



Reflecting on the Bible

Session 2 – 15th October 2017

Bible Readings

2 Timothy 3: 10-17; Luke 10:38-42; John 5: 35-40; Romans 12:12

Sermon Notes

(For the full sermon please go online to listen www.stmarysely.org)

Purity is a wonderful thing. When something is pure, it exists in its essential nature—undefiled, unblemished, uncontaminated.

Purity is a word greatly prized in the New Testament. Unfortunately, in our day it sounds quaint, Victorian, prudish, bloodless. But God's call for us to be pure is precisely his call for us to be purely human—as he intended us to be, uncontaminated by sin. The opposite is what the apostle James called 'double mindedness', 'like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.'

Some people exhibit a singleness of purpose and focus that gives consistency to their choices and commitments.

Others exhibit multiplicity - a life marked by ambivalence – where we both desire intimacy with God and flee from it. Even the apostle Paul faced this struggle: "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."

Jesus encourages us instead to "be transformed by the renewing of our minds." St Paul suggests we can be "washed by the word" so let's start with reading the Bible in a way that will allow it to purify our hearts and help us live as Jesus would in our place?

If the Bible were to completely fulfil its mission, our minds would be so transformed—so filled with thoughts and feelings of truth, love, joy, and humility—that our lives would become one uninterrupted series of acts of grace and moral beauty. Every moment would be a miniature reflection of life in the kingdom of God.

Before you begin reading, take a moment to ask God to speak to you in Scripture. Then as you read, anticipate that he will do so.

Read the Bible with a repentant spirit, with a readiness to surrender everything, with a vulnerable heart. Allow the Bible's teachings on humility to cleanse your mind of pride, allow its teachings on love to purge your judgmentalism; recognize the truth of Jesus' teaching.

Read slowly, become "as the bee who penetrates into the depths of the flower to harvest its nectar". Immerse yourself in a short passage of Scripture. Ask "God, what do you want to say to me in this moment?"

Take One Thought or Verse with You Through the Day. Speak it aloud. Try to remember it. "Hide it in your heart."

Key Quotes

"Woe to those weak and timid souls who are divided between God and their world! They want and they do not want. They are torn by desire and remorse at the same time.... They have a horror of evil and a shame of good. They have the pains of virtue without tasting its sweet consolations. O how wretched they are." François Fénelon

"Purity of heart is to will one thing." Søren Kierkegaard

"Lord, give me chastity, but not yet." Augustine

"The goal is not for us to get through the Scriptures. The goal is to get the Scriptures through to us." John Ortberg

Discussion Questions

Read: Romans 7:14–20. Describe the condition of the apostle Paul’s heart in this passage. Describe a time you felt the way Paul feels in this passage.

“We desire intimacy with God and yet we flee from it. We long to be generous, but we hoard and covet. We attempt to be servants but tend to be self-serving.” What are some other areas of multiplicity followers of Christ can face?

Tell about a time when you experienced a spiritual washing as you studied God’s Word. How did God bring cleansing and refreshment to your life through his Word?

Read: 2 Timothy 3:16–17. What are some of the specific kinds of work God can do in our lives through study of his Word, and how have you experienced one of these in the past month?

Why are a repentant spirit and a soft heart essential when we read the Scriptures?

What are some of the dangers when a person reads the Bible only to accumulate knowledge?

What is one passage in the Bible that has sunk deep into your heart and how has this portion of Scripture brought transformation to your life?

In no more than one or two sentences, what is the “One Thing” you want to pursue with all your strength and life? What are you doing to pursue this one thing?

Prayer

Pray that God will meet each of us through the presence of his Holy Spirit each time we open his Word.

Pray for undivided lives that are shaped by Scripture.

Living the Life

Take time in the coming week to memorise a sentence of scripture that has spoken to you.

Personal Reflection

When we come to God, our minds and hearts can be cluttered with false beliefs and attitudes, deadly feelings, misguided plans and hopes and fears.

What are some similar feelings you deal with and what does God's Word have to say about these kinds of attitudes and hidden thoughts? What passages in the Bible might you meditate on to counteract these feelings?

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www.stmarysely.org and join the conversation on our [Facebook Group "Ely Team Holy Habits"](https://www.facebook.com/groups/267574210421687) www.facebook.com/groups/267574210421687

Watch David Newton's course – "How to read the bible" on YouTube