

Why Do I Study God's Word? One Woman's Heart

My first emotion: anger! My first response: blame! My first question: Why me? In the heat of the moment, this was my initial reaction. Then the Holy Spirit brought God's Word to bear upon my present reality. It spoke straight to my need. It targeted my sinful response. It sliced to the core of my self-preservation and pride. And then it presented me with the beauty of a merciful and grace-filled response. Soaking on what was true led me to soberness, repentance, and asking: "How can I trust the Lord in this?"

I want to be a woman of purity and of fruitfulness and of enduring hope to the very end of my life. That's why I study God's Word.

Studying God's word has a purifying effect on the life of a believer. *Hebrews* describes God's word as "*quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword . . . a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" (4:12) That means His Word is alive, at work in me, able to slice right through my inward thoughts, able to penetrate deep into my settled opinions, and skilled at passing judgment on my strongly held attitudes and mindsets. I desperately need that cleansing and discerning work in my heart if I desire purity. At the point of salvation, I am made pure by the imputed righteousness God gives me as I put my faith in Jesus' atoning work on the cross. But my merciful Father continues to purify my heart in a sanctification process through the decades as I engage His Word and apply it to daily living with all of its joys and challenges.

Fruitful living requires a routine review of God's word. The apostle Paul, in bolstering his young mentee Timothy, reminds him that "*all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17) If I want to be a fruitful woman who is complete, thoroughly fitted and equipped to do good works, then I must back up to the beginning of the verse and apply the prerequisite statements. The criterion is to graciously receive His truthful teachings, His conviction of sin, and His fatherly discipline. If I want to be a woman who is prepared to serve, rather than insecure; ready to serve, rather than reluctant; and disciplined to serve, rather than given to selfish desires, I must be a student of His Word.

Addressing the inner quality of enduring hope, the Apostle Paul writes: "*for whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*" (Rom. 15:4) Life, by God's design, sometimes tests our faith. If I want to be a woman who walks through tests with patience and endurance, hanging onto the hope that these trials are doing a good work in me and conforming me to the likeness of Jesus, then I must be a learner of His Word. There is no shortcut to a life of hope, but through patient endurance, standing on the truth that I can trust God's goodness in all things.

Purification, fruitfulness, and resilient hope are anticipated outcomes of studying God's word, but along the journey, the Lord continues to surprise me. No, I'm not surprised by all the interruptions and pressures that distract me from His word. No, I'm not amazed by how little I know . . . or can retain. No, I'm not startled by my persistent struggle with my flesh. But I am constantly surprised with the joy that results in a growing and maturing love relationship with the Lord. He finds joy in me, and I in Him! As I engage His word, I'm not just interacting with a passage of text, but I'm fellowshiping with my Father. These regular rendezvous engender a blessed assurance that I am His, and He is mine. I am kept and loved and have great worth in His sight. As I walk through my present season of life and look forward to the next, I aspire to purity, fruitfulness, and enduring hope, by the reading and heeding of God's word. And along the journey, I'm surprised and deeply satisfied by His enduring, gentle love.

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