

4 Reasons You Should Read Your Bible More

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[0:00] The last two weeks we've talked about prayer. We talked about in the first week about how important prayer is, and then the second week we talked about how important prayer is.

And I do need to make a clarification of something I said last time. A number of people have talked to me about it and so I'm sure there's several more that have maybe a misunderstanding or at least there might be a problem with what I said.

In a very poor use of words last week, I said that sometimes we can, by our persistent prayers, force God to hear us, to answer us.

And I said it was a poor use of words, so I hope you guys took that into account. But at best, it was a misleading statement. I was struggling to wrap some words around what I was trying to say.

And I don't want you to be misled on prayer. I guess that's why I'm saying this all over again. If you remember, I took you to Genesis 32 and we talked about Jacob wrestling with God.

[1:09] And this is what Genesis 32, 28 says. Then the man, who is actually God, then the man said, your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.

And I used that verse to say that sometimes in prayer, through persistent and earnest prayers, we can overcome God. And that's the statement that needs explained.

So I'm going to explain that. And so I'm still saying that there are occasions when we overcome God in prayer, just like Jacob did.

But let me tell you what I didn't mean and what I did mean. Three things I don't mean. We definitely do not force God to answer us according or in opposition to his decreed will.

So God has decreed something and somehow by prayer, we make him change his mind. I'm not saying that. The Lord does whatever he pleases in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

[2:17] And no prayer can change what God has planned. God is going to do what he wants to do. And I didn't mean to imply that we can make God do something he doesn't want to do.

And I don't mean either. The second thing I don't mean is that there's some unwillingness in God to hear us in our prayers. We talked last week that God is an indulgent God.

He loves to give good gifts to his children. And so when we pray and when we overcome God in prayer, we're not overcoming an unwillingness for him to answer us.

He is definitely more willing to give than we are to ask. And that's why he gives us so many encouragements to pray. The third thing, I also don't mean to imply that some sort of name it and claim it theology, which the name it and claim it theology says, if I pray hard enough and if I want something hard enough, and if I believe hard enough, that God has to answer me and will answer me every single time.

So I want a car, you know. And so I ask God and I say, God, I want a car and I believe and I'm asking.

[3:33] And so by believing and asking hard enough, God's going to give me the car. I didn't mean to suggest that at all. And I hope no one thought that, but just in case.

So here's what I do mean, that we can overcome God sometimes in prayer. Sometimes from a human perspective, from our perspective, God seems to be saying no to us.

We ask and it seems like he's saying no, that he doesn't want us to have that. But through persistent prayer and earnest prayer, God ends up giving us what we've asked.

So God can be overcome from our perspective. So I could think of two sorts of situations where this language of overcoming God in prayer could be applied.

The first is when we have a direct promise from God. So God has promised that we would be holy. And he has promised us the Holy Spirit to make us holy.

[4:42] We know exactly what God wants. And we know exactly what he wants to give us. And he wants for us. And so we can pray with great earnestness.

And we can strive with God in prayer until he gives us what he has promised to give us. We are on sure ground that God wants us to have these things that we're asking for.

And so it might seem for a long time that we're not getting what we are asking for. But when we overcome God, when we strive with earnestness, he gives us what he has promised.

And so we hold him to his word. We talked about that last week, that when we pray, we need to bring up God's promises to him and say, God, you've said this, and I'm asking you to do what you've said.

And we don't do that arrogantly. But we wait on the Lord and we keep asking until he does for us what he said he's going to do for us.

[5:47] That's one situation. Another situation is this. When we don't have any direct promise, we don't have any explicit word from God.

But we are certain, or we are sure, at least from our perspective, that if God would give us what we're asking for, he would be glorified. There's probably lots of situations like that, but I'm thinking primarily of, let's say, the conversion of your children.

There's no word in the Bible that says, my daughters are going to believe. But I think that if they do believe and they live a life of obedience, that God would be glorified.

And so I keep praying. And even though God hasn't answered me yet, I keep praying and I give him reasons to hear my prayers.

And we admit all the time that we can't save our children by our prayers, that God isn't going to do something that he doesn't want to do, that God is not going to change his mind about who the elect are and who they aren't.

[6:56] But we, through fervent prayers, by arguing with God, by giving him arguments, we can, from a human perspective, overcome God.

So, if God has planned to save our children, and you could substitute, if God has planned to do something, like give us another pastor, or, you know, some requests that we have that we think God would be glorified in, then there's no unwillingness to overcome if he has planned to do that for us.

But from a human perspective, God seems to be saying no to us. And he might be saying no for a long time. But, through persistent prayers, God, so to speak, has overcome.

So, after many a parent knows, God can still say yes. And so that's the encouragement to pray.

That, from our perspective, after many knows, God can still say yes to us.

And so keep praying. If there's something that you think would glorify God, and he hasn't made it clear that the answer is certainly no, then keep praying.

[8:11] So, that probably doesn't clear everything up. But, I hope it goes a long way to explaining that statement, maybe making you feel more comfortable if you weren't too comfortable with that statement.

If you have any questions, you can grab me afterwards, and I'll do my best to answer. This week, so that's the longest introduction. This week, we turn to Bible reading.

If prayer's the most important thing in practical religion, then reading our Bibles, the Bible is the next most important thing for sure. So, this lesson, if you want a title for it, for your notes, would be this. Why you should love your Bibles, why you should love your Bibles, for reasons why you should read your Bible more. That's pretty straightforward. My goal is simple this week. I want you to love your Bible more.

Is that simple enough? I want you to love your Bible more. I want you to love the Word of God more. Ryle says this, It's a sorrowful fact that man has an unhappy skill in abusing God's gifts.

[9:27] Just as man naturally makes a bad use of his other mercies, so he does of the written Word. One sweeping charge may be brought against the whole of Christendom, and that charge is neglect and abuse of the Bible.

So, Ryle is writing in the 19th century, and if it was true back then, I would say it's probably even more true now. The church neglects their Bible.

They don't read it like they ought, and so they abuse God's gift. And what's true of the vast majority of Christendom, we don't want, I don't want to be true of Grace Fellowship Church.

That we should be Bible-loving people. We should love the Word of God, and we should be growing in our love for the Word of God.

And so, that's the goal for this lesson. Love is a big word, isn't it? And it can mean lots of things.

When I say, I love my wife, I mean, I think she's the best girl in the world.

[10 : 33] She's the most beautiful person I've met. I enjoy her more than I enjoy any other person in the world. I like being with her. And when I say you should love the Word of God, that's what I mean.

You should think that the Word of God is the best book in the whole world, and that you love it, and you delight in it, and you should enjoy, or you should want, to be with the Word of God.

And I want what John Wesley said, or what he was thinking when he said, oh, give me that book.

Oh, give me that book. At any price, give me the book of God.

The Bible is worth anything that we have. Everything that we have. And so that's why I say a good title would be Four Reasons Why You Should Love Your Bible, or Why You Should Read Your Bibles More.

Let me try that again. Why You Should Love Your Bibles, Four Reasons Why You Should Read Your Bibles More. The Bible is the best of all books, and all of us should be reading it more than what we do.

[11 : 45] So, without further delay, Four Reasons Why You Should Love Your Bibles and Read the Scriptures More. The first, reason number one, the Scripture, the Bible, is God-breathed.

The Bible is God-breathed. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16. 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16.

And look at this passage as I read it to you. It says, All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So, the Bible that's sitting on your laps right now with its tattered, covered, and wrinkled pages contains the Word of God.

It's God-breathed. The Greek word is theopneustos, which means God-breathed. It's a literal, it's a transliteration. It means it's breathed out by God.

[13 : 03] So, when you breathe out air, what's on the inside of you comes out. And when God breathed out the Scriptures, what was on the inside of God came out.

And so, we have God's thoughts in the Bible. We have God's feelings, what God's plans are, His desires, and His character, who and what God is came out.

And we read it on the pages of our Bibles. And that's why Peter says, For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So, the Holy Spirit inspired men. And so, what actually we have in our Bibles is God's breathed out Word.

It's divine. It's God-breathed. So, what else in the world is like the Word of God? Do you have anything in your house that is like the Word of God?

[14 : 12] Isn't it amazing that on my bookshelf I probably have nine Bibles, and every single one of them is God's breathed out Word. And I have nothing in my house like that.

I have nothing that is divine. When we read our Bibles, we don't read the opinions of mere mortals. We read, we don't read the thoughts and ideas of the flower of the field and the sun comes up and the flower's dead and it's gone.

And that's what the best of men are. They're just the flower of the field that lasts for a moment and then they're gone. But when we read the Scripture, we are reading the mind of God. Not all of His mind.

There are some things that He keeps from us. But we get an eternal perspective. You get the perspective of the One who made all things. Who made you.

And who is going to judge every man here. So the Bible tells us what God requires of us and who God is.

[15 : 14] And it tells us what He treasures. And that's why the Bible is so precious. This book is God's book. There's no other book like it.

So what else in the whole world is like the Bible? It's God breathed. And that means it's like Jesus, the living Word. It's pure.

It's holy. It's blameless. Because it came from a pure and holy and blameless God. So, I'm a Bibliophile, which is, the word means a book lover.

I love books. And I love books on my shelf. And I love books on the floor. And I love books on my bed. I love books beside my bed. My wife does too, so we get along.

I like books that I've read several times. Many times. I have books that I read over and over again every year. Because I love them. And I have books, and I especially like books that I haven't read yet, that are in the catalog still, and waiting to come to my house.

[16 : 24] Those are the books I really like. But there's only one perfect book. There's only one perfect book. There's only one book where I could take a magnifying glass and read through every page and every word and say, this is perfect.

This is perfect. It's all true. It's perfect. Reviving the soul. All the other waters are contaminated. But this fountain is perfect.

It's heavenly. It's straight from heaven. And so, when you read your Bibles, you're reading a book that's unlike any other book that you have that has ever been published.

So there's nothing on earth so heavenly, so perfect as what you have in your lap. So that's why you should love the Word of God.

So if this Word, if this Bible is inspired, if it's God-breathed, then it's not a light thing how you feel about it, what you think about it, and what you do with it, if you ignore God's Word, what are you ignoring?

[17 : 35] You're ignoring what God says and what God thinks. And if you don't read your Bibles, you are ignoring God Himself. The two are inseparable.

God and His Word are inseparable. If we read His Word and we cherish His Word, then we cherish God Himself. So we should love Scriptures because it's God-breathed.

So I ask you, do you love your Bibles like it is God-breathed? Do you love it like it is God's own Word to us? Number two, reason number two, we should love our Bibles because God, because the Bible tells us how we can be forgiven.

How we can be forgiven. So experts are saying that knowledge is doubling every seven or eight years. I don't have any idea how they know that, but that's what they say.

So every seven or eight years, humanity gets twice as smart as it used to be. So we're taking, we're making more advances in medicine and chemistry and biology and we're just growing in leaps and bounds.

[18 : 48] But those things are great, aren't they? They are great. When you have cancer, it's great to know that we're getting better at beating cancer. But, none of those things help me if I have a guilty conscience.

When I know I'm a sinner, there's no pill that I can take that makes it go away. There's no pill that I can take that will change my rotten, sin-loving heart to something that is pleasing to God.

God. And all the learning in the world, all the learning in the world can't save you from a God that is angry every day with sinners.

But on the other hand, what does James say? James says, you should humbly accept the word planted in you which can save you.

the Bible shows us the way that we can be forgiven. So let's say you go down to the local Starbucks. And you're sitting there by yourself and it's pretty crowded and so someone sits down beside you at the table and you say, hi, my name's Jason.

[20 : 00] And he says, oh, my name is Dr. Encyclopedia Britannica. And, well, you say, nice to meet you. What do you do? Well, I'm a professor at Notre Dame.

Oh, what do you teach? Everything. I teach everything. I have a doctorate in every subject. Now, Dr. Britannica may have a degree in every field and he might be as wise as Solomon.

He can talk about the cedars of Lebanon. He can talk about the hyssop that grows on the wall. He can talk about beasts and fish and fowls and his proverbs may number 3,000. But if Dr. Britannica doesn't read his Bible, he will die and go straight to hell.

His learning will vanish at his last heartbeat and God will call him up and ask him and for the first time in his life he will not have anything to say for himself.

Now, the next day, you're at Starbucks again and it's another crowded day and instead of Dr.

Britannica, Mr. Oblivious comes and sits down beside you and you say, oh, nice to meet you and he says, nice to meet you as well and you get talking to him and he's a real character.

[21:15] He is absolutely certain that Iraq is somewhere north of Canada and that Julius Caesar was just named the king of Romania. He might be the most ignorant man in the world.

He could be the stupidest man in the world and yet if he believes his Bible, he will go to heaven. He will be a child of God. So there's a vast difference.

Mr. Britannica knows everything and Mr. Oblivious knows nothing, but what he does know is able to save him. And remember, it's what 1 Corinthians says, that not many of you were wise by human standards, but God chose the foolish things of this world to shame the wise.

There's not very many super smart people in this room by human standards, but we are eternally wise because we listen and read our Bibles.

So what I'm saying is the Word of God contains information that can save us. It's only in the Word of God where we read about Jesus, the Savior of sinners, and we read how guilty sinners like us, like what we really are, are able to be declared righteous.

[22:36] So we're guilty, but we can find a way to be declared righteous, and we can have peace with God through the death of Jesus Christ. So, in the Bible alone, do we hear the gospel invitation?

It's the only way that we have of hearing that God is in the business of saving sinners, and how we can be saved ourselves.

So, from a human perspective, our eternal destinies, that seems so huge, that seems hyperbole, but our eternal destinies hinge on what we do with the Word of God.

Will we believe it and be saved, or will we ignore it and perish? So, life and death is in your Bible.

So, how do you read it? Do you read it like your life depends upon it? Because it really does.

Reason number three. That was reason number two.

[23:48] Reason number three, you should love your Bibles, is this. The Bible is full of sanctifying truth. The Bible is full of sanctifying truth.

If you still have 2 Timothy open, look down again. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful. All Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, that the man of God might be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

And Jesus prayed for his disciples. Father, sanctify them with your truth. Your word is truth. So where else do we learn to be holy except here?

The world isn't going to make us holy. In our own imaginations and what we think about how to be holy, that's not going to make us holy, but God's truth is able to make us holy.

And so everything that we need to be holy is in the word of God. There's milk for the babies so that they can grow. And there's solid food here for the mature so they can keep growing.

[25:07] The word of God is like a mine. It's a rich, vast mine. And so on the surface there's silver and we keep digging and we dig further and further and there's gold and then we're down in the deep, dark places of the word of God and there's diamonds and there's everything that we need to be holy.

Another way of saying it, the Bible is a field. And what is hidden in the field? It's the pearl of greatest price. We find Jesus there. We find sanctifying truth there.

So there's life, there's holiness in your Bible if you seek it out. And all those riches, everything that we find, all the truth in the Bible is aimed at one thing.

And that one thing, that target, is our perfection, our holiness. The Bible gives us reasons to be holy. It says, be holy, for without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things, for you died, and your life is hidden with Christ and God. So why should we be holy? Well, because without holiness no one will see the Lord.

[26:17] God is holy. Because we died, and our life is hidden with Christ. Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature, because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Why should we be holy? Because God's wrath is coming down, and it's coming for all those who are disobedient. The Bible gives us directions on how we are to be holy.

It doesn't only give us why we should be holy, but it tells us how we should be holy. We have the Ten Commandments, and we read in the Ten Commandments, and we find out what God wants from us.

And then he gives us the summaries. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul, and love your neighbor as yourself. And then there's the examples of Scripture.

We don't only have explicit commands, thou shalt do this and thou shalt not do that. we find examples of what holiness looks like in everyday life.

[27:23] So we go to the book of Daniel, and we see three young men, and they're surrounded by pagans. They're in a pagan culture, and we can read and see this is what obedience looks like in a hostile situation.

Or we read the epistles, epistles. And in the epistles, we find concrete commands and examples of how we are to act. So what does holiness look like if I'm a husband?

Well, Paul tells us. What does it look like if I'm a wife? What are my responsibilities to my parents?

What are my responsibilities to my children?

What do I owe my employer? What do I owe my employee? Where would we find these things?

Where else would we go to know what God expects from us and how to be holy if we don't read our Bibles?

Then the Bible shows us one other example, and that's Jesus Christ. And we find in him a high priest that meets our need.

[28:31] He's holy, and he's blameless, and he's pure. We look at Jesus from every perspective and he's perfect. And so, the Bible gives us a tour of the life of Jesus.

And not only one or two times, but four times. We have four different tour guides to walk us through Jesus' life. And we see what holiness is when it's on two feet and it's walking and living as a human.

Here's Jesus and he's with a poor man. What does holiness look like when you're dealing with a poor person? What does holiness look like when you're dealing with a rich person?

Here he is under attack. He's being persecuted. Well, what does holiness look like in that situation?

Jesus shows us. And here he is dying on the cross.

And he's dying a wrongful death. He doesn't deserve to die. And yet he's dying. What does holiness look like at that time? Where else do we find the life of Jesus portrayed like this?

[29:43] Where we can read and learn what holiness actually looks like? The Bible, it's a shield against temptation.

There's more, there's enemies set against us that don't want us to be holy. Satan comes with temptation and the world comes with temptation.

What is the only thing that we have that can defend us against temptation except for God's truth?

So, Jesus is in the desert and he's being tempted and we get his final, last three temptations and how does Jesus fight off temptation?

temptation. Three times Jesus defeats Satan with it is written, it is written and it says the word of God can protect us from temptation.

How many times have you been under temptation? You're about to sin but then a verse comes to mind. The word of God comes to mind and the temptation, the fire is put out.

[30:54] We were on fire. We are about to sin and the word of God dumps all this water on us and we don't sin. We are saved because of the word of God.

So, not only does the Bible show us why we should be holy and how we should be holy and examples of holiness and how to keep from sinning, it shows us where we're going, where the righteous are going, and then where the wicked are going.

It shows us the future and it shows us what's the end of the life that I'm leading. The Bible shows us the happy future of the righteous. Paul says to go and be with Christ is better by far.

And Jesus says, blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. God doesn't want to leave us in the dark about what is waiting for us.

What is waiting for the person who lives a holy life? We don't labor in vain. We are going somewhere, and it's a place that is better by far.

[32:04] But the scripture also tells us of the horrors of hell. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Without holiness, no one will see heaven. Their smoke shall rise up forever and ever, and their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.

The Bible doesn't tell us these things to quench some sort of desire that we have to know. The Bible is telling us these things so that we will be holy, so that we will take warning and avoid hell at all cost.

So what else do we have in the Bible? Where else can we go that would tell us these things? But I left out one of the greatest motivations for holiness.

Do you know what it is? The greatest motivation for holiness. Someone said something. What? Oh, there you are.

Okay. Sorry, my ears don't work if my eyes aren't working either. Love of God. Almost. Yeah. I mean, yes?

[33:21] Glorifying God. Okay, glorifying God. Gratitude. Gratitude for what? His grace.

I think the greatest motivation that we have to live a holy life is the gospel. And I didn't mention the gospel.

So how does the gospel, the message that Jesus died for sinners, that Jesus died for me, how does that motivate holiness? He said gratitude.

We're thankful. And when we are thankful people, we do things that unthankful people don't do. We live a different life than what the ungrateful do.

What else? How does the gospel motivate you to live a holy life? I mean, God, when we hear the message of Christ dying for us, why does that spur us on to holiness?

[34:30] I'll give you what I was thinking of. Maybe that's the best way. I think when we see the love of Christ, Paul said, love constrains me.

It wraps me in its arms, and I can't escape, and it forces me to do things that I wouldn't normally do. When we have Christ set before us, it's impossible to live a sinful, selfish life anymore.

Because He's loved us. And if we are not our own, but we've been bought at a price, then I have to live a holy life. The Gospel also tells us that we're dead to sin.

That's what Paul says. That when Christ died, I died. And so when temptation and sin comes knocking, I'm dead to it. It's not my master anymore.

I don't have to obey it. And the death of Christ also shows me how serious God is about my holiness.

[35:36] I'm not very serious about my holiness compared to what God is. I mean, He sacrifices His Son to make me holy, and I have a hard time waking up early to make me holy.

But when the Gospel comes to bear on my life, then it motivates me to be holy. Reason number four, we should love our Bibles, is the Bible is full of blessed truth.

And by blessed truth, I mean, the Bible helps us to live happier, better, meaningful, God-glorifying lives. It doesn't mean that we don't have trials, and it doesn't mean that we don't have problems, but it means that we know how to consider it pure joy when we face those trials.

That there is a stream, a string of joy that goes throughout our whole lives, and it's produced by the Bible and the truth that it tells us. And so, if we're looking for wisdom, and if we're looking to know how to live a joyful, meaningful life, the world is empty.

The world is absolutely empty. We go and we watch the Oprah show, or Dr. Phil, and what do we find there? We just find half-truths and half-baked ideas that end people up in the same place where they were.

[37:07] Or, I was drinking some tea this past week, and it must have been from some, you know how those tea companies are.

They're always trying to put witty, wise sayings that don't make any sense. On the little teabag, it said this, Wisdom, character, and consciousness conquers all.

Wisdom, character, and consciousness conquers all. And I think about that. What does that mean? I don't know. But that's the world's idea of wisdom.

This is how they think you're going to live a good life. If you read this little teabag, and you think about wisdom and character and my consciousness can conquer all. If you're looking for wisdom, to live a joyful life, a meaningful life, a God-glorifying life, the Bible's the only place to go.

Paul says, But their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools. So that's what we have in the world.

[38:18] But in the Bible, we have the answer to all the questions that we need answered. Great men search their entire lives to find out why we are here, what we are doing, what's the meaning of life.

And they live their lives for these things. And yet, if we go into the smallest, the youngest classroom in Sunday school, we find children that know those answers.

Because they read the Bible, they hear the Bible, and the Bible helps us to live wise lives. So, we're running out of time.

The last thing, the Bible helps us to go through trials. This is in contrast. The Bible does help us to live God-glorifying lives.

The Bible does rescue us from many griefs that the world goes through. We have wisdom to know how to deal with our money and our children, what to do in trials.

[39:24] But it doesn't save us from those trials. It doesn't. But God's Word brings us promises to endure in those times.

And how precious is the Word of God when we've been broken under a trial and we're at the end of ourselves and we don't have anything else to give.

And the promise comes, fear not, do not be dismayed, for I am your God. Does the trial go away? No. It's still there. But we can go on and we can be hopeful and encouraged.

And so how precious is the Word of God in that hour when we are in trouble and we're bankrupt and the Word gives us everything that we need. So, I haven't told you anything that you don't know. I didn't tell you anything new today. But I did tell you some things that should make you love the Bible more. And so, my only question is, will you read your Bible more?

[40:31] Will you read your Bible more? If you don't, will you begin? And if you only read the Bible a little bit, will you start reading it more this week? because your life depends upon it?

But for many of you, I'm glad to say and I'm very hopeful that you find in the Word of God your daily manna. Don't you? And every day you go out and you gather your manna and you can live another day.

And it's more precious to you than your daily bread. And so to you, keep on going. Keep reading. Read it more and more. Don't give up.

So next week, Lord willing, we're going to talk about some of the how-tos, some of the practical things about how to read your Bible, how to read it better. But this week, let's concentrate on reading our Bibles more and loving it more and asking for forgiveness for ignoring it.

I think everyone here, I would be safe to say, everyone here could read their Bibles more and enjoy their Bibles more. And so let's press on to that by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[41:44] Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the Word of God. We ask that you would make it part of our lives. Will you show us the places where we're ignoring your Word, where we're not reading like we ought, where we're not thinking about your Word as we ought.

Will you reveal to us our sinfulness? and give us grace to repent and to turn away from our sinful way and embrace your Word once again.

We thank you for your Bible and for the Word of God. And we pray that you would help us to be lovers of it. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen.