

Rooted Week 3
Hearing God Through His Word – 1 Peter 2:1-3

You all remember the “Got Milk?” commercials? Did you know the first “Got milk” commercial was directed by Michael Bay? Everybody had their favorite commercial. My favorite was the guy who dies, and he goes to a place filled with opulence and luxury. The furnishings are exquisite. The décor is fabulous. And situated all over the place are these serving dishes loaded with gourmet cookies, pastries, and chocolates. The place seems to be an absolute paradise. That is until our recent arrival in the afterlife, after stuffing his mouth full of cookies and chocolates, opens the refrigerator door to find nothing but empty milk cartons. In frustration he hollers, “How could heaven not have any milk?” And a voice says, “Who said this was heaven?” Then the words flash up on the screen: Got Milk?

What made those commercials work is the element of truth in them. There are certain things that we eat that just cry out for milk. Nothing else will do. Just imagine a fresh baked chocolate chip cookie right out of the oven. It's hot to the touch, and when you finally can get enough of a hold on it you break it apart, steam rises and pieces flake off the cookie and fall to the table, and the still melted chocolate chips stretch between the two pieces as you pull them apart. Mmmm!.....Anybody hungry?

Now that just cries out for milk. You certainly don't want a big glass of orange juice with your fresh chocolate chip cookie. A frosty mug of root beer doesn't quite fit the bill. With that cookie you crave a big, ice cold glass of milk.

The only person who might crave milk more at this point would be a baby. When a baby wants his milk a baby wants his milk. Every mommy and daddy knows. Those tiny, still developing vocal chords can reach decibels matched only by a rocket launch or a rock concert. The baby screams and though he can't talk, everyone knows what he's saying, “GIVE ME MILK NOW!” To say that a baby craves milk, is not an exaggeration. It is this natural craving that the Dairy Council built on for its “Got Milk” campaign.

Though the apostle Peter never saw one “Got Milk” commercial, he certainly would have appreciated them. In 1 Peter 2, the apostle builds on that same natural craving to describe our desire for God's word.

1 Peter 2:1-3

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

This week in Rooted we're talking about listening to God and hearing God's voice, and the primary language God uses is His revealed Word. Certainly, God can speak to our hearts. He can guide us with inner impressions. He can speak with a still small voice, but the bottom line is if

you want to hear God you need to listen to His word. This is the sword the Spirit. The Spirit speaks through the word, and is confirmed by the Word. The Spirit brings to mind the right Scripture at the right moment to empower you to do the right thing. This is why Peter wants them to crave the milk of God's word.

When It's Good to be Like a Baby - Desire

Usually, it is not a good thing to be like a baby. If we tell someone, "Don't be a baby," we are not complimenting them. But Peter tells us that there is at least one way we should be like babies, that is in our desire for God's word. There is nothing stronger than a baby's desire for milk, and that we should have the same desire for scriptural nourishment. Peter is not saying, "be like babies." He is saying crave the milk of Scripture like babies crave milk.

The desire Peter is talking about here is no mamby pamby, half-hearted desire. It is a full-throated, no-holds-barred craving. It is a passionate longing, an intense thirst that nothing other than the truth of God's Word will satisfy.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I have an uncomfortable relationship with desire. My desires often get me into trouble. My desires are focused on all the wrong things. Throughout so much of my Christian journey I feel like I've been fighting my desires. I pray that God would take those desires away, or lessen them to make them more manageable. Does that describe any of you?

I have a hard time thinking of desire as a good thing. But Peter is talking here about a strong insatiable desire. When we learn to desire the right things, desire is good. Desire for other women is not good for me, but desire for my wife is a good thing. Desire is not wrong. Wrong desires are wrong.

What if our problem is not that our desires are too strong, but our desires are too weak? God created us with desire. He made us passionate people. He wants us to be intense about some things, the right things. Consider the words of C.S. Lewis:

If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

Wow, think about that! Your struggle with sin is not because your desires too much, but because want too little.

This Ain't No Skim Milk - God's Pure Word

Now take this strong desire and apply it to God's word. That's what the pure spiritual milk in

verse 2 is talking about. That's what leads into these verses in chapter 1. In chapter 1, verses 10-12, Peter speaks of the prophets and apostles who "*spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you.*" That's the word. In verse 23 he assures them they have been born of imperishable seed which he says is "*the living and enduring word of God.*" He then quotes from the prophet Isaiah about how the word of the Lord endures forever, and then tells them in the last verse of chapter 1, "*this is the word that was preached to you.*" So, when he tells them to crave pure, spiritual milk, he's talking about God's word.

Milk is a metaphor for God's word elsewhere in Scripture. In Hebrews 5:12-14 it talks about moving on from the milk of the word to feeding on the solid food of God's word. The Christians in Hebrews had been bottle feeding on the word for years, but they never matured. They were like a 6 year old that was still breast feeding, and so he tells them they are still infants drinking milk when they should be feeding on the meat of Scripture.

Here, Peter is telling us to crave the milk. Do Peter and Hebrews disagree? Is this a contradiction in the Bible? Not at all. There are times we need milk and there are times we need meat. The recipients of the Hebrews letter were lazy and immature. They had been bottle feeding for years, but they never grew up. They needed solid food in their diet. Sometimes that's us.

But sometimes we need milk. Who needs the milk of God's word? Well, first of all new Christians need milk. They need the basic truths of God's Word. Until we are thoroughly grounded in the basic principles of the Christian faith, we must maintain a steady diet of the milk of God's Word.

Another time that we need milk as Christians is when we're facing hard times. Struggles can cause us to lose sight of the basics. When the going gets tough, we need to be reminded of what it's all about. This is true of us spiritually, as well as physically. After you grow up, when you get sick you don't eat fried chicken. You go back to your milk. You go back to the basics.

We also need milk after some sort of failure or setback in our lives. What does a football coach do after his team loses several games to turn thing around. They go back to the basics. They work on the fundamentals, Crisp patterns, good hard shoulder tackles, blocking all the way through, protecting the pocket, running with the ball tucked up and both ends covered. Getting back to the basics helps you get back on your feet.

This was certainly true of Peter's audience. They were facing persecution. They were cut off and left out of most of the society around them. Times were tough. They needed spiritual milk. But whether you need the milk of the word or the meat of the word, the point is still the same, you need to desire the word.

Some of us here this morning desperately need the milk. You need to nourish your soul with the simple truths of grace and mercy and the assurance of the gospel of hope. You need to

know that God loves and that he is in control no matter what happens. You need to master the ABCs of trust and obedience, and learn to follow Jesus in some of the most basic ways.

Others of us, though, it's time to start feeding on the meat and potatoes. You've been coming to church and getting bottle fed for far too long. It's time to grow up. It's time to learn to prepare your own meals and feed yourself. Think of it this way, within these pages is the equivalent of a pantry that has all the ingredients needed to prepare delicious, five-star gourmet meals, but you won't even make mac-n-cheese. It's time for Christians to start preparing their own food and feeding themselves. There are way too many Christians who don't know the word. They are biblically illiterate and that's got to change.

I've got a friend who recently travelled to Yellowstone. Upon entering the park they were given a piece of paper and there were signs everywhere that said, "Do not feed the bears." However, he drives a few miles into the park and what does he see – people feeding the bears. He later asked a ranger about it. The ranger told him how in the winter they have to carry away the bodies of dead bears. They lost their ability to feed themselves when times got lean. That's a picture of a lot of Christians. Their faith does alright as long as times are okay, but when the going gets tough, they can't feed themselves, and their faith withers and dies.

When we crave the milk and the meat of God's word, we will not be left wanting. God will not leave us parched. He gives us the milk we need in abundance. The meat he gives is the finest free range, grass fed, organic beef.

My Compliments to the Chef-A Taste for the Word

God's Word does not disappoint. God's Word satisfies. Peter talks here about tasting that the Lord is good. It's not knowledge or information that satisfies. It's God that satisfies. He fulfills you through the word. The word Peter uses for taste contains the idea of flavor. When we partake of God's word, we are savoring the richness of God. The milk He gives is pure, and sweet. This is no watered down skim milk. It is whole spiritual milk. The best way to experience the goodness of God, is to develop a taste for His Word, a bountiful feast prepared just for you.

Once you develop a taste for the Bible, nothing else comes close. Perhaps no one knew the richness of the Lord and succulent variety of God's Word more than David. In Psalm 34:8, he invites us, "*Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who trust in him!*" and in Ps. 119:103 he compliments the chef, "*How sweet are your words to my taste; they are sweeter than honey. Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life.*"

Once you get a taste, a taste isn't enough. It's kind of like Lays potato chips, "I bet you can't eat just one." We have a taste, and the taste is good. It is rich and full. It is satisfying, yet it only whets our appetites. We soon find ourselves craving more and more. But don't worry, Scripture is the one addiction that is constructive

Our culture spends millions and millions of dollars every year trying to get us to taste one thing or another. We are sold on the flavor of chicken, gum and cola. But there is nothing that comes close to the Word of God.

Spoiling our Appetites - Attitudes that Poison God's Word

If I could just stop the sermon here, it would be wonderful, but Peter says there are some attitudes that spoil our appetite for God's word. If you've filled yourself up on junk, it doesn't matter how well-prepared the meal is, you won't be hungry for it. Peter mentions several things that spoil our appetite for God's Word.

Malice

First, he mentions malice. This is a general feeling of ill-will. This is where you want to see harm come to someone. I have been amazed over the years how vindictive and destructive people can purposefully be in the church. They say the most vitriolic things. They conspire to undermine and sabotage. They are venomous and spiteful.

If you sense such feelings bubbling up in your hearts, beware. I don't care how justified you think you are, this attitude poisons your own faith. You will get nothing out of the Bible. You will get nothing out of church. You will miss out on the joys and blessings of God, and you will be both the wound and the salt in it for everyone else.

Deceit

Peter next lists deceit. Those of you with older translations will see guile. Same thing. It is to mislead people. It is to have ulterior motives. It is to use people to accomplish your own selfish agenda under the guise of noble purposes. In case, you've forgotten, let me remind you. The only glory here belongs to Him.

Hypocrisy

Next on Peter's list is hypocrisy. Originally, this word referred to an actor in the theater. It was someone who played the role of another through the use of a mask. By extension it came to refer to anyone who pretended to be someone they are not. The church is the place for honesty and openness. Yet how often do we wear our mask. We try to make people think that we are better than we are.

Instead of leaning on each other, and getting the help we need, we all trying to impress each other. Well, God is not impressed, and He is not fooled, so let's drop the act, and get down to being authentic and genuine. If you're here just to play church, go somewhere else.

Broken lives, yeah we take those. We got spiritual superglue. Those who are hurting are welcome here. We know the great physician. If you're living in a mess, you can find a home here. Jesus cleans whiter than snow. Anyone who is genuinely asking. seeking, knocking,

searching, hoping, looking is invited to come and join us. But if you're a pretender, a fake, you're just poison. So take it somewhere else.

Jealousy

Next, Peter mentions jealousy. This is to envy someone else while harboring feelings of bitterness toward them. Not only do you want what they have, but you're mad at them because they've got it. If Scripture is spiritual food, jealousy is pure, heart stopping, artery clogging cholesterol. Jealousy is a sure sign our focus is on the wrong thing.

As long as we keep of focus on Jesus, we won't have a chance to grow jealous. If someone else succeeds, we will rejoice with them. If something bad happens, we'll see their need. And we'll always be thankful for what we have, not tormented by what we don't.

Slander

Last on Peter's list is slander. I love how the New Living Translation puts it. It calls it backstabbing. That's what this is talking about – when we sling words at our brothers and sisters in Christ like weapons. How sad it is when the children of God after church, in a classroom before Sunday School, on the phone during the week use the opportunity to assault and murder with words the character of a brother or sister in Christ. We nitpick at pet peeves in the lives of others, while there are glaring inadequacies in our own lives. Just remember this: before you open your big mouth and start ripping into someone else, everyone else could do just the same to you. This is why Jesus told us to remove the log from our own eye, before we start picking at the speck in someone else's.

I don't care how much you read the Bible, if you have these attitudes festering in your heart, it will spoil you appetite. There are some who don't read the Bible for spiritual nourishment. They are not looking to grow in the fullness of their salvation.

The Word of God can be used as either a tool or a weapon. As a tool, it builds up. It makes lives better. As a weapon it tears down. It destroys. People with these poisonous attitudes use the Word as a weapon. They're looking only to win arguments, put others in their place, or prove someone else wrong. They go to the Bible not looking for nutrition, but for ammunition

This is why we make sure that we are rid of all these poisons before we go to the Word. Then God's Word is rich and nourishing.

Conclusion:

In the early to mid-1800's, a spiritual movement was ignited on the American frontier. It arose out of a grassroots desire of people to be free. Not only did these pioneers seek freedom from the political shackles of the old world, they sought to rid themselves of the religious and denominational barnacles that had encrusted themselves on Christianity over the centuries. People wanted to pursue a relationship with God unencumbered by all of the manmade rules

and traditions. They wanted a faith built on nothing but God's Word.

Fire breathing preachers fanned this flame into a great spiritual movement known as the restoration movement. It was called restoration, because these people wanted to restore the Bible to its proper place in the church. They wanted to restore New Testament Christianity.

These lowly preachers came to be some of the greatest preachers of the Word of that Century. They discoursed and debated with the greatest intellectual minds of the day. They were able to do this, because they had an in-depth knowledge of God's Word

And it wasn't just the preachers. The common Christian in the pew knew his or her Bible backwards and forwards. They were known as a people of the book. They were defined by their love of God's word. This movement swept across the nation, and by the turn of the Century represented the largest and fastest growing group of churches in the United States.

In our day, however, that tremendous, thorough knowledge of God's Word has been lost. We are biblically illiterate. We have so many translations, and Bible study tools available to us, yet we know so little of the Word. Son-Rise Christian Church descends from that great movement. We need to recapture that passion for the Scriptures. We need to become people of the book once again.

We need to taste and see that the Lord is good. We need to crave the milk of the Word and move on to the bountiful feast that has been set before us. The table has been set. The meal is prepared. Dinner is ready. Can you smell it? It's good. Come taste and see.