, etc.

“Crave” – fervently desire, long intensely for, always be thirst for, hunger for,

Philippians 1:8 “God can testify how **I long for** all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Pure –the opposite of “deceit/guile of 2:1) –consistent with the word of truth (not deceit).

“spiritual” – logikon reason, of the word, spiritual,

“spiritual” milk or milk of the “word”

Logos means word, logic, reason, rationality or spiritual.

Logikon is the form of the word logos that is used here.

“Milk” The written word of God heard, read and preached and lived out in the lives around us.

James 1:18,21 “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created...Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

1 Peter 1:9 “for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.