

Several years ago, I was riding on a chartered coach from Singapore to Malaysia to speak for a church camp. On the way there, I overheard two campers having a conversation in the seats in front of me. One of them exclaimed to the other; "*Oh no! I forgot to bring my Daily Bread! Now I can't do my daily devotions!*"

It struck me then that perhaps we have become overly-dependent on written devotional materials rather than to dig and glean from the Word of God and allow the scriptures to speak to us personally. Many of us would queue for hours to hear our *favorite preacher* or spend money to buy their CDs and DVDs. This is great and helpful. But at the same time, we neglect the private discipline of hearing God personally for ourselves through the Word. We prefer to be *spoon-fed* rather than to discover truth for ourselves! Like a typical Singaporean; our mentality is "*Just tell us what to think and we will follow! Just tell us what to eat and we will swallow!*" That's how our entire education system is built upon! But it is time we learn to feed ourselves! It is time we learn to build our capacity to run with horses! If we are willing to go to the Bible and spend time digging it, we will discover that there is a deep well of wisdom that is waiting for us to drink from it.

How many of you need more wisdom? This Book is the ultimate source of divine wisdom!

Psalm 32: 8, 9 – "*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.*"

3 WAYS TO LEARN

King David tells us that there are 3 ways we can learn to grow in wisdom:

1. WE LEARN FROM OUR OWN MISTAKES

I run full speed into the wall – Bang! I broke my nose! So I realized: "*Wall hard, nose soft. Wall win, nose loses!*" I have thus gained a nugget of wisdom. That's good.

2. WE LEARN FROM PEOPLE WE KNOW

John runs full speed into wall. He comes to me and report: "*Wall hard, nose soft. Wall win, nose loses!*" I have again gained a nugget of wisdom but at John's expense. That's even better!

3. WE LEARN FROM PEOPLE WE DON'T KNOW

There is an even better way, which is to learn from great men of God that we have not even met. And these are ancient heroes of the Bible who are waiting to share with us their wisdom from of old.

✚ **King David** will teach us the dangers of flirting with lust.

✚ **Abraham** will teach us to walk in faith.

✚ **Jonah** will teach us that disobedience does not pay.

✚ **Ruth** will show us the beauty of submission.

All these awesome **divine mentors** of the past are waiting to talk to us if only we are willing to turn to them! How can we glean from them unless we take time to *visit* them and *consult* with them? This is what the private devotional life is all about! It is not just a habit we develop or a culture we cultivate because all Christians are expected to do it. But it is really a sacred time to put aside to visit with our Divine Mentors so that God can use their lives to instruct us, counsel us, teach us and watch over us!

No wonder the Psalmist declared:

Psalm 119: 97 – 104 - *“Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word. I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.”*

When I was in **Sydney**, one pastor asked me this: *“How do I help people in my church who tell me that they are not growing, they feel dry and they are not fed in this church?”* This is understandably one of the most frustrating situations that any pastor can face. Not so much because it is a blow to his *ego* but rather, most progressive churches have structured *resources* and *programs* to help their people grow spiritually.

But the key really is this – We must be willing to take *personal responsibility* for our own growth! So if I have anyone come and tell me they are not growing or they are not fed, the first thing I like to put my finger on would be: *“Are you having a consistent and meaningful daily devotional life?”* More often than not, the answer is *“No.”* The problem is not a lack of resources or feeding. It is just that people want to be spoon fed!

Let me illustrate what I mean. - Imagine that my wife is on holiday in **Paris** for 2 weeks. I am left all alone here in **Perth**. Two weeks later, she comes back. When she sees me, I look *skinny* and *emaciated*. My eyes and cheeks look sunken; my body is frail and weak. My stomach is enlarged and bloated. She asks me: *“What happened to you?”* and my reply is, *“I’m not getting fed here. There was no one at home to feed me.”* What do you think she will say? That’s right! She will say: *“You should feed yourself!”* and rightly so!)

Have you ever watched the game show *“Who Wants to Be a Millionaire”*? Whenever you don’t have the answer, there are 3 life-lines:

1. Ask the Audience
2. Call a Friend
3. 50 -50

Did you notice that this is really a metaphor of life? Sometimes when people are not sure what to do, they also:

1. Do what everybody thinks is right
2. Ask a friend to tell them what to do
3. Take a chance and just do it

But as followers of Christ, we need an inner compass that is *calibrated* to the unchanging Word of God. We need to turn to eternal *anchor* of God's Word!

✚ How does God change a man? - The Word of God!

✚ How does God change a nation? - The Word of God!

This Book has the power to change your life! One of the true *distinctiveness* of being disciples of Jesus Christ is the centrality of God's Word in our lives.

2Timothy 3: 14 – 17 - *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God can be thoroughly equipped for EVERY GOOD WORK..."*

In other words, everything we need to be men and women of God is provided in the Bible. Let me take you to one of my *life-verses* and share with you one of my convictions when it comes to the Living & Precious Word of God...

Ezra 7: 10 – *"For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel."*

3 THINGS TO DEVOTE TO:

1. Study God's Word

Develop a life of deep biblical convictions by getting into the study of God's Word for yourself. And remember that you are not simply trying to know the Word of God but to know the God of the Word. We don't just go to the *Word* to know about God but we go to *God* to know His Word. The Bible is not just a book of *messages* but it is a book of *meetings*! It is not just meant for *education* but for *encounters*!

2. Apply God's Word

Truth does not transform lives but truth *applied* transform lives. Knowing God's Word is not the end, it is only the beginning. There is a need to apply the Word of God. We are not just a *Bible-believing* Church but we are a *Bible-Living* Church. It is not just *mastering* the Word but it is being *mastered* by the Word! To do this well, we must first believe God's Word. We can only *apply* what we *believed*. We can only *believe* what we *know*. We can only *know* what we had *studied*.

3. Share God's Word

The Word is not just for our *information* but it is for our *transformation*. We must in our discipleship move beyond the knowledge of God's Word to the transformation of lives through *application* and *sharing*. So study the Word with a commitment to share it with someone else.

It is like what **Stephen Covey** created of the course on "*7 Habits of Highly Effective People*"; required of all his students. They must commit to teach the materials to someone else. The ones who learn most are the ones who teach.

1Peter 1: 23 – 25 talks about the *potency* of God's Word:

✚ “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God...”

This *imperishable* seed of God's Word when it is sown into fertile hearts and nurtured will birth forth life and bring definite change. I remember reading about an excavation in Old London. It was the site of an old temple. In the temple, they found an old altar. On the altar, they found some old seeds of corn. What was interesting was that when they took those seeds and planted them, they *germinated* and sprouted back to life.) This is the power in a seed! But ultimately the plant that grew from those seeds in the end also died.

Why? – Because they were *perishable* seeds. But the seed of God's Word that is planted in your heart is *imperishable* and they will never die! There is life in the Word of God and this life is imperishable and irresistible! That is why I always tell Christian parents with wayward children. I believe that the seed of God's Word planted in them will never die. So keep watering the seeds with prayer & hope until in the fullness of time, it may just germinate and bring forth fruit once again.)

Jesus Himself said in **Matthew 24: 35** – “Heaven and earth will pass away but the Word of God will never pass away.” No wonder Peter calls it “*the living and enduring Word of God*”!

Jesus declared in **John 6: 63** – “*The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you, they are Spirit and they are life.*”

Do you realize that week after week as you come and listen to the preaching of God's Word, God's life is birthing inside of you? Do you know what this really means? Let me illustrate - When you see a tree growing next to a concrete pavement; after some time, cracks will appear on the pavement.

Why? – There is life underneath!

In the old days when they come across granite rocks that are too hard to break; what would they do? One way is to plant seeds in the cracks of the rock. After a while you will see more cracks coming on. Why? – Life is irresistible!

When the Word of God is sown into our hearts and start to grow:

✚ Old *habits* will break!

✚ Old *character traits* will go!

So don't be surprised if you see yourself changing in your *thoughts* and *attitudes* after some time of sitting under the Word of God.

✚ **Hebrews 4: 12** – “*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*”

4 NECESSARY TOOLS

1. Your Bible

Read directly from your Bible.

2. Your Bible Reading Plan

Use a Bible reading plan that will allow you to systematically read the entire Bible in a year. When you miss a day or two, do not give up. Continue the next day and read a bit more to catch up.

3. Your Writing Instrument

Use a pen and mark your Bible. Do not be afraid to 'dirty' your Bible by underlining or circling the word or phrase that God impresses you when you are read.

4. Your Devotional Journal

Write a journal to capture what is important when God speaks to you. I want to encourage all of us in 2012 to get a journal and diligently keep our daily appointment with God and chronicle our journey in this journal.

✚ Why do I believe in journaling?

I have mentors that I meet with regularly and mentorees who meet with me regularly. When I meet my mentors, I always go armed with a few questions that I want to seek their wisdom on. If I have an hour with them, I will take 15 minutes to ask the questions and then I spend the next 45 minutes to listen to them. Wouldn't it be silly of me to take 45 minutes to talk and then leave 15 minutes to listen to their wisdom? And when I listen, they would be honored if I take notes so that I can retain more of what they are saying to me? I cannot depend on my memory because it is limited in capacity. And when I meet my mentorees, I take what I have retained and share it with them. Because my well is full, others can come and drink from my well! And when I share stuff with my mentorees, it delights me when I see them taking notes because I know then that they want to retain what I am sharing with them.

That is what journaling is all about! We are writing down what our Divine mentors are teaching us through the Word and the Holy Spirit. It becomes for us a *wealth of wisdom* that we can pass on to others. Most of my sermons come out of what I have gleaned through these times with God. If we are willing to devote a dedicated time to meditate on God's Word and keep a journal; I believe that by the end of this year; our lives will be radically transformed by the power of God's Word! So go get your Bible and your journal and join me in spending time in the Word of God that will bring *instruction, illumination* and *transformation* to our lives!

CONCLUSION:

Some time ago, I had a meeting with **Jim Chew**, one of the key leaders of **Navigators** in **Perth**. He shared a testimony about his father, the late **Dr Benjamin Chew** who was a Christian statesman in Singapore.

When Dr Benjamin Chew was hospitalized once for surgery; he was put under anesthesia. When that happens, one can become delirious and will utter all sorts of things. Some would swear. Others will talk incoherently. But when Dr Benjamin Chew was under anesthesia, he was quoting from Scriptures and expounding on them! Such was the life of a man who was saturated with the Word!

