

"It's Not Business, It's Personal"

The Ministry of the Word (pt. 6)

February 9, 2025

INTRO ...

"We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their bible between service, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own." **Bill Hybels** (founding pastor of Willow Creek Church)

When it comes to the Human/Divine Relationship—the idea that Created Human Beings would Relate to Their Creator— WHERE SHOULD WE START? ...It seems Obvious that We Should START With GOD!

...2 Guiding Concepts Should Inform Us

Matt 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

... "Go and make DISCIPLES"

Jn 4:23-24 "...the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

...These verses START with and Feature what GOD is Seeking! ...

"DISCIPLES" - learners who have knowing God and His glorious purpose at the top of their existence priority

"WORSHIP" - the affectionate delight, passion, obedience, and enjoyment of the One True God! ...That is Informed & Framed by "spirit & truth"

?? – What if I Don't Want Either of These? ...Then You Really Don't Want to be a Christian (a "disciple" ...a "follower")

"Over the past several decades the Western church has noticed alarming symptoms of our discipleship disease. Some of these symptoms include people leaving the church; students dropping out of church after high school; attendance dropping; and perhaps most important, a lack of seriousness among our people about what it really means to be a follower of Christ. From an examination of these symptoms, we've come to think our disease is that the church has become increasingly irrelevant and requires too much from people who want to get involved. We see that we are losing market share in the world of ideas and in the rhythms of people's everyday lives. ...The church seems to think our disease is that we've gotten too deep. In order to treat this disease, we have sought to develop ministry strategies that require less of people, not more, strategies that focus on keeping disciples in the church rather than growing disciples in the church, and that view the pastor more as a marketer than a minister. ...we have lowered the bar, and we have settled for a lowest-common-denominator discipleship.

...I believe many of us have misdiagnosed the disease and are mistreating the church. Our ministry disease is not that the evangelical church is too deep, but that it is far too shallow." **J.T. English**, "Deep Discipleship", p. 7

"Fewer American adults qualify as Bible users, according to the latest [State of the Bible study](#).

In January 2023, ...39% of Americans, said they use the Bible three or more times a year. That equals the lowest number in the 13-year history of the study and ties with last year as the lowest percentage.

...Generationally, elders (48%) and boomers (46%) are more likely than Gen Xers (38%), millennials (33%), and members of Gen Z (30%) to use the Bible at least occasionally during the year.

As to why so few people are using Scripture, most point to a lack of time, understanding, or excitement. Given six options and asked to choose their top two frustrations with Bible reading, Americans say they don't have enough time (26%), don't know where to start (17%), lack excitement about reading it (16%), have difficulty relating to language (15%), see the layout as difficult to navigate (9%), or feel the stories are confusing (8%).

Those who qualify as Scripture engaged by having higher levels of Bible reading and application have steadily declined over the past four years. The number of Scripture engaged fell from 71 million Americans in 2020 to 47 million today." **Aaron Earls**, "Scripture Engaged: Who are American Bible Readers"

...Note: It is Understood that We are "L.U.I." (Living Under the Influence) of the World! ...**Rom 12:2** "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind*"

-- All these "life elements" create an Approach & Pace of Life that is HOSTILE to "Analog Bible Reading"!!

>> Digital Information Style is training us how to "Process Information" ...Image Driven
Communication + Verbal Brevity is training us to "feel" a certain way when we read ...Infinite Info
Feeds teaches us to "Keep Moving"

"If we give priority to the outer life, our inner life will be dark and scary. We will not know what to do with solitude. We will be deeply uncomfortable with self-examination, and we will have an increasingly short attention span for any kind of reflection." **Timothy Keller**, "Prayer", p. 22

...Clearly, the **DIGITAL AGE** requires us to process information differently! It's Designed for Speed & Volume—for Width NOT Depth! ...But Worship & Discipleship are NOT Shallow, High-Speed Activities—They Require SLOWNESS & DEPTH!

This 52 Week Project is about Enlarging the Piece of Real Estate that the Bible Owns in Our Lives! ...It is about increasing our curiosity, improving our conversation, opening the door to deeper life encounters with the Ministry of the Word! ...To do so—We Must be Willing to Travel at a Slower Speed!

...Much of these encounters happen in the "personal" (self-feeder) spaces of our individual lives. —

Jn 16:7-8, 13-15 ⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ... ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

...v. 7 ... "it is to your advantage that I go away"

...v. 13 ... this ministry of the Holy Spirit has a vital, personal dimension to it!!

...Personal Ministry of the Word is **POWERFUL Ministry!!**—and there's No Substitute!!

PERSONAL AWAKENING—and the Ministry of the Word

The Awakening of Moses

Ex. 3:1-10 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

...v. 1-3 ...**Doing everyday life ...living with some sense of "curiosity"**

...Am I Living with an "INNER-CURIOSITY" Factor? ...and where does that curiosity take me?

...v. 3-4 ... **The Essential Act of "TURNING ASIDE"**

-- Turning aside has implications!

-- God Notices when men turn aside from their own lives to seek him!

-- "Around the Word in 80 Days" ...is about learning the Daily Discipline of "Turning Aside" (15 min/day)

...v. 5-6 ... **Observe—we approach God as He is and on His Terms! ...'Posture' Matters!**

...v. 4ff ... **"God called to him" ... "Then he said..."** ...This is an encounter with the Ministry of the Word! ...God is going to use "words", he's going to "reveal", he's going to "communicate, converse, impart understanding"

"Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live." It is beautiful to think of the Scripture as proceeding out of the mouth of God. ...pray the Holy Spirit to speak it into your heart as coming immediately from the mouth of God! ...you are to regard this Word of God as constantly coming forth fresh from His lips. The Holy Spirit puts into the Word a power which makes it go right into your heart with the very tone and majesty of the God of Grace, the Father of your spirit!" **Charles Spurgeon**, "Living on the Word" (Spurgeon's Sermons, The Complete Set (63 Vols.))

...v. 7-8 ... **"God's Purpose" (God's Big Plan; God's Big Picture)**

...It doesn't sound like Moses was Dreaming of THIS assignment!!

...And at the end... Moses is not going to "make much of God"—because God made him the wealthiest, gold-medal winning shepherd in Midian!! ...This Exchange was going to AWAKEN in Moses a Willingness & Faith to Participate in God's Redemptive Purpose!! ...His "Destiny" was to be a DISCIPLE (learner) and a WORSHIPER!

...This is a MAJOR Ordeal in the Storyline of the Bible ...Notice Where it Began—In a Personal Moment and Setting of the Ministry of the Word!!

?? — Am I “turning aside” to have PERSONAL encounters/exchanges with the ministry of the Word of God? ...or am I merely going through the motions of the “BUSINESS” of Modern Christianity? (a genuine interest in God and spiritual things + some form of Corporate Church engagement + some digital age devotional reading from time to time).

... “It’s Not Business—It’s PERSONAL!”