

November 13, 2006

THERE IS UNITY IN SCRIPTURE INTAKE

In Deuteronomy 31, we have instructions from Moses to the people about a very important practice – the corporate reading of the Word of God. Consider his instructions: *“Then Moses commanded them, saying, “At the end of {every} seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, in order that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. And their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.” (Deuteronomy 31:10-13)*

This passage established what was to be a very important event in the life of the nation of Israel, but as you dig further into the Old Testament, you see that the nation of Israel did not continue to follow this command as it was outlined here. In fact, they were not in the promised land very long at all before they began to forsake God’s law and adopt the pagan practices of the surrounding nations. From this history, we learn a very important spiritual fact: when the Word of God is forsaken among God’s people, demise and destruction soon follow.

As we come into the holiday season and look towards the end of 2006 and the start of 2007, I believe one of the greatest experiences we could undertake as a church family is the corporate discipline of daily Scripture reading. I know many of us are in the Scriptures daily, but more of us also struggle with the daily intake of Scripture. In preparation for 2007, we are going to make Daily Bibles available through the church for a cost of ten dollars (these Bibles normally retail for almost \$20). This arrangement of the scriptures breaks the entire Bible into 365 daily readings. Each day, there is an excerpt from the Old Testament, from the New Testament, from the Psalms, and from the Proverbs. I am asking that every member and family of our church buy a copy of this Bible and commit to reading it daily so that our entire church can be reading the exact same Scriptures on the exact same day for the entirety of 2007. I truly believe the effects of being in the Word together as an entire church will be amazing. Here are a few thoughts to get us started.

First, it will help us be unified in developing one of the key habits of the Christian life. As I noted above, some of us already have that habit, but for others of us, it is a struggle to develop and maintain this discipline. Having our entire church undertake this commitment will create an environment of mutual support, discussion, and accountability that will foster depth and spiritual growth in our membership. Lord willing, it will help all of us take a significant step forward in having this habit ingrained in our daily routine.

Second, it will help us be unified in learning the same spiritual truths. I have read through the Scriptures using this type of Bible several times before, and every time I read through it, I encounter new and beautiful truths as the Holy Spirit illumines my mind. Imagine being part of an entire church where everyone is reading the same stories, digesting the same truths, and meditating on the same verses. It is incredible to consider how our church would be hearing God speak to us from the exact same passages on a daily basis!

Third, it will keep us unified in pursuing obedience. Remember Psalm 119:11 – *“Thy Word have I hidden in my heart that I may not sin against Thee.”* The word of God shows us the path of obedience. It is the chisel God uses to chip away the stone of our flesh. How awesome it will be for us and our children and grandchildren to be in the same Word, learning the same standards, and applying the same principles. It will help us all to “hear and learn and fear the Lord our God.” It will protect our present; it will assure our future; it will transform us into more fervent witnesses of the power of Christ.