

From Pabulum to Porterhouse

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I. Spiritual growth.

A. The early church was in need of spiritual progress and it progressed in spite of its problems.

1. One problem in the early church was that of hearing and receiving the revelation of God. (Hebrews 5:11)

a. These Hebrew believers should have been teachers by then, but they needed to learn the elementary principles again.

b. They were in need of pabulum not porterhouse.

c. They were babes in Christ.

1. A babe is used to refer to the receptivity of the word, not to a young believer.

2. Prolonged infancy was the problem of the Hebrew believers.

3. Maturity comes by training the senses to discern good from evil.

4. A babe is one who cannot solve his own problems, but always needs a crutch.

5. Someone told me the word of God will keep me from sin or sin will keep me from the word.

6. A Christian is either in the word or he is in the world.

d. Peter tells babes to desire the word as a baby longs for milk. (1 Peter 2:2)

1. My first daughter was born prematurely and needed to eat at strange hours of the night. She cried for food every three to four hours.

2. As the baby needs milk to sustain itself, spiritual babes need the word of God to sustain spiritual life.

3. Making time for getting into the word of God is essential.

4. I pastored a church where an elder told me his work and family of five kept him from the word. I told him it would be better to die in fellowship with Jesus than to live out of fellowship with Jesus.

5. Fellowship with God is a question of priority.

6. Many of you come from good churches and I hope you don't take that for granted because there is a famine for the word in the world.
7. I preached in a liberal church recently and people wept as I spoke, and one lady told me it was the first time the word of God had been preached from this pulpit in 17 years.
8. Let us fear that we don't become spiritual brats, hearing the word and not responding.
9. Being under the word of God is a privilege but a greater privilege is to be in the word for yourself.
10. Being under the word should be a stimulus to get into the word, yet sometimes it short circuits personal responsibility.
11. I grow weary of conferences where people come to sit, sip and sour.
12. Instead of responding to the message we often compare one messenger with another.
13. One woman took copious notes and told me she keeps them in a drawer at home, a fire hazard.
14. One lady was visibly disappointed that a minister would not be present at a meeting so I reminded her that the Holy Spirit would be there.
15. There is no substitute for personal involvement in the word.
16. *The Crisis of the Universe* is a book that indicts evangelicalism because if one tenth of the word is true we should be ten times more excited and effective than we are.
17. Many of us are not excited about the word, we're embalmed by it.
18. I was raised by my grandmother who knew the Lord and lived a Christian life before me. She displayed a work of art I made in school I called the Abomination of Desolation, proudly telling others "Howard made that."
19. She loved me and was excited about what I did. In a similar way we need to get excited about our own study of the word of God.
20. You will not be able to excite someone else if you're not excited yourself.
21. We need to shun childishness but to be child like in reference to the word.

e. Peter also tells his listeners to develop an appetite for the word.

1. This is a matter of cultivation not accident.

2. There are three kinds of Bible students.

a. The castor oil type; reluctant study.

b. The shredded wheat type; dry but nourishing.

c. Strawberries and cream type; loving the word.

3. You'll never become a student of the word without cultivating a desire for the word.

4. A preaching assignment in an obscure place introduced me to a man who placed a bowl of black eyed peas before me which I ate and learned to love.

a. We need to develop a love for the word.

b. My first experience in the word was confusing, reading Ezekiel and then Revelation, so I closed the book for one year.

c. We need to lead new converts into profitable reading.

i. Read systematically with understanding.

ii. Read consistently.

iii. Study the word every day.

iv. Memorize the Scripture in an ongoing fashion, as a person needs food and exercise.

v. Communicate the word to others.

f. Peter also tells his listeners that their aim in developing an appetite for the word is to grow spiritually.

1. Some know the word but they don't grow; the word is an end in itself.

2. This leads to spiritual sterility.

3. The word is to transform lives.

4. There is no growth apart from the word of God.

5. Growth is essential to life.

6. Peter said we are born again by the incorruptible word of God, and now that we have been born we need to grow by staying in the word.
7. If a cute baby does not grow it is a tragedy.
8. If we are born of the Spirit and do not grow it is a tragedy.
9. If a pastor needs to spoon feed his people it's a tragedy.
10. If we have the mentality of a child it's because we are neglecting our responsibilities.
11. We who are born of the Spirit must grow; life demands growth.
12. Growth is also essential to usefulness; we don't need more workers but more worshipers.
13. Working in the energy of the flesh is useless; our work needs to be Spirit empowered.
14. I love to see how the Spirit moved in the hearts of the disciples.
15. If you were starting a corporation would you have picked the disciples?
 - a. Peter often spoke presumptuously.
 - b. Thomas doubted.
 - c. Philip and Andrew seemed to be dull yet they led people to Christ.
 - d. But God chooses not because of what we are but because of what we can become.
16. My daughter greeted me at the airport once telling me how much she had grown—maybe one quarter inch, yet she was excited. Then she asked me why adults stop growing.
17. Have you stopped growing or are you continuing to grow?
18. If the Lord took you home tonight would you be ashamed in his presence?
19. Before you go to sleep tonight step up to God's growth chart.
20. Develop an appetite for the spiritual milk of the word in order that you might grow.