
Building Bible Literacy Part II

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Eat God's Word!

Revelation 10:8-11

How many people do you know (perhaps yourself) who feel that the Bible is boring or too difficult or that they will never need these intense Bible study methods? Maybe what holds you back is the work ethic involved. Well, perhaps if you are never going to teach and you just want to learn His precepts, you do not need all the tools; you just need His Word and a desire to pursue it on a regular basis. However, even those who pursue reading the Bible on a regular basis can get frustrated and discouraged, and thus give it up. We do not want this to happen to you. It has happened to me many times; Bible study can be wearing at times. That is why we need a few ideas, techniques, and/or accountability to keep us on track.

In Revelation 10:8-11, God asks a strange thing of John; he asks him to "Take it and eat it," as in, *take God's Word and eat it!* This refers to "grasping" as in taking food for pleasure and nourishment. However, before we can be nourished, we have to obtain it, and then we can eat and digest it. This applies to God's Word in that we have to get it, read it, understand it, and then apply it (Psalm 119:103).

But, if we really examine what He is saying, it is not so strange after all that we all must "eat" God's Word, the Bible. If we want a productive and purposeful Christian life, we have to get it in us first. Furthermore, before we can proclaim God message to others as a lifestyle or in words, it must be received, and it must convict and transform. Thus, to declare God's message so it can be heard by others, we have to have digested it. Before we can do that, we have to know it, as in *know it before we live it—and before we give it*. God told John to "eat" because he had to undergo conviction that was both bitter and sweet; it was bitter because of its news of suffering and conviction and sweet for its blessings of communion and restoration with God, as what we gain is so sweet. Thus, we may see another fear here, a fear of conviction, perhaps the reason so many of my colleagues do not get into His Word.

This passage is more about receiving God's Word for life—like food that is necessary and instrumental for us to survive and thrive; it is for sustenance and joy, as His precepts are. Then, He says to us and John that "your stomach will sour," perhaps indicating that the contents of this scroll will also contain suffering and a message of judgment that the people will not like because when we receive "bad news," it will "sour" us (as in sadden us), from all of these events coming in Revelation chapter 11. But, for our application, this also refers to the taking in of His Word; as we do, His Word comes across to our will and ideas and we will be challenged and convicted.

Why are they both bitter and sour? Because, God's ways must go deep within us, changing us from the inside out. His precepts convict and challenge us inside and out so to move us from our means and ways to His Way. Many people do not like this, even those in leadership, because it means they have to relinquish their will to His.

Thus, leadership goes from being pretentious and arrogance-based to becoming Christ-driven, and many people really do not want that. They say they do, but they do not. Pride and self will are just too powerful and alluring for some because they cause us to transform and be challenged—a process that takes its toll on our will, satisfaction, resolution, and pride. Its ultimate bitterness is the cost of our surrender; as we relinquish ourselves to Him, He becomes in us more and we become less to ourselves.

But he also says it is sweet, “sweet as honey,” conveying to us God’s goodness, grace, and mercy, and that through His Word, both written and Spirit-led, we have *good news* from God’s promises and our communion with Him, through which we receive His instructions and the knowledge of His nature including His grace, mercy, and goodness (Psalm 19:10; 119:103; Ezek. 2:3). This happens when His Word becomes a greater part of us, affecting all we are and do. Yet, its positive sweetness is that it enhances and improves us beyond measure, and this is far, far greater than what we think we might lose. We can quickly forget its sweetness when all we see is what we think we lose rather than the bounty of what we gain (Rom. 12; Heb 4:12).

Conversely, we are called to heed God’s Word, to cling to His precepts which are sweet, and take them seriously; this can be bitter as we must allow His conviction to remove what is in His way for our growth and betterment, and be pointed to His Worth and Glory. If not, there will be judgment from our own misdeeds, accumulating and implementing their way back to us, as well as opening us up to God’s judgment (Num. 5:23-31; Prov. 5:3-4; 24:13-14; Rom. 1:18-32; Rev. 7:13-14).

There is also a warning in this Revelation passage that His Word is not to be ignored or rejected because that would be the same as rejecting Him. It is also a warning that obedience may have a cost, and that we, too, will “sour” or suffer for the cause of Christ as we offer His “sweetness,” such as forgiveness. As Christians, we are the representatives of God; yet, others may reject the message as well as the messenger—both God and us. Our allegiance is to Christ. We Christians are in Christ, and are a part of a greater Kingdom than one of race or nationality. This also refers to the *Abrahamic Promise* (Gen 12; 18:18; 22:18; Is. 60:1-5; Rev. 7:9-17; 11:9) which indicates that God’s purpose and plan is inclusive to all; there are no peoples that are not a part of His will and plan; His purpose will be accomplished and nothing can stop Him. His message is universal as it not only applies to Christians, but to all people of all time (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 11:2).

Questions

Read Psalm 119: 1-

1. How is God’s Word like food?
2. How has God’s Word been both sour and sweet to you? How has the Christian life been sour and sweet to you?
3. How have you seen bitterness become a barrier that some people refused to trespass? How has bitterness been an obstacle to you?
4. What would it take to see bitterness as a challenge to go deeper and further with

what Christ has for you?

5. Why do you suppose that the Gospel message and any biblical principle must first be taken, convicting and transforming us, before we can impart it to others?
6. What does it mean to you to be convicted? What should it mean? What does it take for you to experience conviction? How have you gone through this in the past? How has it been both bitter and sweet?
7. How is being a messenger of His principles an awesome privilege and responsibility? How is it that what we gain is so sweet? How is it bitter?
8. What is the “bitter,” the toll on your will, satisfaction, resolution, and pride? What about the cost of your surrender? How can your surrender enhance and improve you beyond measure?
9. How is sin sweet at first and seem good? How does sin become bitter as it ferments and works its way upon us, corrupting and destroying? If sin is so destroying, why is it so alluring? Do you think people get away with sin?
10. How can your Bible reading be a defense against sin and help you avoid poor choices and willful disobedience?
11. How do our poor judgments and misdeeds accumulate and find their way back to us to harm us? Why do so many people make bad judgments and not think ahead?
12. Do you realize that in spite of whatever we endure, our reward will be far, far greater or sweeter?
13. Do you also realize that our attitude and what we do can sow bitterness from our own actions when we could have the sweetness of trusting and obeying Him?
14. What will it take and how can you implement these precepts in your church? When will you do it? Who can help you?