



+ **YOU**

Spring 2024
Being an Authentic Church

Sermon Title: God's Word: The Catalyst for Authentic Worship

To be used with Session 4: Worshiping God

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-3

Connection with Bible Study: To complement the Bible study "Worshiping God," this sermon will look at the apostle Peter's quotation and application of Psalm 34:8a, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." In this section of the psalm (vv. 8-10), David's call to worship focused on the general goodness of God. Centuries later Peter borrowed the psalmist's metaphor of "tasting" the goodness of God to help emphasize a specific aspect of His goodness, namely, His "living and enduring word" (1:23). The sermon that follows applies the apostle's teaching in this passage to the worship of the church. When it comes to worshiping God, the Bible (God's written Word) is essential.

Introduction: In every context of Christian worship—be it personal, family, or the corporate worship of the local church—the prime catalyst is the Holy Spirit applying the written Word of God to the hearts of the worshipers. In other words, true worship can only occur as God reveals the glory of His person and works through His Word. The true worshipers of God, as Peter identified them in our text, are those whose ongoing pattern of living is to "desire the pure milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2). Peter strategically positioned this command ("desire" is an imperative verb) at the center of the passage and then surrounded it with instructions for how to obey it.

1. Remember the source of your faithfulness (1 Pet. 2:1a, 2b).

The word "therefore" signals Peter's application of the preceding chapter. We are people of *the* faith "through the living and enduring word of God" (1:23; cf. Rom. 10:17). It was through God's Word, "the gospel that was proclaimed" to us, that we were saved (1:25). As we move into chapter two, Peter reminded us that God's Word continues to be the source of our life of faithfulness to God, which is the very definition of true worship. "Therefore," Peter commands us, "desire (*epipotheō*, have an insatiable craving for) the pure milk of [God's] word, so that you may grow up into your salvation" (2:2). The same word is used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) in Psalm 42:1. "As a deer longs for (yearns for) flowing streams, so I long for you, God." We must yearn for God. Our spiritual growth and pure worship depend upon it.

2. Reject the sins of your fallenness (1 Pet. 2:1).

Just as snacking on sweets causes us to lose our appetites for healthy foods, feasting on the sinful sweets of this world results in a loss of desire for God and His Word. Peter's admonition is "to continually be ridding yourselves" (participle, middle voice) of the sins your fallen nature craves. He begins with the root sin of "malice." Malice is the malignancy of our unredeemed flesh, out of which spawns every other form of sinfulness—"deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander."

3. Recognize the state of your neediness (1 Pet. 2:2).

The analogy Peter used to drive home the truth about our spiritual neediness is that of an infant after birth. We all know that the one thing a newborn infant wants is his mother's pure milk. When it comes to momma's milk, newborns are single-minded. Every baby is born with the God-given instinct that it cannot live and grow without milk. Peter's analogy is clear. As God's spiritual children, Christians were born again with a spiritual frailty, and the only source of needed strength is a continuous feeding on "the pure milk of [God's] word." This is why Peter commanded that we have a constant "desire" for it. Essentially, our spiritual neediness demands that we gorge ourselves on God's pure Word. "Your words," said the prophet Jeremiah, "were found, and I ate them. Your words became a delight to me and the joy of my heart, for I bear your name, LORD God of Armies" (Jer. 15:16).

4. Review the specifics of your blessedness (1 Pet. 2:3).

Peter changed his quote of Psalm 34:8 from a present tense admonition to a past tense conditional clause. His point being, "If indeed you have already tasted the goodness of God in salvation, then you know of His continuing goodness toward you." You *have* tasted His grace in forgiveness and salvation. You *have* tasted His answers to prayer, His protection, His abundant provisions. You *have* tasted and seen His work in your life and in your world. All of these demonstrations of God's goodness toward you have come as a result of His pure Word—through a promise found there, an answer to prayer given there, and a measure of strength granted through His "living and enduring word" (1:23).

Conclusion: Far too many of God's people today are becoming anorexic when it comes to being nourished on God's Word. They have lost their appetites for spiritual food. They do not read and study the Bible for themselves, and in their corporate worship experience God's Word has been relegated to a subordinate place of importance. The lyrics of the songs they sing and the contents of the sermons they hear contain too little of "the pure milk of the word." As the prophet Amos lamented, there is "a famine through the land, not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11).

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