

Core Class: Meeting with God

Session 2: Meeting with God in His Word

Introduction

- I. Hello everyone and welcome to the second session of Meeting with God.
 - A. I hope everyone had a good day...
 1. Just a reminder that if you want to stay updated on things happening in this class, you can join the Facebook group or go to our website faithfellowshipfortbend.com/coreclasses...
 - a) That will keep you up-to-date when we send out recaps, notes and extras we talked about in the class.
 - b) We've also added a section at the bottom of the class webpage where I'm putting all the handouts and extras...
 - (1) You'll see two there that we'll reference this week.
 - c) But just feel free to use this as a resource page to get more out of this class...
 - (1) The goal of this class is not necessarily your knowledge...its not necessarily that we have a good time together...those are important of course...
 - (a) But my goal for this class, my hope for you is really that you would develop some curiosity and some wonder for this stuff...
 - (2) I often use this food illustration I know but food is enjoyable not when its just fuel for living...
 - (a) Anybody ever been on a diet where your supposed to see food as fuel?
 - i) Like the cardboard and the side of air they've got you eating is just fuel?
 - ii) There's not going to be any enjoyment of the food there obviously...
 - (b) But if you go to a place like Texas de Brazil...the Brazilian Steakhouse... and those guys are walking around with the swords of meat.

- i) And their like, “Would you like to try the garlic filet?
 - (1) Why, yes I would.
 - ii) Would you like to try the flank steak?
 - (1) Indeed I would.
 - (2) Ah, it pairs so well with the scalloped potatoes...
 - d) This is what I want for you when it comes to God’s Word, theology and what we’re studying in this class...that’s why I’ve put some links here on the website just for you to sample...
 - (1) See if you like the Reformation stories...
 - (2) See if one of the 30 Day Bible Reading Plans is particularly appetizing...
 - (a) Again, our goal in here is wonder and curiosity...
- II. So last week if you remember, we began by looking at some assumptions that we’re bringing into this class:
- A. **SLIDE:** One, that it is actually *possible* both to know and to meet with God.
 - B. And two, that meeting with God is something we should participate in on a consistent, even daily basis.
 - 1. **SLIDE:** You’ll see this in your handout, what we said last week is that meeting with God is ***“daily time that we set aside for fellowship with God in His Word, in prayer and through the church so that we would know Him more, know ourselves in light of Him, and know the world according to God’s perspective”***
 - a) In other words: meeting with God re-calibrates our perspective on the world according to God’s perspective on the world
 - (1) And a key aspect of this recalibration that we are going to be talking about this evening is meeting with God through His Word.
 - C. **SLIDE:** But a third assumption we talked about last week is that we actually can meet with God and get close to Him and know Him because He has given us a Plan to do so.

1. And that plan centers on the fact that we have a great high priest who serves as our what...**our Mediator.**
 - a) Yeah, we are sinful people.
 - b) And in humanities desires and decisions to trust ourselves over and above God on a daily basis, what has happened is that we have committed treason.
 - (1) We have sinned against the holy, infinite God and we have no right to come into His presence on our own.
 - (2) Remember that the template for our condition is the first and original sin...
 - (a) When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, God banished them from His presence...
 - (b) This is what has happened to us.
 - (c) Because of our sin, God has banished us and thus...we need a mediator to gain access to Him.
 - c) Jesus is that mediator for us, through His blood shed on the cross....He is the perfect sacrifice, paid *once for all time*.
 - (1) **SLIDE:** And so Hebrews 4:16 says **“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”**
 - (a) That’s the key verse for this course...
 - i) That’s the verse we want emblazoned, tattooed, seared into our minds...
 - (1) We can draw near to the throne with confidence..
 - (a) And like we just said, one of the ways we can do that is through God’s Word..
 - (b) So tonight the plan is to talk specifically about how to meet with God in His Word.

III. So let’s look at two passages that clearly speak to this point.

A. **SLIDE:** The first is **John 17:17**, when Jesus is praying to His Father in what theologians call his High Priestly Prayer...quite appropriate in the context of talking about a mediator.

1. So Jesus prays: “**Sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth.**”

a) So, Jesus is praying for His disciples but he’s also praying for the disciples who would come after them...which is us...and he’s praying that God would sanctify us in truth:

b) **SLIDE:** Now that’s a bigger theological word but its important that we know it for our time together so let me define sanctification. This is from our statement of faith, the good ol Baptist Faith and Message: **Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God’s purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him.**

(1) Some of you are like...spark notes version please...

(a) I know last Sunday when we were talking about those six doctrines that never change in our small groups...some people were like, “Those were big words.”

i) But see what happens...and what I heard happened in small groups...was that when you think through and wrestle with these words, you start to understand them in a far deeper way than if I would have just given you the simple version.

ii) **SLIDE:** But for the sake of time, because that’s not our focus tonight, let me say it like this: **sanctification is God setting us apart and enabling us to progressively become more like Jesus.**

c) What Jesus is praying is that He wants us to be like Him.

(1) And don’t miss this...the means by which He asks God to do this is by the truth.

- (a) Now he could have left it alone there.
- (b) He could have stopped and ended the prayer here.
 - i) But He didn't...He got more specific.
 - (1) He defines truth.
 - (2) He says, "Your Word is truth."

(2) God's word is truth, so we are sanctified...

- (a) We're set apart...
- (b) We're able to progressively become more like Jesus by the Word of God.
- (c) This entire Bible is made up of this sanctifying truth.

B. Now let's look at a few parts of **Psalm 119**...if you have a Bible go ahead and turn there so we can look at it together...it's going to be pretty much in the dead middle of your Bible.

1. Psalm 119 is what is called a psalm of praise...it's a prayer to God from a man who has a very high regard for God's Word.

a) And what you'll see in these verses are a lot of synonyms for the Word of God...

(1) So your going to see phrases like:

(a) Your words, your promise, your testimonies, your commandments, your law, your righteous rules, your precepts, your statutes...

i) Bottom line is that the Psalmist is talking a lot about the Word of God here.

ii) In fact if you want, as we're reading these verses, go ahead and underline or highlight every time he refers to the Word of God.

(2) From Psalm 119 we see that God's word *saves* and God's word *sustains*.

b) **SLIDE:** So everyone look down at Psalm 119:57-64: **"The Lord is my portion; I promise to keep your words. I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies; I hasten and do not delay to keep your**

commandments. Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law. At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules. I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts. The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes!"

(1) Ok lets talk for a minute...give me observations about what you see about God's Word in these verses.

- (a) Let me give you five quick things we learn from just this one section of Psalm 119....
- i) **SLIDE:** God's word of promise to us is the foundation for receiving grace from him — **v. 58: be gracious to me according to your promise.**
 - ii) **SLIDE:** God's word humbles us and causes us to look to him — **v. 59: When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies.**
 - iii) **SLIDE:** God's word is more powerful than anyone who would oppose us — **v. 61 - though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.**
 - iv) **SLIDE:** God's word leads us to praise Him — **v. 62 - ...I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules.**
- (1) There is something circular going on here.
- (a) We go to God in His Word because He is worthy.
 - (b) And when we go to His Word, He sends us back to praise Him.
 - (c) Can you see the circle here?
- (2) Spending time in God's Word leads us to praise Him, and praising Him leads us to want to know Him more through His Word.

(b) **SLIDE:** The Word of God leads us into the fellowship of the church — **v. 63 - I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.**

(2) So, to summarize what we've seen in Psalm 119 alone...

(a) God's word of promise to us is the foundation for our receiving grace from Him...

(b) God's Word humbles us...

(c) His Word is more powerful than any who oppose us...

(d) His Word leads us to praise Him...

(e) And His Word leads us to the fellowship of the church.

IV. **SLIDE: The Bible**

A. Let's talk now a bit more about this book that God has given us...let's talk about the Bible itself.

1. The Bible is a book written by God about God.

a) It contains the message of salvation.

b) It will lead us away from sin.

c) It will remind us that we are not made for this world.

d) It will tell us the truth of God...it will tell us the truth about ourselves.

(1) It is not a book we should read simply to try to make ourselves better people....God will use the Bible to do that of course...

(2) But when we start making ourselves the point of the Bible instead of God being the point...inevitably we're going to short change our own spiritual growth.

2. So when we read the Bible, we should ask, "What does this particular passage tell me about God? About His character? About His purposes?"

a) **SLIDE:** So in Acts 17, Paul and Silas were preaching in a town called Berea,

Luke...who is the author of Acts, tells us in Acts 17:11 that **"these Jews were**

more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so”

- (1) Are we like the Bereans?
 - (2) Do we examine the Scriptures daily?
- b) The Bereans are a great example for us, but over and above these Bereans even, we are called to follow Jesus.
- (1) Many times in Scripture it describes Jesus as going out to a quiet place where he could spend one-on-one time with the Father.
 - (a) Matthew 14:22-23, Mark 1:35 and Luke 5:16 all describe Jesus getting away from the crowds...even away from his disciples...and spending time alone talking to the Father.
 - (b) And the most basic, simplest point is that if *Jesus* needed to spend this time with God, how much more do we need to do it?
 - i) Look I get being busy.
 - ii) And believe me, I’m talking to myself as much as anybody
 - (1) Being busy is often a real hindrance to spending daily time with the Lord.
 - (2) We live in a very busy area, and its strange even how COVID and quarantine hasn’t stopped our busyness but has rather given us different ways to be busy it seems.
 - (3) And I’m sure that many of you are incredibly busy.
 - (a) Work, school, family, church, and countless other things vie for our time.
 - iii) But I do think in our hustle and bustle, we should probably remember the example of Jesus, who gave his life to healing and teaching tons of people...
 - (1) And yet found time to be by Himself with His Father.

3. **SLIDE:** Let's stop and chat for a minute. Let me ask you this question: what is one hindrance for you that keeps you from spending time with the Lord in His Word?

V. **SLIDE:** In his book, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Don Whitney lays out five ways that we meet with God through His Word...five means of "Bible intake," as he calls it.

A. You'll see them on your handout:

1. Hearing
2. Reading
3. Studying
4. Memorizing
5. Meditating

a) Tonight we're going to look at hearing and reading the Bible. Next week we'll look at studying, memorizing and meditating.

VI. **SLIDE:** Hearing the Word of God

A. So there is a scriptural basis for the public hearing of God's word.

1. Ezra read God's word publicly to God's people after they had returned from exile and Nehemiah had led them in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem.

a) In Nehemiah 8:1-4, the people asked Ezra to read the book of Moses *publicly*.

(1) In fact, they "*told*" him the text says.

(a) So we see that the people had a *desire* to hear the Word.

(2) Second, they were attentive for a long time.

(a) Ezra read from "*early morning until midday*"

i) You think my sermons can be long!

ii) And yet the people were attentive even though it was read for a long time.

2. **SLIDE:** Likewise, Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13, **“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”**

a) **SLIDE:** Don Whitney writes, *“We are to discipline ourselves to go and hear God’s word. Hearing the Word of God is not merely passive listening, it is a discipline to be cultivated.”*

(1) It is not going to hear an academic lecture...

(2) It is going to hear the very Word of God preached.

B. Now there are a number of benefits to hearing the Word of God regularly, but I want to highlight just one of them particularly for us.

1. **SLIDE:** So one benefit of regularly hearing God’s Word is that it often cultivates a hunger for God’s Word.

a) This hunger for hearing the Word regularly will often lead to a desire to read the Bible on your own outside of just hearing it Sunday mornings.

(1) But then the question then becomes: how do I grow in my ability to hear and *listen* to the Word of God?

(a) So we’re making a distinction here...there’s a difference in what we may call passive and active listening.

i) **SLIDE:** One way is through discussing what you have heard with others.

(1) This will help you see what others are getting from hearing the Word.

(2) Because through the example of others you will be able to grow in your ability to listen to God’s word more faithfully.

ii) **SLIDE:** Second, spend time listening to sermons or an audio Bible outside of Sunday mornings.

(1) Many of us in this area may have a reasonably long commute.

- (2) Use that time to listen to the Word more regularly and practice becoming a better listener to God's Word.

(2) SLIDE: Question: How has hearing the Word of God preached or taught helped you meet with God and grow in your relationship with him?

VII. SLIDE: Reading the Word of God

A. Alright, let's talk now about *reading* God's Word.

B. SLIDE: *The Reformation and Reading*

1. There was a time when reading God's Word was essentially impossible for the common person.
 - a) During the years leading up to the early 16th century, the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England would not allow a Bible to be published or written in the language of the common people.
 - b) The only way for the people to know the Bible was to hear it preached by the priests and bishops.
 - (1) And then the Reformation happened.
 - (2) **SLIDE:** In 1516, a man by the name of Desiderius Erasmus had his Greek translation of the Bible printed.
 - (a) There's Erasmus...we'll see him again in eternity...
 - (b) **SLIDE:** One historian described the importance of that event in this way:

This was the first time that the Greek New Testament had been printed. It is no exaggeration to say that it set fire to Europe. Luther translated it into his famous German version of 1522. In a few years there appeared translations from the Greek into most European vernaculars. They were the true basis of the popular reformation.

- i) **SLIDE:** Luther begins to devote his life to getting the word of God to the common man and William Tyndale gives up his life to translate the scriptures into English.
 - (c) **SLIDE:** The same historian goes on to talk about the importance of the personal reading of God's word: **The energy which affected every human life in northern Europe, however, came from a different place. It was not the result of political imposition. It came from the discovery of the Word of God as originally written . . . in the language of the people. Moreover, it could be read and understood, without censorship by the Church or mediation through the Church. . . . Such reading produced a totally different view of everyday Christianity...**
 - i) **SLIDE:** Luther said in the year before he died, **"Let the man who would hear God speak, read the Holy Scripture"**
 - ii) Luther wrote in 1533, **"For a number of years I have now annually read through the Bible twice. If the Bible were a large, mighty tree and all its words were little branches I have tapped at all the branches, eager to know what was there and what it had to offer."**
2. **SLIDE:** Martin Luther and William Tyndale devoted their lives so that those who came after them, including you and I, could read the Scripture for ourselves.
- a) Tyndale actually gave his life for the transition of Scripture...he was burned at the stake in October of 1536 for it...
 - (1) I quoted some Luther, can I give you a quick William Tyndale story..the one-liners this man had were just incredible..
 - (a) When Tyndale was 28 years old, he was a scholar spending a lot of his time reading Erasmus' Greek Translation of the New Testament.

i) Tyndale saw Reformation truths more clearly in the Greek New Testament and that made him suspicious in the Catholic house where he was staying.

(1) We're told that one day an exasperated Catholic scholar at dinner with Tyndale said, "It would be better if we were without God's law than the pope's."

(2) In response, Tyndale spoke these famous words, "**I defy the Pope and all his laws....If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scripture than he will.**"

(b) Years later, his last words, as he was being burned alive were, "*Lord, open the king of England's eyes.*"

i) If you ever hold a copy of the King James Bible in your hands, you are holding God's answer to William Tyndale's prayer in a very literal way...

ii) Having the most famous English translation of the Bible named after the King of England...

(1) And because Tyndale gave his life so that the Bible could be translated into English...you, me, and yes even plowboys, were able to read God's Word.

3. Two powerful realities strike me when I think about this:

a) One, people actually died so that we could read God's Word.

(1) William Tyndale was burned alive to get God's Word to us.

(a) **SLIDE:** If you go to the Luther Memorial in Worms, Germany...

(b) You'll see seated, Jan Hus, Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe...

i) People who died so that we can read this book.

- b) And two, we have the privilege and gift of holding in our hands and beholding with our eyes the very words of God. These are no mere bedtime stories.
- (1) **SLIDE:** So again, Luther said, **“Let the man who would hear God speak, read the Holy Scripture.”**
- (2) St. Jerome said it like this: **When we pray, we speak to God. When we read Scripture, God speaks to us.**
- (3) Or Justin Peters: **If you want to hear God speak, read your Bible. If you want to hear God speak audibly, read your Bible out loud.**
- c) So, there’s our historical, biographical motivation for meeting with God through His Word. Now let’s look at our scriptural motivation.

VIII. **SLIDE:** Scriptural Basis for Reading

- A. **SLIDE:** I think Matthew 4:4 is a key text on taking God’s word in. Jesus is in the wilderness...He’s being tempted by Satan and He says: **“It is written, man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God.”**
1. Here’s the parallel.
- a) If you don’t eat physical food, you die.
- b) Likewise, if you don’t eat spiritual food, you die.
- (1) Reading God’s word is one of the primary ways that we spiritually feast and without it we will spiritually dry up...
- (a) Think about it like this:
- c) It is interesting that Jesus often asks, “Haven’t you read...?”
- (1) Matt. 12:3 – Have you not read what David did when he was hungry...?”
- d) And when he is tempted by Satan in the desert he responds, “It is written...”
- (1) There is an assumption here that reading is taking place.

B. So, what are some practical things we can think about that would help us be more consistent and profitable in reading God's Word? **Here are three:**

1. **SLIDE: Find the time**

a) As people who are prone to wander and prone to distraction, it is our heart and flesh's first inclination to steer away from God.

(1) It is easy to make excuses to not spend daily time with God in His word.

"I'm too tired today."

(2) My own phrase, *"We had a rough night with our kids, so I can't get up that early."*

(3) *"I have to be at work early today so I can't spend time in God's word."*

b) We live in one of the busiest cities in the world, and even though we're still in the midst of a pandemic, you might be even busier.

(1) But remember that the Word of God will refresh us if only we'll go to the stream to take a drink.

c) ***When should I read?***

(1) There is no hard and fast rule to this.

(a) Some people are morning people and some are night people.

(b) Find what works for you and roll with it.

d) ***How much time do I need?***

(1) What is important is not the time you spend reading or praying....what is important is that you meet with God.

(a) This could be for 20 minutes.

(b) It could be for an hour.

(c) It could be more or less.

(2) Just hear this:

(a) It is better to read a little and understand what you read and have it affect your life than to read a lot and not get anything out of it.

(b) And while time is not the most important thing, it is often the case that the more time you spend with someone, the better you'll get to know them.

i) The more time you spend with God the more you will know Him as well.

e) What should I read?

(1) First, I think it is important to make a plan.

(a) If you sit down with God's word every day and haven't thought about what to do once you get there, you'll probably find yourself just wandering through the text with no consistency and little fruit.

(b) So I think it is helpful to think in advance about what you need to read.

i) There is no science to this.

ii) This class is not about giving you a formula that will guarantee you to have a good meeting with God.

iii) You might need to plan for 30 minutes.

iv) You might need to plan for an hour.

(1) Maybe less.

(2) Maybe more.

(2) So once you're there, what do you read?

(a) There are lots of plans to help you read through the Bible in a year.

(b) You might want to pick one Old Testament book and one New Testament book to be reading through at the same time.

(c) In your Titus Guide if your in a small group, we encourage you to read through the passage a few times that the sermon will be on the next Sunday.

i) On the class website, I've put 6 different 30 day Bible Reading Plans on there for you

- (1) There is nothing set in stone.
- (2) But you should think about it and probably make a plan.

C. **SLIDE:** Meditate

1. We will talk more in-depth about this next week, but I do want to mention it here.
 - a) Meditation is important because our minds are so cluttered that it is easy to read a long passage of scripture (or anything else for that matter) and not remember two hours later what it was that you read.
 - (1) If this is the case with you then you won't get very much out of your time in the Word.
 - (2) You won't find yourself being conformed to the image of Christ if you can't remember what His Word says and you certainly won't know the Lord better.
 - (a) **SLIDE:** Remember the goal from our definition of meeting with God:

Daily time that we set aside for fellowship with God in His Word, in prayer and through the church so that we would know Him more, know ourselves in light of Him, and know the world according to God's perspective.
 - i) Either way, you will probably not remember a thing if you don't single out a portion of your reading to focus on throughout this day.
 - (1) Consider picking out one word, phrase, verse or idea from the text and think about it more deeply than you have read the rest of the passage.
 - (2) That's what meditation is.
 - (a) It is focusing on something that you might know it better.
 - (3) This might even entail asking a few questions:
 - (a) **SLIDE:** Why did God say this? What does this tell me about God? Is there a way that I can specifically apply this to my life today?

2. **SLIDE:** Lastly, and most importantly, we should also briefly mention the role of the Holy Spirit in our hearing and reading God's Word.
 - a) **In John 14:26, Jesus speaks of how the Holy Spirit "will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you".**
 - (1) The Holy Spirit, who dwells within us as believers, will teach us the truth as we spend time in God's Word.
 - (2) We'll unpack this more next week, but what a promise!
- D. **SLIDE:** Question: What suggestions do you have for others in class for growing in regularly meeting with God through reading Scripture?

(Close in prayer)

1. **SLIDE:** One a benefit of regularly hearing the Word of God is that it leads you to worship.
 - a) Like we said, hearing the Word preached is not an academic lecture...
 - b) It is also not going to be roused by a motivational speech...
 - (1) There may be some academia in there and I pray each week you feel motivated but that's not the point of public preaching of God's Word.

(a) ~~Sixty years ago, Martyn Lloyd-Jones was asked if preaching should be more doctrinal or application-oriented.~~

i) ~~He said the answer is neither.~~

(1) ~~Because he said the goal of the lecturer is to leave you with information and a page full of notes.~~

(2) ~~The goal of the motivational speech is to leave you with action steps.~~

(3) ~~The goal of a Word-Centered Gospel sermon is to leave you worshipping.~~

(a) ~~Martyn Lloyd-Jones said there ought to come a time when the Word causes your pen to go down and your eyes to go up and you quit writing down all the neat things you're learning or all the things you need to do for God and you say, oh my God look what you've done for me.~~