

“The Power of God’s Word”

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Scriptural Foundation: 1 Peter 1:22 – 2:3, ESV

Called to Be Holy

²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for

“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

A Living Stone and a Holy People

¹ So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

This past week Kimberly and I had lunch with Dean Lockwood, an assistant coach with the University of Tennessee women’s basketball team. Dean told us of a time, a few years ago, when he spent the entire day with John Wooden, the legendary coach from the University of California Los Angeles. He did not intend to spend the entire day, but John Wooden continued to invite him to more and more of his day. Coach Wooden talked to Dean about life and about basketball, and during that conversation he talked about his wife, Nellie. Nellie had past away nearly twenty-five years earlier, but he spoke of her as though she was still present, so tenderly and so sweetly.

He related Nellie was the only girl he had ever loved and ever kissed. He was fourteen years old when he met Nellie and he married at age twenty-two. They shared an uncommon union for nearly fifty-three years. After Nellie died, John Wooden would honor Nellie’s birthday by writing her a letter on the twenty-first of every month. In the evening he would take that letter and set it on the pillow next to him. He would keep it there all night and in the morning he would take the letter and put it with the stack of letters he had written over those some twenty-five years he had living on this earth after she died.

Coach Wooden then gave Dean a tour of his home and he showed him his bedroom. Coach Wooden related to Dean since the day Nellie died he kept his wife’s pajamas folded on the bed next to him and left them undisturbed. In fact, he did not sleep under the covers because he did not want to disturb the bed. He slept on top of the bed and put a comforter over him for those twenty-five years.

At this point, as Dean was relating this incredible love story, my wife’s eyes were welling up with tears and she sighed, “Oh, that is so sweet,” and she began crying, then everyone began tearing up thinking about this incredible love story. John Wooden would write this about love, “Love means many things. It means giving; it means sharing; it means forgiving; it means understanding; it means being patient; it means learning. You must always consider the other side and the other person. You can give without loving, but you cannot love with giving.”

I agree with Abraham Lincoln, who said, “The best thing a man can do for his children is to love their mother.” I believe that is pretty good.

We plan to talk about love in this message because the Apostle Peter is writing about love in the section we are going to study. However, we are not going to talk about love in marriage so much as we are going to talk about love within the church. That is what Peter is directing us toward. Peter is encouraging us toward a fervent love for one another.

It is helpful for us to briefly review what Peter has taught us in previous messages as we have studied this letter. We remember, in the first twelve verses of Chapter 1, the Apostle celebrates the great salvation God has given us in Christ Jesus. Peter is rejoicing God, according to His great mercy, has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter then rejoices as part of this new life we possess, we also possess this imperishable, eternal inheritance. Then we arrive at Verses 13 through 21 and these become the practical command section based upon this doctrine and this marvelous truth of God's great gift of salvation to us. Peter presents to us the practical life change with ought to be ours as the recipients of this great gift of life in Christ.

Peter, in Verses 13 through 21, has laid before us three specific commandments which flow from our new life in Christ. In Verse 13 he says, "Set your hope fully upon the grace of God which is going to be revealed in Jesus." The second command begins in Verse 15, where he says, "Be holy. Live a holy life for I am holy." In Verse 17 we see the third command Peter issues in teaching us about our salvation, and he says, "Conduct yourself in the fear of God. In everything you do and in all of your behavior, conduct yourselves in such a way so as to reflect your respect, awe, and reverence for the Lord."

Now Peter moves to a fourth command which flows from this doctrine regarding our regeneration and new life and salvation which is ours. The fourth command is simply this: Love one another earnestly from a pure heart. That is a natural outcome of being born again and of being a Christian. In fact, the Bible will teach us, if we are truly born again we will love one another. It just naturally flows.

There are five points about this command to love one another. First, we will look at our command to love. Second, we will consider our community to love. The third is our capacity to love. The fourth is our continuance in love. Finally, we will study our catalyst to love.

Let's consider this command Peter issues to us in Verse 22,

²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart...

The command to love is the Greek word *agape*. It is a verbal form in which God is saying, "Love with my kind of love, a love which is born not out of your emotions and not out of your natural affections, but it is born out of a renewed will." This love is a choice God commands us to make regarding people whom we otherwise might neglect, look past, or even avoid. This is a choice God commands us to make in our lives in reference to other believers.

This love is different from romantic love and the natural love a father has for his son or daughter. This is a love we choose to set upon another person even when it is difficult to do so. It is a love which is deep, strong, and abiding. This is a love which endures through other's sins and failures, even when those sins and failures hurt us. This is a love which remains steadfast through disappointments. This is a love which acts to help those who are in need. This is a love which sacrifices one's own comforts and desires in order for the benefit of others.

Where do we see this love most clearly demonstrated? How can we know what this love exactly is? How can we put our arms around it? What does it mean? How have we seen it?

Of course, the greatest example is God Himself. In sending His Son into this world to die as a sacrifice for sin, we have this tremendous picture: For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son so whosoever would believe in Him would not perish, but would have eternal life."¹ God is our model and our example as to what kind of love we are to have for one another. Think of the love of God set upon our lives while we are yet sinners and undeserving. It would have been natural for a holy God to look past us and not send His affection upon us. God so loved the world He gave His Son. God demonstrated His own love that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.²

¹ John 3:16

² Romans 5:8

We must ask ourselves this question, as we look at this command, because it is easy for us to say, “I believe I love others. I am nice to people. I smile. I wave. I do not try to honk my horn in anger when I am frustrated in traffic. I try to open doors for people.” We evaluate whether we have this kind of love based upon whether we are nice, but this is not merely a nice kind of love. It is a deep commitment to love. This is His example: He gave His Son, that which was most precious to Him and He gave Him to us so we might benefit.

Jesus told the story of The Good Samaritan, who helped the Jewish hurt man, to remind us of what this kind of love is. It is the kind of love which treats people with such commitment, kindness, and grace, people whom we would naturally avoid. The Samaritans had no dealings with the Jews and this was a Jewish man. The Jewish priest and the Levite walked on the other side, but it was the Samaritan, who naturally would have no affection for this man, who stopped. That is the point of Jesus' story.

We must ask ourselves this question: Is my love like that? If it is not, what are you going to do about it?

James Packer writes, “The Greek word *agape*, love, seems to have been virtually a Christian invention, a new word for a new thing. Apart from about twenty occurrences in the Greek version of the Old Testament, it is almost non-existent before the New Testament. *Agape* draws its meaning directly from the revelation of God in Christ. It is not a form of natural affection, however intense, but it is a super-natural fruit of the Spirit. It is a matter of will rather than feeling. It is the basic element in Christ-likeness.” I like that part. If you are to ask, “Am I Christ-like.” here is the bottom floor and the foundation of that life.

Peter understands the fundamental necessity of this love within the heart of the believer. He writes about this subject of love in every chapter in this letter. In Chapter 2, he writes,

¹⁷ Honor all people, love the brotherhood...³

In Chapter 3, Peter writes,

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

In Chapter 4, we read,

⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

And in Chapter 5, Peter writes,

¹⁴ Greet one another with the kiss of love.

Peter talks about love in every chapter. He does not get away from this. Peter is simply following his Master Jesus. He has learned well.

In John 15, Jesus says, as He is speaking in the Upper Room the night before He was to go to the cross,

¹² “*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*”

The qualifier, the measure, the standard is: As I have loved you.

Everywhere we turn in the Bible we find this emphasis upon love. The Apostle John, in his first epistle, talks about love over and over again. Consider what he writes in 1 John,

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

³ New American Standard Bible (NASB)

John says if *agape* love is absent from our lives we are right to question whether or not we have truly been born again. That is an amazing measure!

Friends, there is no Christianity where love is absent. The principle we want to consider in this command is this: Love is the greatest of the graces the Spirit bears in our lives. The fruit of the Spirit is love. It is the greatest of the graces. We know that because that is what the Bible says.

In 1 Corinthians 13, the great “love chapter”, which we are most familiar with, says,

¹ If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing...¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Love is the greatest of the graces.

Let us consider two adjectives Peter attaches to this command for us to love one another. The first is the adjective “sincere” in the text, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love...” This is as a sincere affection within a family. “Sincere” means it is not fake or phony or a shallow kind of love of pasted-on smiles; “I love you, brother,” “I love you, sister.” It is deep and authentic.

Have you ever had someone say to you, “I love you, but...” and they say something so unkind and something so unloving to you? We like to say we “love” other people, but the question is: Do we? Is it the motivating force and influence in our lives and in our relationships with others? It is real, sincere, and heartfelt because it is produced by God’s Spirit. It is not produced by us. It is super-natural.

Second, we observe the adverb, or descriptive word, “earnestly”. Other translations read “fervently”⁴ or “deeply”⁵. One translation reads, “Love one another as if your life depended upon it.”⁶

This word “fervent” or “earnest” is a physical word used elsewhere of muscles in the body of a person or a horse. It means to stretch the muscles to the limits of their capacity. Have you ever exercised so strenuously you literally fell over and said, “I cannot take another step”? That is what it means to love one another fervently and you love with such intensity and strength it is as you cannot take one more step toward love because you have given everything you have into this kind of love. Fervent is a powerful and convicting word.

It is not about running a few errands for another person. It is not about getting coffee, mowing another person’s lawn, or making a dinner. All of those are loving acts and those may be a part of fervent love, but they do not define it. We cannot say, “I shoveled the snow off of my neighbor’s drive, so I love them.” No, this kind of fervent love is something more than that. It is a whole-life. It is a constancy. It is a depth we have. We do not take vacations from this kind of love.

When people ask me, “Pastor, how can I pray for you”, this is what I say to them, “Here are three things I would like for you to pray for me: I need a pure heart; I need a strong faith; and I need a fervent love.” If I have these three things then I have all I need.

The second idea we want to address, as Peter teaches us, is about our community. We have someone to love as well as a command to love. Who are we to love? The answer is: Everybody! That is true, but Peter, in the Scriptures, is more specific: It is brotherly love. Who are we a brother to and who is Peter talking about. Then Peter tells us to love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

The principle is: God calls us to give priority to loving other believers. Peter is writing to “the elect who are strangers and aliens in this painful world.” They are being persecuted for their faith and he communicates to them, in Verse 3,

⁴ American Standard Version (ASV)

⁵ New International Version (NIV)

⁶ The Message

they are born again. This is a family term because a person is always born into family and into a community. Peter carries this family language along through his explanation of this new life. In Verse 14, he says, “as obedient children” and in Verse 17, we read, “and if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially.”

Peter is using family language when he comes to Verse 22 when he talks about brotherly love and loving one another. He understands it is within the context of the church and the context of the people of God gathered together. In 1 Peter 2:17, he says, very specifically, “...honor everyone, but love the brotherhood.” We are to make sure we love other believers.

This is not to suggest we are not to love unbelievers. We should! God loves unbelievers because He demonstrated His love toward us while we were still sinners and hostile to Him.⁷ We should do no less than love unbelievers. But, the Bible does suggest God would have us to prioritize our love for believers; more than we love unbelievers, we are to love other believers. I know that may sound very strange to some, particularly in our current evangelical landscape, but I challenge you not to listen to me on this, but observe what Scripture says about this.

Is it true the Bible says and emphasizes a special kind of love we are to have for others within the family of God? I believe this is Jesus' point in John 13, as He talks to His Disciples in the Upper Room,

³⁴ “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

He is telling His Disciples it will be their love for one another which will be an attraction, or an identifying feature, from the world toward them that they follow Jesus and they are His.

In Galatians 6, the Apostle Paul says,

³⁴ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

John MacArthur makes an excellent argument from 1 Corinthians 10, regarding this very issue. We read from this text,

²⁷ If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁸ But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience— ²⁹ I do not mean your conscience, but his...

This “someone” has a conscience which is disturbed by eating meat which is offered to idols and this someone is a young believer. That is who has this protest of the meat being offered in sacrifice to idols. Imagine yourself living in Corinth and an unbeliever asks you to come to their house for supper and you warmly receive that invitation. Another young believer in Christ comes with you and this person has just come out of paganism and temple worship and idol worship. The host brings out dinner and it is roast goat. The young Christian leans over to you, as the elder and mature believer, and says, “Do you think that meat was purchased at the temple? Do you think it has been sacrificed to an idol? I do not believe we should eat it if it has been offered to an idol.”

You realize eating the meat in itself is not a sin and it does not reject a command of God, but meat sacrificed to an idol would violate this young Christian’s conscience which is so very tender. You respond, “Let’s just not ask. We do not have to make this an issue and offend this guy. Let us set this question aside.” But, as the dinner is being set before you, the young Christian, who cannot resist, looks at the host and says, “Where did you buy this meat?” The host replies, “At the temple” and your heart sinks as you think, “Why did he ask?”

Now you have a dilemma. If you do not eat the meat you will offend the host, the unbeliever. If you do eat the meat, you will offend the young believer. You will have to act in one way which will display a lack of love, either to the unbeliever who is the host, or to the young believer who is part of your family. Who do you offend? I believe most evangelicals will say, “Of course, you offend the Christian. You do not want to offend the unbeliever.” That is not

⁷ Romans 5:8

what Paul says. You look at the unbelieving host and say, “I am sorry, we cannot eat this,” and you know it will sound as though you are saying to the host you do not love him and you know it will offend him, but the deal is, you care more and you love more about the believer’s tender faith than you do the unbeliever. You must make a choice.

Someone may say, “Then how are we going to win the world if we do not love them above others in the church?” I believe God’s plan is for the world to see the sacrificial love believers have for one another and they will be drawn to Christ because of it. I believe that is the church’s most attractive feature and that is why, when we fail to love one another, we are demolishing our ability to witness to this lost world. The world will be attracted and drawn, and this is one of the means, by a church which has such intense, fervent, earnest, deep, abiding, constant love for one another. When the world sees we do not love one another, they will say, “What is the good of being a part of that community?” God says, “Love one another, specifically within the family. Saturate your entire community with this deep, abiding, constant, fervent love.”

This is the reason why relationships within the church are so vital for you to be a part of and connect to. That is why we have ABC groups⁸ and why we will be launching small groups. We realize there are many people who come to church on a Sunday morning and leave without any real and vital connection to the body of Christ. There is no way we can love one another outside of real relationships with one another. As believers, one of the ways we commit to loving one another is by committing to being in relationship with one another and spending time with each other, and communicating with one another.

How can we have this kind of love in our heart? This is about our capacity, and we read from our text,

²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God...

Notice before Peter issues this command to love one another, he says, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth...” What is the truth? It is the Gospel, I believe, Peter is talking about. And our hearts are purified by God; we do not purify ourselves, but we are a part of that process as we place our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus as our Savior and Lord and as we turn and repent of our sins. I believe Peter is saying, when he says, “having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth”, he is saying, “When you submit to the truth of the Gospel you commit yourself to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, then you are establishing your life for a sincere love for the brother. Apart from a pure heart it will be impossible to have this kind of love.”

Peter follows this with similar language in Verse 23, “since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.” These are like bookends. On the front end we purify our souls as we obey the truth and have trusted in Christ as our Savior and Lord. There is obedience to faith in Jesus that we submit to the Gospel call and repent and believe in Jesus and that purifies us. Then he says, “...since you have been born again.” This commandment would be absolutely meaningless to a person who has not been renewed, because it is a commandment to love with a super-natural kind of love. Our new spiritual life gives us the super-natural ability to love other people.

We have the capacity to love other people precisely because we have literally been changed by God’s Spirit. Our old heart could not love in this way, but our new heart, which has been transformed into the likeness of Jesus, can. We are no longer who we used to be, so now we can love others as God loves us.

How does this new birth work, this purification God gives to us, provide us the capacity to love others? There are two ways. First, our new birth purifies our heart from other loves which would impede us or stop us from loving others. Our hearts have been purified from the love of this world, of the things of this world, of the lusts of this world, and of our own boastful pride of life. We are purified and those kinds of loves are removed from our hearts and now we are free to have a love which is unselfish, God-centered, and Christ-exalting. An impure soul is too small to stop on the road and spend time and money and invest life to help a stranger. It is a pure heart which gives the lift of our love so we can take flight.

⁸ Adult Bible Community

The second way in which being born again provides us with the capacity to love is our new birth gives us God's Spirit and this love is born of God's Spirit. In Galatians 5, God communicates to us the fruit of the Spirit is love. It is like the old story of the wife who confesses, "Sometimes I wake up Grumpy and other times I let him sleep in." I confess, some days do not go as I planned and I get grumpy and I get impatient. My wife will ask me, "Why are you grumpy today," and I can give a list of things that went wrong: I didn't get the trash out to the curb on time; I spilled juice on my shirt; the car has a new rattling noise; the conversation I had early in the morning with a person did not go very well.

But, do you know why I am grumpy on those days and why I am impatient? It is not because any of those things went wrong, but it is because I am not being controlled by God's Spirit. That is the reason why and all of those other things are just excuses I lay down to try and make me feel better about the inward condition of my soul on those days. The Bible tells us if we walk in God's Spirit, it will produce something within us which is super-natural – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control.

I must ask you, if love comes as a result, and our capacity comes on the heels of being born again, have you been born again? Maybe one of the reasons you have had difficulty in loving others is because there has not been this true regeneration in your life. God has an answer for you and it is Jesus. Come and call upon Him.

The fourth idea is our continuance in love as we read,

²⁴ ...for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Peter immediately launches into the character of this Word of God which is not the perishable seed, but it is the imperishable seed. This imperishable seed is unlike everything else in our life. It is unlike our own bodies and everything physical around us which fades and falls away. This seed, this Word of God, which has come to us, which we have received, and through which we have been born again lasts forever; it endures, it continues. This Book is unlike any other book because this Book alone is eternal. Everything other book is like yesterday's newspaper. What do we do with yesterday's newspaper? We throw it out because it is not lasting.

Why do you suppose Peter ties this command for us to love one another to this idea and extensive description of the imperishable nature of the Word of God? I believe the answer is: If the seed which created life is eternal, then the nature of that life is everlasting as well. This new birth and new life which is everlasting gives us hope toward an eternal future and love is born out of hope. That is what I believe Peter is saying; "It is because this new life is eternal, we have a hope which is certain and sure and it is hope which gives birth to this love. Love thrives where hope for the future is permanently secured."

Where there is no hope there can be no love and that is why Peter emphasizes the imperishable quality of the life of God. Did you notice, all through this chapter, how Peter uses this word "imperishable": Verse 4 – "this inheritance is imperishable"; Verses 18 & 19 – "we are redeemed not with perishable things like gold and silver, but with the blood of Jesus which is imperishable"; Verse 23 – "this seed God uses to create spiritual life is imperishable; it is eternal".

One of the things keeping us from loving other people and other believers is when we begin to think that love will not accomplish anything of value and by loving that other person we are going to lose something precious or valuable. Some one may say, "Why would I love that person? They are not going to receive it. They are not going to accept it. It is not going to do anything good. It is wasting my love!" When we think that, that is hopelessness; "There is no good future to that love which is offered."

Peter is saying that is never true for the believer. When we love another person, even if they do not receive it, on the Day of Judgment it returns. It is still lasting because it was born out of the seed of the eternal Word of God. Whatever is born out of the seed of the eternal Word of God is eternal itself. That is why Peter tells us not to lose hope and we should "Love one another because when we love one another it is everlasting just like the seed which started it all is everlasting and eternal."

What a great truth this is to know, because so often I believe our love gets cut off because we have drawn a line and we are not going to love that other person anymore because loving that person will cause me to lose something valuable – time or energy or money – to myself. A hopelessness cuts a line between us and the other person God calls us to love.

The last idea is our catalyst to love: What can we do? This is the practical emphasis. We may write a list of things we might do to love other more and on that list we might put: Do three acts of kindness this week; Wear a nametag so other people will find me more approachable; Commit to serving the nursery or joining an ABC group so I can be in a relationship; I will go to the Peoria Rescue Ministry or the Crisis Pregnancy Center and serve. All of these would be great ideas, but Peter is thinking of his audience and he is asking, “How can I encourage them and help them to actually love other people more?”

He could have given them a list such as that, but what does he do? Notice, and this is the most significant thing we can do to love other people, he says,

¹ So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

These are like sugar in a tank. They are love-robbers. They have no part in our lives. Then Peter says,

² Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation...

Christian maturity is largely defined by love: love God and love for other people. That is what “growing up” means. The New American Standard Bible explains what that milk is much better,

² ...long for the pure spiritual milk of the word...

He is talking about Scripture and about God’s Word in our lives. If you long for it you will grow up in salvation and you will love others with the kind of love Jesus has for you. Apart from God’s Word working in our lives daily there is no hope for us to have this kind of love for others. If we want to love others we must long for God’s Word. The Bible is God’s instrument, first, to regenerate us and bring us new life, and then to grow us as Christians to set this love He has for us inside of us so we can give it out to others.

I love the analogy God uses to describe this craving: Like a new-born baby. Some of you are around new-born babies an awful lot and you know how much they crave the pure milk from their mother. Nothing is going to stop them from their communicating their longing for that milk. They desire it with an intense, pure passion and when they receive it everything is good and right. They are being sustained and nourished.

Peter says all of us are to be like new-born infants. He is not just talking about immature Christians who are supposed to desire the milk in the Word. All of us are to be like new-born infants in this way: We are to crave the spiritual milk of God’s Word.

Craving is a longing. It is like a man or a woman who is on a 5K run and they are toward the end of it in ninety degree heat and they have not had any water. They are thirsty and they are craving it. It is an inner drive to reach out and receive it.

Does that describe your life, because this is the key to everything? If it does not you must ask yourself this, “Why am I not craving”, because something is wrong and out of place. If you have no desire for God’s Word then you should, first, recognize something sincerely and seriously wrong with your soul. You should not overlook that symptom which could mean: A) you are not regenerate and not truly born again; or B) there are sins which are corrupting your heart so as to take away an appetite for that which I naturally would have an appetite toward.

What can you do if you do not desire God’s Word? First, do not let your feeling master your soul and say, “I just cannot do anything about it.” You should say, “My feelings are not my master. I may not feel like getting into God’s Word today, but I will not let my feelings control what I do and how I think.” Secondly, turn and repent from any soul-destroying sin, as Peter says in Verse 1 of Chapter 2. Sins will keep you from the Word of God and from craving it. Third, pray. God is merciful and this is not something you can manufacture on your own. It is a gift from God. You

can pray and God is generous to those ask of Him. Finally, pursue spiritual growth by taking in more and more of the Word. Start feasting and trust in God to bring about this desire in this life.

What a precious resource God has given us. He has given us His imperishable Word, a Word which, first, brings spiritual life; a Word we can love, learn, and live out. How good God is to give us everything we need for life. May God allow this church to be a church which acts, speaks, lives, and relates in a way which reflects the love of Jesus.