



SERMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS for the week of June 28, 2020

“Word Power”

Rev. Ron Oldenkamp

Theme/concept

A person who is fully alive in Christ hungers for God's word. In our Vision Frame we say, "We experience the renewing of our minds by the transforming power of God's word, the authority for what we believe and how we behave."

Application

God's word satisfies our souls, instructs our minds, empowers our wills and directs our daily steps.

Charge:

Feast on God's word.

Icebreaker (for groups)

The Israelites ate manna from heaven, day after day. If you had to pick one food to eat for a week straight, what would you pick?

Reflections on the sermon

What aspect of Scripture included in this week's message spoke to you in a new way?

Scripture

Deuteronomy 8:1-10 (New International Version)

Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors.² Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.⁵ Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.

⁶ Observe the commands of the Lord your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him.⁷ For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills;⁸ a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey;⁹ a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.

¹⁰ When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

Psalm 119:72 (NIV)

The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

1 Peter 1:24-25 (NIV)

“All people are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,
²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever.”

Isaiah 40:6-8 (NIV)

A voice says, “Cry out.”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

“All people are like grass,
and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.

⁷The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the LORD blows on them.

Surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God endures forever.”

John 6:67-69 (NIV)

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

John 1:1-18 (NIV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”) ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NIV)

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you

wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Breaking down the Scripture

1. How does Deuteronomy 8 make clear from the very beginning of the chapter that there are clear benefits to following the Lord's commands, and conversely, consequences for failing to follow them? What are the benefits? What are the consequences?
2. How does Deuteronomy 8:2 explain some of the trials the Israelites had endured? How had God used that time in their history for God's purposes?
3. What is human longevity, as described in Isaiah 40:6-8? How does this compare to the longevity of God's word? What are some reminders you might use in your own life to keep this perspective when you become overly fixated on today's troubles?
4. According to 2 Timothy 3:16, what are the four primary uses of Scripture? See if you can recall them from memory. If this is not already a memory verse for you, consider copying it down on an index card or Post-it and committing it to heart.
5. What is the end goal of those four uses of Scripture? (See 2 Timothy 3:17.) How does this apply to your own life?

Going deeper

1. Re-examine the circumstances the Israelites found themselves in at the time the words in Deuteronomy 8 were spoken to them and recorded for us. Why would the Israelites need a reminder of God's provision? Why do we still need such reminders on a daily basis?

2. In Deuteronomy 8:7-9, the Israelites are given a vivid description of the land the Lord is giving them. Is there such a promised land for believers today? If so, what might that look like?

3. How does Psalm 119 show us the value of the law as set forth in Scripture?

4. Note that 1 Peter 1:24-25 refers to another passage (Isaiah 40:6-8), a common practice in the Bible. How does this show that Scripture relies on other Scripture as an authority? Do you give Scripture greater authoritative weight compared to other sources? Why or why not? What are some competing “authorities” in your own life?

5. The Gospel of John begins by describing “the Word,” the Lord Jesus Christ. Note each time the Word is mentioned. How does this expand upon or refine your knowledge of the Trinity?

Reflection questions

1. Deuteronomy 8:3 explains that the Israelites’ hunger and God’s provision of manna were intended to teach God’s people. What work does the Lord need to do in your heart to make you receptive to God’s word?

2. When we spend time in God’s word daily, we experience a renewing of our minds. What types of things do you find your mind ends up “filled with” besides God’s word? Do these other influences work in tandem with Scripture, or compete for “mental space” in your head? How can you ensure that the primary influence in your heart is life-giving, instead of life-draining?

3. In John 6:67-69, Jesus asks his disciples, ““You do not want to leave too, do you?” How does Simon Peter answer? If Jesus asked you that question today, how would you answer? What do you find calling you away from Jesus?

4. We are reminded that the word of God “empowers our will” so that we are able to live out God’s kingdom purposes and experience a deeper relationship with the Lord. Do you find yourself trying to live under your own willpower? In what areas do you need to have your will empowered? If you are meeting with a group, take time to pray for each other’s areas of struggle, as a reminder that we are uplifted by the prayers and encouragement of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Closing prayer

Dear Lord, our hearts are full of gratitude for your word, yet we confess that we do not always prioritize it in our lives the way we should. Help us keep our minds focused on you, and renewed by your Holy Spirit, especially when we are distracted by the concerns of this turbulent world. Protect our hearts, minds, and bodies, Lord. Amen.