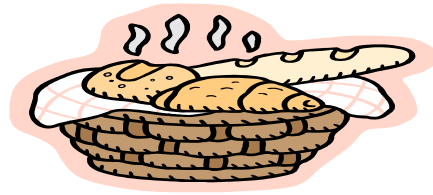


Bread of Life



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Welcome!

You have been summoned to this place because of an acute hunger that has gripped you. Whether you were wandering from site to site, or deliberately put in the words, "Christian web pages," you were trying to fill a need. That need is so basic, yet for the most part is unfulfilled. Well, wonder no more. Jesus proclaimed Himself the bread of life, sent from the Father. He is most controversial, particularly in a country that claims to foster tolerance for all faiths. Yet Jesus must have been referring to this day when he said the world would hate those who follow Him because it hated Him. He also said for us not to think that he came to bring peace, but strife between neighbors and brothers. This maiden issue of Bread of Life is dedicated to calling you to a more intimate walk with Jesus. Our prayer is that you may increase in knowledge about and of the Father through a relationship with His dear son Jesus.

The disciples who walked with Jesus when he was here on earth were fortunate, in that they got to learn about the kingdom first hand from the Master. He described the kingdom of heaven as many earthly things: like a man who sowed good seed in his field; like a mustard seed which a man took and planted in his field; like yeast a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough; like treasure hidden in a field; a merchant looking for fine pearls; like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. In each of these passages found in Matthew chapter 13, the kingdom is described as something that begins small but has the potential and will grow into something great if it is the person entering the kingdom is engaged in the work. It is also described as something precious that is discovered and is treasured.

We are also blessed because we have a relationship with Jesus, because of which we are members of his kingdom. Yet Jesus says the kingdom suffers violence. In the midst of the struggle for the kingdom, we are admonished to be strong, to remain focused on the prize at the end of the race. As did Jesus, you are invited to steal away from the storms to cultivate your interior life in communion with the Father. This will then shine forth in your exterior life in all of your encounters with people, wherever you are. You are invited to read the enclosed articles to refresh you in topics relevant to your life. May you enjoy the journey.



The Word as a Sword

Many of us think when the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians' church about the "armor of God," that this gives a license to beat up on those who disagree with us. But a quick reading of the words in context reveals Paul's admonishment to be fully prepared, "that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." So, the word of God, described as "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword," does not necessarily mean we go around quoting scripture in order to beat down a person who is not in total agreement with us. If that is the case, why can't we argue to win? What do we do in a discussion of faith when others strongly disagree with us?

First of all, to use the word of God for our purposes would be unjust of us. When we look at the example Jesus left for us, he was very focused when deciding when to give his word to make cuts. He used them in Matthew 4 against the Devil himself, who was trying to tempt him away from the Father's purposes in exchange for food and earthly power. He also spoke to that population of so-called leaders of the temple who were misinterpreting the

word of God for their own purposes and attempting to cast doubt on Jesus as the Son of God. He was not merely seeking to win arguments, but the souls of the leaders as well as the followers who were listening to the conversations.

Secondly, Jesus left us with the command that we should go and "teach all nations..." So our commission is to win and teach souls that they would remain in him. Many times we speak the word in order to win an argument, to make sure the person agrees with us or sees our point, and it gives us a sense of satisfaction that we have won. This might feed our egos for the moment, but this is a hard won victory at the price of the soul of our listener. Instead we should ask ourselves: when we speak the word of God to people who disagree with us, do we have the compassion of Christ in our hearts, desiring as the writer said in the book of Jude to "save [some] with fear, hating the garment of sin?"

Thirdly, remember, from the creation God gave man free will, the right to make choices even if we believe they are wrong. The bible gives instances in which we are to release a person over to Satan that

his or her soul might be saved. The bible is right. God's power is awesome and God can do as He wills, but He will not MAKE us surrender to Him. He will pursue us and speak to us through lots of experiences and make us know His love for us, but He won't force us to love Him back.

Finally, I can hear you thinking, "Well, what am I going to do with all of that free time, now that I don't have to beat up people to see my point? Well, try worshipping God in your work and loving the people around you. Remember Proverbs says, "a soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." Sometimes in the midst of trying to persuade someone you just make him or her angry. Rather than do that, let the light of Jesus shine so people will glorify God as they look at the good things you are doing. Save the fight for your real enemy who is trying to deny the divinity of Christ, who is the spirit of antichrist, not a person. Pray for the soul of the person who is annoyed by your stand and love them anyway. That's what Jesus did. Peace.



Interiors



So many times we are admonished in the word of God to let the world see us, so that God may be glorified, and this is a wonderful call to the Christian. We can sometimes unknowingly take this call to the extreme of caring more about how we look to the world and less about how we look to our heavenly Father. Yes, we pray to Him to help us to do more. But don't forget the wonderful example left by Jesus of a consistent prayer life, of private time spent thinking over and discussing the word of God. Don't forget that spending time with people is only part of what we should be about. This reminds me of a metaphor of a marriage gone bad. A woman I knew told me the first thing she would do after her retirement would be to get a divorce, because there was no longer anything between her and her husband. I thought to console her that when she was not so busy with her work the romance would perhaps be rekindled. Her response was that they had spent so many years concentrating on raising the children and getting ahead at work, there was literally nothing there. They were

for all intents, strangers living in the same house.

Sometimes it appears that is how we conduct ourselves when it comes to communion with the Lord. We say prayers in the mornings and at night without thought as to whom we are addressing. We become more earnest in our prayers when there is trouble or when we need to do well, but for the most part we conduct our lives as we see fit, not acknowledging His constant attentiveness to our needs. At times like the woman above who lived with her husband as a stranger, we lose touch with our very reason for being alive.

Then He comes ever so sweetly calling to us for communion, drawing us to His bosom. Nothing like the too busy earthly mate, the Father never slumbers or sleeps. He is ready to listen and to tell us of the depth of His love for us. His plans for us as we listen are mesmerizing. His words are so sweet. Our doubts fade. Our worried brow relaxes, And we are okay
Because
We know we are loved.

Financially Overweight?



The gentleman pictured above is in crisis, as he has not much more boat to stand upon. He will soon be in the shark-infested water if he is not rescued. Sometimes it feels just like this when we become loaded with financial woes. We want to yell for help and have someone take us away from all of this.

Before we talk about how to get out of the boat and navigate through the waters, or better yet, steady the boat and stay in it, let's take a moment to ponder how we became overloaded with debt in the first place. One of the ways is by buying beyond what we can afford using credit cards. These cards can be a major help if we use them to book trips or for things we can pay for by the end of the month. But too often that is not the case. Instead we spend more money than we are able to pay off and end up paying high levels of interest that is added to the amount we borrowed. The result is it takes us much longer to pay off this debt due to the interest, and the habit we have of paying the minimum balance.

The level of debt in the United States of America is at an all time high.

Examine for yourself the state of affairs regarding the subject of debt. The most profitable industry today is the credit card industry. High interest rates, coupled with a myriad of penalties, create enormous profits for the industry and extraordinary debt for most of us.

One of the greatest target markets in the country is the collegiate young person. Yes, marketers are working painstakingly to add more unwitting customers to their roles. The sneaky objective of those in control of the financial and retail business is to get consumers to buy, buy, and buy more. This mentality of making purchases with credit, in most instances, creates debt. It is imperative that most Americans, particularly the young, change their way of thinking about money. We must adopt the discipline of saving more and spending less. We must also get rid of the debt we have and dedicate ourselves to being financially free. This goal epitomizes the strong words of Proverbs 22:7, "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave." CW

Campus  Battleground

Every generation experiences it, although some are noisier than others. The fact that young people go away to college at a time in their lives when they are moving into adulthood, attempting to define themselves by their life choices in terms of careers, lifestyles, friendships and families. At the forefront of those shaping young minds is the college, and each comes with a different set of ideologies, whether subtle or overt. One that has come to the attention of many in the recent past is the notion of ecumenism. This seemingly harmless term that appears to promote harmony among the faiths is really set to dismantle the core beliefs of the faith in exchange for agreement among the people. Christians are being asked to drop the supremacy of Jesus Christ because of its offensiveness to others in favor of greater harmony. But to do this is to deny the essence of our faith. Jesus himself said he came not to bring peace, but a sword. He knew even then that he would be controversial even in our day.

So, the question, dear reader is this: *Are you swimming against the tide of ecumenism or are you drowning?*

Reading Corner

Some books to consider: "Prevail: A Handbook for the Overcomer," by K.H. Varner. "Battlefield of the Mind," by Joyce Meyer.