

'THE B.I.B.L.E.'
('Yes! That's The Book for Me, and Ye!')
Studies in Psalm 119

'Smooth Transitions'

(Serving up God's Word correctly and creatively)

Proper meals are served in *courses* or stages that make a dining experience not only digestible but also delightful. How the food is prepared is most important to the taste buds. How it's presented is a treat to the eyes. But the orderly plan of service converts a meal into a memorable event. Would you consider it weird, if an otherwise great dinner, began with dessert followed by soup and salad before the main course you ordered? You would probably be distracted, bewildered, or annoyed if the usual order of appetizer, entrée, dessert wasn't the way your order was delivered to the table! In serving a spiritual meal of God's Word to a class, Bible study, or sermon it is also important that a sensible order of service be followed so as to keep the focus upon God and His Word instead of the speaker and his or her attempt to just be clever and unorthodox.

The Lord Jesus instructed the Apostle Peter (*and all ministry teachers and leaders*) to **feed My sheep (John 21:15-17)**, not draw attention to the *feeder* or *feeding methods*. Teaching God's Word is not about entertainment of God's flock as many last days, pseudo-teachers seem to think (**2 Timothy 4:1-5**). The spiritual flock of God does not need amusement; they need biblical nourishment (**Hebrews 5:12-14, 1 Peter 2:2-3**). However, it is a blessing to God, His *sheep* and the teacher to be as professional and creative as possible in serving up the Word of God (**1 Corinthians 14:33, 40**). This includes **smooth transitions** from one part of the message delivery to the next.

Biblical examples of good Bible teaching (*all of Jesus' messages in the Gospels, apostolic messages in the Book of Acts, the New Testament epistles and even Jesus' addresses to the churches in the Book of Revelation*) have an **appetizer** (*opening illustration, question, or thought*), an **entrée** (*the main course of discussion intended*) and a **dessert** (*wrap-up, challenge, closing summation*).

Careful examination of biblical dissertations also show *smooth transitions* during the 3-course spiritual meal of Bible exposition. Smooth transitions, of course, always include good speech and good appearance of the speaker, loud and clear diction, enunciation, and grammar with appropriate demeanor and gestures. But beyond these basics there must be a clear connection between what has just been said and the new phase of the message the speaker is trying to move into. Jokes, stories, poems, object lessons, etc. that have no obvious linkage between what was just said and what's about to be said confuse and distract both the listener and the speaker anticipated (*when he or she perceives the 'huh?!' look on the faces of those listening, instead of the Spirit-led 'Amen! How true!' look of comprehension*).

Taking time to prayerfully ask God for a clear creative transition with the story or joke or object lesson is well worth the few minutes of meditation it takes. Let the Spirit of God guide your thoughts about setting up the illustration with a few introductory words or leaving out some non-essential details to shorten it up, or omitting the idea altogether lets God shape you and your thoughts into what He wants to say through you. If illustrations are too detailed or lengthy it will tend to confuse you about how to get back on track with the main text. The same is true if you use too many cross references to back up your point – many teachers get off on a *rabbit trail*

side issue and can't find a way to get back to the main point, making their talk awkward to the hearer and leaves a teacher scrambling for some way to gracefully get out of the message any way they can! In summary, an opening illustration should lead smoothly into the message, then another or two short illustrations during the body of the message holds the talk together and a concluding illustration or *action point* should lead smoothly from the message into a closing time of prayer. Such prayerful preparation of how to present God's Word in a spiritually nourishing way which is both accurate and interesting will bless the hearer, God and the Bible teacher with great *biblical dining experiences* that changes lives. Then, when the message is over, don't be surprised to get a really nice **'tip'** from the Lord whispering to your soul: ***'Well done! Thanks for feeding My sheep'***. **-PtL**

'Night Light'

(God's Word – So you won't be 'scared of the dark')

Psalm 119:105-112

The *nun* section (letter with an 'n' sound) / means *perpetuity through re-sprouting*)

Possible historic connection to King David – **2 Samuel 3:1-5** – *the 7 ½ year Jewish civil war:*

David's first 7 years of his 40-year reign as king were full of civil war between the families of deceased Saul, still in control of the northern part of the country, versus the southern part of the kingdom. Abner challenged the soldiers of David under his military general, Joab (**2 Samuel 2:12-32**). This began a treacherous period of battle where the generals became almost as powerful as the kings they served. It should also be noted that during this period of time David, in disobedience God's Word, married four more of his six wives (This did not even include Bathsheba whom he would marry later on). *Monogamous, heterosexual marriage was always God's will – Genesis 2:24-26 as implied often throughout the Law. No doubt these things grieved David and perhaps necessitated God's affliction of him (119:107).* This would explain David's need for revival (**119:107**) and desire to rededicate Himself to the Lord. He seems to know God will hear because the Lord is *perpetually faithful* to His Word (**v 111**).

Our Lamp & Light

"Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep your righteous judgments.

I am afflicted very much; revive me, O LORD according to Your Word" Vs. 105-107

Whether *dark times* come upon us through adversaries, natural events, or God's chastening hand, it is His Word that guides the way until good times dawn upon us.

- Talk about how the Bible is like a spiritual *lamp* to your daily walk during difficult days. How is Scripture like *foot lights* along God's *path* in *dark times*?
- David is experiencing *affliction* (for multiple marriages, or the war, or challenges of a new job?). Whatever it was, he needed spiritual renewal and revival again (*vs 25, 37, 40, 88, 107*).
 - Compare these different kinds of revival David has experienced.
 - What is revival? How do you know you need revival? What is revival like?

Our Life & Law

"Accept, I pray, the free will offerings of my mouth. O LORD and teach me Your judgments.

My life is continually in my hand (at risk); yet I do not forget Your law.

The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I have not strayed from Your precepts." Vs. 108-109

It seems that David either is in jeopardy or at least feels like he is. He appears to hope that worship and devotions will clear his thinking, remove his insecurity and protect him.

- Discuss how doing these spiritual disciplines (*especially when you don't feel like it*) restores and revives your spiritual life.
- Talk about how our life goes in concert with our submission to God's Word.

Our Lifestyle & Legacy

"The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I have not strayed from Your precepts

Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes, forever, to the very end." Vs. 110-112

Although David isn't going through an easy time in his life, the spiritual legacy (*heritage*) he wants to leave behind him boosts his spiritual energy to steadfastly persist in obeying the Word.

- When you are going through discouraging times, how does your testimony to God and others help you be steadfast and keep going for the Lord?
- Talk about how *spiritual joy* FOLLOWS obedience to God's Word (*Proverbs 16:3*).
- Share how it feels to do devotions, or come to Bible study, out of sheer discipline, and then to experience the Spirit's filling and blessing and joy for being faithful even if you didn't want to.
- If your family and friends see such discipline, how glad will you be to leave such a legacy to them?