

Why So Many of Us Are Starving and Don't Realize It

My German shepherd was starving to death, and we didn't know what to do. Sophie got 12, yes 12 cups of food a day, and at a year old she was only 40 pounds. After many tests, the vet diagnosed her with a pancreatic problem which kept her from digesting her food. As a result, whatever she ate went through her system without nourishing or feeding her body. With pancreatic enzymes, Sophie is now thriving.

As a culture, America is starving, too. So are some of her churches. Why? We live to eat but don't eat to live. We are not feeding on the one thing we need most, the Word. God made us to have intimacy with him through his Holy Spirit, prayer and Scripture. Without the catalyst of God's Word, we will not thrive.

We need to digest the Word before we can absorb it and do what it says. But if we barely open the book, how will that happen?

Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is alive, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart."

The word "living" means God's words are alive, and they give life. "Active" is the Greek word *energes*, which resembles the English word "energy." The King James Version translates it as "powerful." God's Word and words are full of life and energy. God's words are to achieve something in our heart and life; they are for more than contemplation. Scripture needs to become more than head knowledge; don't let it go in one ear and out the other. It needs to be heart knowledge so it can be absorbed and nourishing.

God's Word is sharper than a sword, able to pierce through the

soul and spirit. The word “pierce” meant “to penetrate or get through.” This may be one reason we may not care to read the Bible. Unless the Word penetrates our heart, we will not grow and change.

Our soul is our mind, will and emotions, and our spirit is what the Creator breathed into us. They are often at war with one another. Our spirit communes with God through the Holy Spirit while our soul is everything which makes us who we are.

So, why would the Word divide them? God wants us to be Spirit-driven, not soul-driven. The Spirit is love, peace, truth, patient, gentle, kind, self-controlled, faithful and joyful. This is how God wants us to function. The soul can be moody, self-centered, turbulent, depressed, thoughtless, self-driven, lacking self-control and deceitful. Satan can influence our soul by manipulating our thoughts. If we are not in the Word of truth, under the perfect power of the Spirit of truth, we get off-track.

God wants us to be Spirit-led and Word-led. One without the other is only half the equation. Unfortunately, many overdo one or the other. We become so Spirit-led we assume everything we think is of the Holy Spirit and will act and speak out without the guidelines of Scripture. However, being overly Word-led can stifle or quench the Holy Spirit so we can no longer hear Him because everything becomes an intellectual experience. There needs to be a balance.

In Hebrews 5:11-12, the author rebukes his readers for becoming dull of hearing. He says in verse 12, “For though by now you should be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God and have come to need milk rather than solid food.”

The Greek word for “dull” refers to “a condition of spiritual apathy and laziness that prevents spiritual development” (Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary). Isn’t that how we

can feel, too?

Studying Scripture takes time and effort. *God does not think less of us if we are not in his Word.* But, have you ever thought how it must sadden him to see the time we invest in things having no heavenly value?

Do we spend too much time on our phones, iPads or binge-watching our favorite shows on Netflix? Yes. Do we need to improve? Yes. Am I preaching to myself? Yes.

The answer lies in putting those things away for a set time each day and getting out our Bibles to let the Holy Spirit guide us through the Word one verse at a time. Don't set unrealistic goals. Reading one verse and letting God speak to you through it is better than reading one chapter or an entire book just so we can say we did it.

If you are a parent, can you imagine letting your 10- or 15-year-old still drink from a sippy cup or a bottle for each meal? Unfortunately, that is the state of a lot of churches in our country. We need more than milk; we need solid food. Church book clubs and cafes are all the rage. Those things are not bad, but we need to get back to reading, discussing and studying God's Word.

Our health depends on it. {eo}

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