

*Last week we talked about love and I wanted to share what is love from a child's point of view. Here are some quotes from some little ones.*

*"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So, my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."*

*"When someone loves you – the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth."*

*"Love is when someone hurts you, and you get so mad, but you don't yell at them because you know it would hurt their feelings."*

*"Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is okay."*

*"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen."*

*"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well."*

*"Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford."*

*"Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day."*

*"You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget."*

Last week we finished the first chapter of **1 Peter**, where we focused on loving one another because the truth of God's Word, which is like a seed planted in our hearts, reminds us that God first loved us – even though we were hard to love. Paul summed it up in one verse when he said in **Romans 5:8**, ***"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."***

God loves us – He proved it on an old rugged cross – the Bible tells us so – and because we are born-again and God loves us with an unconditional and sacrificial kind of love, we are to choose to treat others the same way. God loves us, so we love others. God forgives us, so we forgive others. God is gracious to us, so we

are gracious to others. God is kind to us, so we are kind to others. It's what God commands us to do – and in light of our salvation, to love one another is a totally reasonable response by us.

This morning, we are continuing with the same train of thought, and if you desire to grow spiritually, loving one another as God commands, please pay attention to what Peter has to say. Turn with me to **1 Peter 2**, and we are going to read the first three verses – **1 Peter 2:1-3**.

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, <sup>2</sup>and like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, <sup>3</sup>if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.**

As we have seen in other passages, **verse 1** starts with the word “**therefore**,” a conjunction which serves as a connection to the previous passages. When considering what we previously covered last week, with that one word “**therefore**” Peter is essentially saying, “*If you are born-again, if the Gospel has been planted firmly in your heart – love one another just like God loves you, and since what I already told you is true, then the following is true as well – so pay attention.*”

Peter says that if we are to love one another – if we are truly people of the Word, then there is some stinking thinking that cannot be present in our lives, and he mentions five rotten attitudes that have a direct negative impact in our ability to genuinely love one another and grow spiritually. If we are going to get serious about this, Peter tells us to rip these things out of our lives – like ripping off old stinky clothes that you no longer want to wear. With God's help, we are told to get rid of **malice**, and **deceit**, **hypocrisy**, **envy** and **slander** – all negative characteristics of our old nature – of our old way of life, and if you noticed, all of these pertain to how we relate to each other, and I also think it is safe to say, that these rotten attitudes tend to rear their ugly heads when people are under pressure.

In Peter's letter, the churches he was writing to were under a lot of pressure from the outside – remember they were being severely persecuted – they were suffering, and it seems this outside pressure was being vented inwardly towards their brothers and sisters in Christ. When we are under pressure, as individuals or collectively as a church body, this is when the bickering and the division starts, and it's when this stinking thinking seems to take on a life of its own. So, let's look a little closer at these rotten attitudes to get a better understanding of what Peter is telling us.

The first that Peter mentions is **malice**. Malice is an interesting word – in general, it means *wickedness* or *evil*. It's an attitude that is similar to hatred, and it involves the desire to inflict pain, to bring harm, or to cause injury to another person either by word, by intimidation, or by deed. It speaks of a person who has no good feelings toward another, they hold a resentful grudge, and to take it a little further, a person with malice could care less if something bad happened to another. As Christians, we might shake our heads in disbelief – that malice could actually be present amongst brothers and sisters in Christ, but need I remind you that Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is writing this to churches, to saved people not to lost people, and he is using this very strong word for a reason.

Peter also mentions the rotten attitude of **deceit**. We are to cast it aside. Deceit is like a fishhook with a fat juicy worm on it and it refers to deliberate dishonesty with an ulterior motive behind it. It's a two-faced attitude that deceives and hurts others for personal gain. You are deceitful when you tell a lie or omit the truth in order to gain a personal advantage or to get your own way. Just turn on the television and watch the political ads of outright lies and half-truths to gain a political advantage. That is what the Bible describes as deceit.

Peter says we are to rid ourselves of **hypocrisy**. Hypocrisy has an interesting history and it means *to speak out from under a mask* – a word used in Greek drama. To portray different emotions on stage, actors would pick up a mask depicting some type of facial expression like a smile or a frown, and they would speak out from under the mask. But the mask which was displayed on stage would not necessarily express the true attitude of the person behind the mask. From there, this word came to mean a person who is acting out a part but concealing his or her true motives. In context here, a hypocrite is someone who pretends to care for another person, when they really do not.

We are to put aside **envy**. Envy begins with a desire to possess what belongs to someone else, but it's more than this. It is a resentful discontent. Envy is jealousy at the success of others or it can be happiness at another's misfortune.

*Dwight L. Moody once told the fable of an eagle who was envious of another eagle that could fly better than he could. One day the bird saw a sportsman with a bow and arrow and said to him, "I wish you would bring down that eagle up there." The man said he would if he had some feathers for his arrow. So, the jealous eagle pulled one out of his wing. The arrow was shot, but it didn't quite reach the rival bird because he was flying too high. The first eagle pulled out another feather, then another—until he had lost so many that he himself couldn't fly. The archer*

*took advantage of the situation, turned around, and killed the helpless bird. Moody made this application: if you are envious of others, the one you will hurt the most by your actions will be yourself.*

The final rotten attitude that Peter mentions is **slander**. Slander literally means “*to speak against or speak down about someone.*” It suggests of running others down. It is speech that deliberately assaults the character of another, and it includes gossip, backbiting, spreading rumors, taking cheap shots, and making disparaging comments. You can slander someone by twisting the truth to make another person look bad, or by putting others down with the intent to make yourself look good. It is any speech that harms another person’s status or reputation, and of course, it’s usually done behind the back of another person or now days it’s just done on social media for the world to see.

This stinking thinking listed by Peter should have no place in the lives of born-again believers, and with God’s help, we are to rid ourselves of these rotten attitudes because they impact our relationships with one another, and as we learned last week, our love for one another is directly connected to our love for God. So, to grow spiritually, we are to cast these attitudes out of our lives. We are to get rid of these things and replace them with something else which brings us to **verses 2 and 3**.

Peter says, **<sup>2</sup>like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, <sup>3</sup>if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.**

It’s been said that a baby does three things: eats, sleeps, and poops, and we just dealt with the poop in **verse 1**, now we are considering the eating.

At first glance, this passage seems fairly straight forward. In context, since we are born-again, since we know the truth of God’s Word, and instead of being in the poop, instead of being fixated on hurting someone else to satisfy the rotten desires of our old nature, as believers, we are to desire God’s Word. Just as new born babies have an insatiable appetite for their mother’s milk, in the same way, all believers in Christ are to crave the nourishment found in the Word of God. This makes sense to me, but I’m going to tell you – I struggled with this passage, and let me tell you why.

In **verse 2**, Peter gives us a command, and the command is to **long for** the Word of God. It’s not a command to read the Word of God, which of course we should do.

It's not a command to study the Word of God, which of course we should do. It's not a command to meditate on the Word of God, which of course we should do. Rather, in this passage, we are commanded to **desire** the Word of God. We are commanded to **crave** the Word of God – just like a baby craves its mother's milk. Well for me, that prompts several questions: **How can God command us to desire something? Is this like commanding us to desire liver and onions? That's just nasty. I mean, how does that work? How can we be commanded to crave the Word of God?**

I think the clue is in Peter's reference to a new born baby. We know a healthy baby has an insatiable appetite – they will loudly tell you so if you have any doubts. Babies have a natural craving for their mother's milk, and they have instinctive automatic reflexes to support that craving. For example, if their cheek is stroked, they have a natural instinctive reflex to turn towards the touch to find the nipple. It's called the "*rooting reflex*." If you touch the roof of a baby's mouth with your finger, they have a natural instinctive reflex to automatically start sucking. It's called the "*sucking reflex*." It's in their nature – it's natural instinctive behavior that supports their craving for their mother's milk.

Likewise, just like babies who crave milk, believers are to desire the Word of God, and God commands us to desire the Word because it should be natural and instinctive for us to desire His Word. Since we are born-again by the gospel truths revealed to us in God's Word, we are commanded to continue to desire that very same Word. It should be a natural instinctive driving force in our lives.

In **Psalm 42:1** we read, "***As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God.***" In **Psalm 119:16**, David says, "***I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.***"

*A man in Kansas City was severely injured in an explosion. Evangelist Robert L. Sumner tells about him in his book "The Wonder of the Word of God." The victim's face was badly disfigured, and he lost his eyesight as well as both hands. He was just a new Christian, and one of his greatest disappointments was that he could no longer read the Bible.*

*Then he heard about a lady in England who read Braille with her lips. Hoping to do the same, he sent for some books of the Bible in Braille. Much to his dismay, however, he discovered that the nerve endings in his lips had been destroyed by the explosion. One day, as he brought one of the Braille pages to his lips, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters and he could feel them. Like a*

*flash he thought, I can read the Bible using my tongue. At the time Robert Sumner wrote his book, the man had read through the entire Bible four times.*

*This man had a craving – and even losing his eyesight wouldn't prevent him from reading God's Word.*

Now, let's be honest. For many of us, that story does not describe our desire for God's Word. The truth is – we all have our feasts and our famines when it comes to craving the Word. For all of us, there have been times where there has been no real desire to get into the Bible.

*A recent Lifeway study revealed that 90 percent of professing Christians say that they “desire to please and honor Jesus in all they do.” But 81% of them do not read their Bible as they know they should. What does this tell us? You and I are not alone.*

Every one of us could admit that there are times when we have had no appetite for God's Word. Oh, we might read it for a few minutes just to check the box to meet some quota. We might read a passage or two so we don't feel guilty. We might read it as part of our daily chores without giving any thought to what we just read – we've all been in that place, where we just go through the motions so to speak, where there is no real hunger and thirst for God's Word. So, you and I are not alone – and that may be comforting for some, but it is also very concerning.

If a baby had no appetite for milk – we would rightly be concerned. We would be concerned about the well-being of the baby because a healthy baby should have an appetite, and the same principle applies to a believer as well. If a believer does not have a healthy appetite for the Word of God, their source of nourishment, then there should be some concern about their spiritual well-being. As God commanded, we should crave His Word, but sometimes we do not.

**So, how do we lose our appetite and how do we get to that place where we crave the Word of God just like a baby craves milk?**

There could be a multitude of answers, but to stay in context with our passage, there are two answers I want to draw out, and the first is this: The way we treat one another has a direct impact on our relationship with God, and as long as we engage in the stinking thinking that Peter mentioned in **verse 1**, we cannot hope to grow spiritually and we cannot expect to somehow crave God's Word.

I like what Ray Pritchard had to say about this. You can treat people unkindly and gossip about them and harbor bitterness, you can have a sharp tongue and a critical spirit and you can look down your nose at people who aren't like you. As long as you do that, you will never grow spiritually not even if you come to church four times a week and go to Bible study every other day. Those rotten attitudes will choke off the Word of God in your life. That explains why some people can come to church for years and never grow or get any better. They make excuses for their envy, they ignore their gossip, they make light of their cutting comments, and they try to righteously justify their meanness towards other people. They don't grow spiritually because they can't grow spiritually. As D.L. Moody once said, "*God's Word will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from God's Word.*"

So, as Peter told us, let's get rid of our stinking thinking. Just as a disease will dull the appetite of a healthy baby for milk, so sin will dull our appetite for the Word or to look at it another way, sometimes we lose our appetite for real food because we have been stuffing ourselves with junk food. Confess your sin, confess your stinking thinking, repent, get back into fellowship with God, get back into the Word, and if you don't already desire the Word, pray that you would.

There's one more thing I want to draw out of our passage, and it comes from **verse 3**, where Peter seems to get to the heart of the matter and says, "**if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.**" This is a quote from **Psalm 34:8**, which tells us to "*taste and see that the Lord is good,*" – to discover the satisfaction only found in God, and in context here, Peter is referring to the satisfaction of experiencing the undeserved kindness and goodness from God when we were born-again. We have already received a sample of His kindness and His goodness when we were saved. God loved us, even though we were still yet in our sin, and by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, we were forgiven of all of our sin and wickedness by the finished work of Jesus on the cross – born-again to a living hope because we have a living Savior. In this salvation, we have an inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven, and as heirs of this heavenly inheritance – our salvation is safe and secure, protected by the power of God.

All of this is true, but I fear our salvation no longer leaves us in awe and wonder – it's become like a coat hanging in the closet that we know is there, and I fear that we have forgotten what we used to be like and where we were headed before Jesus came into our lives. It's so easy to overlook God's kindness and goodness towards us, and when we do that, we fall right back into the stinking thinking and lose our craving for God's Word.

*Many years ago, a ten-year-old boy walked up to the counter of a soda shop and climbed onto a stool. He caught the eye of the waitress and asked, “How much is an ice cream fudge sundae?”*

*“Fifty cents,” the waitress replied.*

*The boy reached into his pockets, pulled out a handful of change, and began counting. The waitress frowned impatiently, after all, she had other customers to wait on.*

*The boy squinted up at the waitress. “How much is a dish of plain vanilla ice cream?” he asked.*

*The waitress sighed and rolled her eyes. “Thirty-five cents,” she said with a note of irritation.*

*Again, the boy counted his coins. At last, he said, “I’ll have the plain vanilla ice cream, please.” He put a quarter and two nickels on the counter. The waitress took the coins, brought the ice cream, and walked away.*

*About ten minutes later, she returned and found the ice cream dish empty. The boy was gone. She picked up the empty dish – then she swallowed hard.*

*There on the counter, next to the wet spot where the dish had been, were two nickels and five pennies. The boy had enough for a fudge sundae like he wanted, but instead he had ordered plain vanilla ice cream so he could leave her a tip.*

God is good and He is kind, and if we aren’t careful, we can overlook it. I encourage you this morning to reflect on your salvation and His goodness and kindness toward you.

Source Material:

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