

A God-Lived Life

Sample Sermon – Month 1

Peter 1:22-2:3

A God-Lived Life is One that Craves the Word.

- I. The Word makes you who you are.
- II. The Word makes itself important to you.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today we start our stewardship series on the God-lived life. Do you remember the last one we did—the “10 for 10” stewardship challenge? Three weeks of special services were followed by 10 weeks to implement it—to give to God as he would have us. 10% for 10 weeks. Many of you became more thoughtful and intentional in your giving of offerings. And that was great! You hear the word “stewardship,” and normally, that’s the kind of thing you think of—money. God has given us everything, and we want to give back to him our firstfruits, our offerings. And there is a really clear way you can check if you are doing that, isn’t there? Either you are giving 10% of your income to the work of the church or not. But is that really the answer? Is just writing a check the end-all and be-all of a God-lived life? You know that there have been times when you’ve done the activity on something like that without the heart. Just giving an offering doesn’t necessarily equal good financial stewardship.

And it’s not just money, is it? God has given us everything, not just our stuff. He’s given us our time and our health and our intellectual capacity and our relationships and our opportunities. All of it is a gift from God. So, this year, our stewardship campaign is going to talk about way more than money. We’re talking about *living* the God-lived life. And you might notice in the title a double meaning. The only way *we* can live a life for God is because *Jesus*, true God, lived his life for us. His God-lived life inspires ours.

So, each month for the next four, we’ll have a special service with a special Bible study and sermon about what the God-lived life looks like. After each of those, we’ll have a one-month challenge based on that aspect of the God-lived life. So, what is a God-lived life? What does a God-lived life look like? Well, that depends. You realize it, don’t you, that things aren’t always as they seem, aren’t always what they look like, right?

You just heard the reading of the Gospel. Have you heard those stories before? The Pharisee never missed his time in the temple. Like clockwork, he was there for his prayers. He was bringing his offerings. He was consistent. He wore the right clothes, said the right prayers, and did the right things. He gave his tithes and fasted and all of it. Every box was checked on his religious resumé. He was doing it. He was living the God-lived life. Or so it seemed. I’m guessing that after hearing today’s Gospel, none of you then said, “That’s who I want to be like—that Pharisee.” There was something missing, wasn’t there? He was living the *God-looking* life for himself, his own pride, his own reputation. Jesus taught: It was the tax collector, the repentant sinner, who was forgiven, who had a relationship with God. It was the children, the ones who didn’t seem to be worth the time, who receive the kingdom of God. The God-lived life is the one that is a response to a relationship with God that looks to his mercy, not to our doing.

So, where do you fall in that Pharisee/tax collector story? Do you seem to live a God-lived life, or do you live, by the grace of God, a God-lived life? The God-lived life is not just doing the right things. It’s being who God has made you—not someone who lives to gain God’s favor, but who lives because of God’s favor. It’s doing things not because you are told you are supposed to, but because it’s who you

are. It's the difference between going through the motions and experiencing the fulfillment of living your purpose. The God-lived life is a life lived in relationship with God, in reaction to God's love and his life for you.

Today, we focus on the first part of that. First, the **God-lived life** is a life of *being* a disciple, a life that wants to learn more about God, that wants to grow closer to God. The God-lived life is **a life that craves God's Word**. Our text is 1 Peter 1:22-2:3 - ²²**Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.**

Do you see how he starts with what we are and tells us to live like it? Because you are believers, because you've listened to the truth which has made you pure and holy through faith in the work of Christ, he says "show that." Love one another "*deeply*" —the Greek word there conveys the concept of something intense, that doesn't give up—you're passionate and committed to showing it—not just when it's convenient. "**Love one another *deeply*, from the heart.**" And then he says why: ²³**For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.** Why love so committedly? Because you have been born again. You have a whole new life. That living word of God, in other words, the Word of God that does something, it has effect—that *living* word of God makes you who you now are. And it is the enduring word of God. Long after you are gone from this earth—that Word stands. So Peter quotes Isaiah who had written that word eight centuries earlier to make the same point. Isaiah was long dead and gone, but the Word he wrote endures: ²⁴**For, "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.**" Verbum Domini manet in aeternum. Do you remember the sermon on that text? The Word remains. We are here and then gone, but God's Word stands. His promises endure. Then Peter says: **And this is the word that was preached to you.**

Let that sink in. Do you always realize that? It's one thing to agree that God's Word is powerful. That's what he used to create the universe after all. The Word is powerful. We know that. But it's another thing to act on that knowledge. If I really have access to something that powerful, that lasting, that important—I'm going to want to cherish that, right? I'm going to want every opportunity to be connected to its power.

But let's be real. There's probably a part of you today that came to church or tuned in out of duty or habit instead of eager excitement. You've had more than one day when a daily devotion wasn't what you were looking forward to, but what you had to get done...or didn't want at all. That Bible on your shelf or on your phone doesn't always register in your mind when you think of your prized possession or your favorite app.

Think about it. If you sacrificed and went above and beyond to give someone you loved a precious gift and they acted like it didn't matter that much to them, you'd be offended, right? If you saw a guy get down on his knee and give his girlfriend a diamond ring he had spent every dime he had on and then some—and then you saw her toss it to the side like it was nothing—you'd be appalled. What does God see when he sees our attitude toward the Word, that precious gift he has given us? What does he see when he sees our attendance at Bible study, our faithfulness in daily devotion? Yikes.

But it is the living and enduring Word of God. It's the Word that tells us of the God-lived life. Jesus, the Word made flesh, lived the life God demands. He cherished the Word—even as a 12-year-old in the temple. He used the powerful Word, defeating every one of Satan's temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4) and throughout his life. And Jesus gives us salvation through that very same Word. The Word tells us of his forgiveness, even for our failures to value his Word. It tells us of the blood he shed and the death he died so that we are saved, so that you are purified through that same Word. This is why

you have this (Word). God gave it to you because he desperately wants you to have life, his life, and have it to the full.

And since that's the life God *has* given you, Peter goes on: **Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.** Since you are God's children, it doesn't make sense to live in those ways. Instead... Verse 2: 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.**

It's been a few years since my babies were newborn, but still, the picture couldn't be more vivid, could it? What happens when you give a baby a bottle? Once they realize what it is, they latch on. They don't want to let go. And if you try to take that bottle away, what happens? They're furious, right? Their skin gets red. Their fists clench. They scream at the top of their lungs. If they could form words, you know what they would be saying: Give me that back!

Think about why. Well, first, they like it. It tastes good to them. And they need it. Deep down they know they need it to grow. Without it, they die. It's a matter of life and death.

Now translate that picture to the point Peter makes with it. God's Word is just as necessary for our faith. Without regular feedings in God's Word, our faith gets weaker and eventually dies. And God's Word tastes just as sweet. What could be better than to hear that you are loved by God? So of course, Satan wants you to take it for granted.

I can't help but think of the post-BIC syndrome. You know what that is? BIC, Bible Information Class, usually the first Bible study people get involved in here. I don't know how many people have told me that their 12 weeks in Bible Information Class were the best thing that ever happened to their faith. As a new Christian or someone coming back to it after a while, that regular commitment to a corporate Bible study, digging into God's Word, strengthened their faith more than anything they had ever done. And that's good. You've tasted that the LORD is good. But then what happens? Satan tries to convince you that you don't need it anymore. I mean think about our Wednesday night classes or Sunday morning Bible Study—the numbers of attendees at those do not represent the number of people who have promised to be faithful in Bible study, even after they tasted it with Bible Information Class. So, Peter reminds us all—**"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk,"** and notice why—**"so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."**

It's the Word that God uses to rescue you from the punishment deserved for every time your life wasn't the God-lived life he looks for. It's the Word of God that strengthens you to fight against every temptation. So, crave it. Realize its value and don't let anyone take that away from you.

By God's grace, commit to living a God-lived life in this aspect. On your challenge cards for this month, there are challenges for several aspects of craving the Word. Commit to coming to worship and Bible study—and let your brothers and sisters in Christ hold you accountable. Challenge yourself to a daily schedule of Bible reading, to devotions with your family, to finding ways to be in the Word and protecting your time for it. Crave that pure spiritual milk.

In Christ,

Amen.