

Let's Eat  
I Peter 2:2-3

It was in 1943 out of Knoxville, Tennessee that Wally Fowler formed a band called Wally Fowler and the Georgia Clodhoppers. During WWII they were requested to perform to staff members and their families restricted at the nuclear research plant in nearby Oak Ridge, Tennessee. They sang there so often that eventually they changed their name to the Oak Ridge Quartet. At the time they focused on Southern gospel songs.

Fowler eventually sold the rights to the name "Oak Ridge Quartet" to group member Smitty Gatlin in exchange for forgiveness of a debt. Gatlin changed the group's name to "the Oak Ridge Boys" because their producer thought "Oak Ridge Quartet" sounded too old-fashioned for their contemporary sound, which now had switched to country music. Throughout their history they flip flopped back and forth between the two genres.

In 1914 William Golden wrote a song titled "To Canaan's Land I'm on My Way." Hank Williams would later record it under a different name "Where the Soul of Man Never Dies." It would become a hit. A lot of gospel groups have sung this song, but it was Duane Allen, lead singer of the Oak Ridge Boys, who would provide a memorable story related to the song.

"In 1976, the Oak Ridge Boys were invited to Russia. The communists were still in charge and the Iron Curtain was in place. Before we made the trip, the Soviets demanded the lyrics of all our songs for approval. Shortly after the tour began, we realized we needed more songs. At that time we didn't have country music hits. We only had our gospel music, and it was difficult to get those songs approved by the Communists. I wanted to use 'Where the Soul of Man Never Dies,' because we'd won a Grammy for it. But fearing it would be rejected by the censors, I submitted it under the

original title, 'To Canaan's Land I'm On My Way.' The Soviets took the lyrics into a room, and half an hour later they called me in. We could sing the song, they said, if we changed the first line. They didn't know what 'Canaan' was. That word wasn't in their dictionaries. They asked if we would sing: 'To *Disneyland* I'm on my way...' They knew all about Disneyland. I was appalled, but after thinking a moment, I asked if we could sing, 'To *that fair land* I'm on my way.'" That satisfied them, and it became one of our biggest hits of the tour.

That evening after the concert they loaded us onto a military bus for departure, and as we were getting ready to leave an old woman ran up and knocked on the glass. When I pulled down the window, she pitched in a note that fell to my feet. I bent over and picked it up, then turned to wave goodbye. To my horror, she was being dragged off and beaten by the authorities. Opening the note, I read her words, which I've never forgotten: 'Keep singing about Jesus. There are still those over here who love His message.'"

With that, take your Bibles and turn in our study this morning to I Peter 2:2-3. There are three verbs that I would like to focus our attention today. They are crave God's word, grow up in God's salvation, and taste God's goodness.

## I. CRAVE GOD'S WORD

Miriam-Webster's Dictionary provides us with a definition of the word *crave*. It can mean to ask for earnestly, to want or yearn for greatly, or to have a strong inward desire.

Notice here in our text what we are to *crave*. "Like newborn babies, *crave* pure spiritual milk." Some scholars would suggest that the believers Peter is addressing are relatively young in their Christian faith. They are new believers. These scholars focus on the term "newborn babies" which is translated literally "born just now" referring to a

newborn baby who has just emerged from the mother's womb moments ago. They then speak of the craving a newborn has for milk.

Other scholars suggest that the emphasis isn't on the "newborn baby" but on that first word "as" or "like" making it a comparison with what is to follow.

They believe some of these Christians may have been saved for quite a few years arguing that the desire of the Christian for God's Word should be just as unquenchable as a newborn desires milk.

The Bible dictionary defines the word crave as an intense, recurring, insatiable desire or passion.

Let me ask you, what is it you crave?

Some crave chocolate.

Some crave caffeine.

Some crave power or money.

Some crave the next adrenaline rush from some extreme adventure like bungee jumping.

Some crave the open sea or a sandy beach.

Some crave the next drug induced high.

Some crave attention.

What is it you have an insatiable desire for?

What burns with an intense yearning that if you don't get you'll go crazy?

This past week I was pulling up weeds in the garden next to the house and inadvertently unearthed a nest of five bunnies. Eventually they all dashed to the safety of the nearby shrubs. A couple of days later in an open area of the garden lay the momma bunny nursing her brood. They were going to town.

That is how we are to crave.

Peter then tells us what we are to crave: "pure spiritual milk".

Psalm 42:1-2

About this passage one author writes that "the animal's need for water to sustain its life forms a fitting simile for a soul's need of the living God, the Source of spiritual life."

Psalm 143:6 "I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land."

Psalm 63:1 "O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water."

Psalm 119:20 "My soul is consumed with longing for Your laws at all times."

Psalm 119:97 "Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long."

Psalm 119:103 "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Psalm 119:111 "Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart."

When was the last time your soul panted after God and His Word? When was the last time the appetite of your soul found its relief in the Word of God? Do we still long for more after we have drunk from it a long time? Peter wants there to be a craving like we have never experienced before, one that won't be satisfied no matter how long we drink from it.

That was the longing of the prophet Jeremiah (15:16) who said he had found God's Word and ate them. They were his joy and delight.

That was the desire of Mary content to sit at Jesus' feet while He taught her. She could not get enough. Her sister, Martha, expected Jesus to tell Mary that she should help with the meal preparations, but Jesus responded by saying that Mary had chosen the better thing.

Now Peter says we are to crave "pure spiritual milk". The KJV says it is the "sincere" or "pure milk of the word." That the Word is pure means that it is unadulterated, unmixed, not watered down.

I like whole milk. It would be in my refrigerator if my nurse wife would let me, but there are some legitimate reasons she wants me to curb my desire for whole milk. So, I have compromised with her. I'm happy with 2%. She would like me to drink skim milk, which looks like 9 parts water and 1 part milk and tastes like 9 parts water and one part milk. The compromise is that she lets me buy a gallon of each and mix it. I'm relatively happy with that arrangement and she's happy.

Peter says the Word we are to crave is not mixed. There is no flaw, no imperfection, no impurity, no dilution, it won't deceive or lead people astray. In the Greek the word pure is the exact opposite of the word deceit found in verse 1. Psalm 119:105 says that God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We couldn't have a better guide in this life than God's Word.

II Timothy 3:16-17 says that God's Word teaches us, rebukes us, corrects us, and instructs us in righteousness to thoroughly equip us.

As milk is essential for a newborn infant in order to grow, so the Christian needs to be nourished by the Word of God. Because we are in Christ there ought to be a natural desire for the Word of God.

For some unknown reason chocolate tops the list of things people, especially many women, crave the most. Psychologists at a London University did a two week study on a college campus with dozens of students. They wanted to see if people could be trained out of their cravings. Half of the students ate their chocolate 15 minutes before they ate a meal. The other half waited two hours after eating to consume their chocolate. They found that those who ate their chocolate before the meal had a higher craving for more chocolate than those who waited. Those who waited to eat their chocolate said that the taste was actually less pleasant than it was before the study. Researchers concluded that it is possible to retrain yourself away from cravings.

Taking that to our text it is possible then to retrain yourself away from craving God's Word.

Let's consider some of the things that can diminish our appetite for the Word of God. If I were to give them a grade it would be an F.

Let's start with FUN. Now there's nothing wrong with having fun, enjoying life. The Bible doesn't tell us we have to go around looking like we have just sucked a dozen lemons. Go ahead and enjoy life, turn that frown upside down. However, don't allow the fun to be a replacement for time with God in His Word. I'm reminded of the song Larnell Harris wrote and sang some 30 years ago –

There He was just waiting,  
in our old familiar place  
an empty spot beside Him,  
where once I used to wait  
to be filled with strength and wisdom  
for the battles of the day  
I would have passed Him by again  
if I didn't hear Him say

I miss my time with you  
those moments together  
I need to be with you each day  
and it hurts me when you say  
you're too busy  
busy trying to serve me  
but how can you serve me  
when your spirit's empty  
there's a longing in my heart  
wanting more than just a part of you  
it's true I miss My time with you  
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We can let stuff, we can let life get in the way of craving God's Word. These things may not be necessarily bad in and of themselves, they can be good things, but when we allow other things, even fun things to take the place of our time in the Word of God then we can lose our appetite for God's Word.

Let me combine two additional attitudes that can diminish our appetite for God Word. They are FEAR and FATALISM. This is the way it's always going to be so accept it. We can get stuck in the feeling of hopelessness. Fatalism saps the spiritual desire out of the Christian causing us to lose our joy and passion. Instead of being a delight spending time in God's Word it becomes a drudgery or some legalistic duty we have to perform. We may go through the motions, but it brings us no joy or sense of fellowship with God.

Where do we learn such joy, and hope, and trust?  
We learn it from God's Word.

Psalm 34:1-4

Psalm 37:1-7

What is our response in the middle of fear?

v. 3 – Trust in the Lord

v. 4 – Delight in the Lord

v. 5 – Commit your way to the Lord

v. 7 – Be still before the Lord

Let me give you one more reason we can lose our appetite. It is LACK OF FELLOWSHIP. Separate a chunk coal from the fire and it loses its blaze. Put it back in and it ignites into a flame. Separate from God's Word and we can quickly lose our fire, our passion for God and His Word.

Proverbs 27:17 compares the need for fellowship with iron sharpening iron. "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." That is made possible through the Word of God.

There are any number of things that can diminish a craving for God's Word.

So how do we rekindle that earnest longing for God's Word that we once had?  
Walter Hendrickson wrote a little booklet titled "Many Aspire, Few Attain". He writes that we need to have a hunger for God's Word and suggests several reasons why that is important.

We are reminded in Colossians 3:16 to let the Word of Christ richly dwell or live in us. Make your heart a home for the Word of God. Don't let it be a stranger or a casual acquaintance, make it your closest companion, your closest confidant.

Hendrickson suggests that God's Word cleanses. The Word of God guides in discovering the will of God.

The Word of God gives us power.

The Word of God reveals the ways of God.

The Word of God transforms the mind (Rom. 12:2)

Now might be a good time to ask if you are hiding God's Word in your heart.

It might be a good time to ask if the Word of God has a prominent place in your daily schedule.

It might be a good time to encourage you to attend Sunday Adult Impact, join a study or start one.

Robyn was recently talking with someone whose husband was doing pre-marital counseling with their daughter and her fiancé. A big red flag flew up when the fiancé was asked about his personal quiet time. He was very serious when he said that he didn't need to have a quiet time because he was in seminary and studied God's Word all day. The day we stop craving it is the day we stop growing. Study becomes purely mechanical.

Is there a hunger for God's Word?

Is it like honey to your lips?

Are you meditating on it and then applying it?

Hendrickson adds "The Word of God was given primarily to change your life, not to increase your knowledge."

One of the exercises for Adult Impact was to read through Psalm 119 and pick out some of the benefits of the Word of God.

v. 16 – By delighting in God's decrees we won't neglect His Word.

v. 24 – When we delight in God's Word it gives us counsel.

- v. 35 – God’s Word directs our path.
- v. 92 – Delighting in God’s Word keeps us from perishing in our affliction.
- v. 98 – God’s Word makes us wiser than our enemies.
- v. 105 – God’s Word guides our steps.
- v. 165 – God’s Word brings peace.

How much do you crave the pure spiritual milk of God’s Word? You cannot grow as a Christian if you neglect so basic a food staple for your spiritual diet. But it is more than just the basic spiritual food we need for spiritual growth. It is also our meat and potatoes, our dessert, and our drink to satisfy all the deep longings for Spiritual growth. We read in I Corinthians 3:2 that Paul rebuked them because they hadn’t grown. Not only are we to crave it, we are to grow from it.

## II. GROW UP IN GOD’S SALVATION

The word ‘grow’ means to advance, or increase in the sphere of.

The other day Robyn said she thinks David is going to hit another growth spurt because he has been consuming large quantities of milk and food.

Someone described some churches as refrigerators instead of incubators. There is no growth. A little girl was asked what she had learned in Sunday school. The text for the class was “many are called, but few are chosen.” She responded with a little different but perhaps more accurate understanding by saying that many are cold and a few are frozen. We are to grow.

In Ephesians 6 we are told to put on the whole armor of God in order to stand against the wiles of the Devil. The offensive weapon given is the Sword of God which is the Word of God. We cannot mature in our faith or defend our faith if we are not in the Word of God. They go hand in hand.

John MacArthur writes “Believers must commit to

regular nourishment from God’s Word...[and] be motivated by the opportunity to grow strong and mature in Christ, enjoying greater blessings and usefulness.”

The implication in this verb ‘grow’ is to be unsatisfied with our current spiritual condition.

In his mid 80’s after he could no longer read Uncle Johnnie, the founder of Barakel, was asked about how he was able to spend time in the Bible. He said that he just sat and meditated on it.

Don’t ever be satisfied with where you are in your faith. Continue to grow. That was Peter’s admonition in II Peter 3:18 to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now he didn’t mean that the more we know about Christ the more grace we are given. Instead he meant that the more we know about Christ the better we understand the grace that is already ours. Grace isn’t something we earn through more knowledge, grace is something we have already been given.

From this verse we are to grow in knowledge of Jesus Christ. In the context of his second letter, Peter wants the believers to have a depth of knowledge about the Lord to refute the false teachers. In I Peter 3:15 he writes that we should “always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

Paul writes that we are to “study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” II Timothy 2:15

Psalm 1:1-3 – A Christian who is growing through the Word of God will be firmly established.

A Christian who is growing will have a greater desire to get rid of the attitudes and actions in vs. 1.



Would you say you are growing in your faith or is there something holding you back?

Robyn will be planting her garden next week. In a few weeks she ought to see growth in her plants, if there isn't growth something is wrong.

William Fisher in his book *"Don't Park Here"* shares a conversation he had with his four year old son about what he wanted to be when he grew up. His son said he didn't want to grow because he wouldn't be able to ride his tricycle any more. We may have all felt that way until we grew up and got behind the wheel of a car and learned to drive.

Something is wrong if you don't have a desire to grow up spiritually in regard to your salvation.

Are you growing? In my opinion there is no justifiable reason we can give for a lack of spiritual growth. I think it boils down to laziness or rebellion – we just don't want to.

We can't say the pastor never feeds me.

We can't use work as an excuse.

We can't use running children all over creation as an excuse.

We can't say we just don't have time. Folks, if we're too busy to spend time in the God's Word then we are too busy – period.

With all the tools at our fingertips for spiritual growth, there isn't any satisfactory excuse.

Peter says "grow up in your salvation".

This does not mean that we are partly saved and need to keep working to become fully saved. This is speaking about the end result or culmination of our salvation. It's speaking about the completion of our salvation when we either leave this world due to our passing away or when Christ returns. It's what John wrote in his first epistle (3:2-3) "Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we will be but we know that when He appears we will be like Him for we will see Him as He is.

Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself as He is pure."

When we see Christ our salvation will be complete, we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is. Until then John and Peter both say we should continue to grow in our faith to become more like Christ in our character. So let me once more stress that we won't grow if we aren't in the Word of God craving it.

There is one final thought from this passage to address and it comes in the word taste.

### III. TASTE GOD'S GOODNESS

Peter quotes from Psalm 34:8 "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good." He begins the verse with 'if' or 'since' which is a statement of fact, something that actually happened to them.

Taste means here to experience and the tense of the word speaks of the initial act of tasting. Tasting implies as well that there is a desire for more. One author writes that "since this taste has proved satisfactory, the believers are urged to long for additional spiritual food."

Taste excites the appetite and longs for more. In this verse Peter is referring back to chapter 1 and to verses 5, 7, 9, 13 speaking about their salvation. They had tasted the initial benefits of salvation which should wet their appetite to experience more of what salvation would bring them.

Walvoord and Zuck write "They had taken a sample, having experienced God's grace in their new birth, and had found that indeed the Lord is good."

These believers had already experienced God's goodness through salvation. The implication is that when we have tasted of the Lord's goodness we will get rid of the other stuff in our life, things that otherwise will hinder our spiritual growth.

Alister McGrath states “The heart that clings to the Word of God and delights in it cannot but daily find in it new tastes of God’s goodness.”

Like the Russian woman, do you love His message?

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

Are you craving pure spiritual milk?

Are you growing up in your salvation?

Are you tasting the goodness of the Lord’s?