

# AS YOU CONTINUE YOUR ADOPTED ROUTINES THIS WEEK...

We are thinking more these days about when life returns to normal. Remember, Peter was inspired to write to people like us to change our normal. That's God's heart too, as the author behind the author. It's His heart because He knows our normal can compromise our lives in every way. Our normal can hold us back from His best. So YES! Let's think about normal. But let's help each other allow Jesus to lead that conversation.

## **Work through these questions 1 Peter 1:22-2:3 raises.**

(Pastor Kyle's sermon and Pastor Bob's commentary below will help you.)

1. "Born again" has become a political label in America. But why did God coin that term to use of us who trust Him? What are some great things in these verses that it means about you?
2. During these present circumstances what sins/excesses do you sense God trying to filter out of your life?
3. The fruits and beauty of our lives tend to spoil and pass. What kinds of hopes and dreams have you been thinking about in view of all the things that Peter is teaching?
4. Peter's exhorts us to crave what helps us grow up spiritually. That implies we can shift our cravings. What would you like to crave? What might you need to taste to help you develop that craving?
5. Jesus has you here thinking about these verses. Kyle suggested four applications of them. Which one got your attention as the one Jesus wants you to focus on?

# A HIGH-YIELDING, BONUS ACTIVITY

Check out Psalm 19! It talks about the “milk” Peter refers to. As you read Psalm 19 you’ll see that God has left a message for us through the things He made. At verse seven you’ll feel the Psalm abruptly change direction. The second half of Psalm 19 talks about the message God has left for us in writing. That message is much more specific. It helps us understand Him better as we look at all He has made. Jesus lived it! Take time to stare at these statements about Yahweh’s messages. Think about the implications of His messages.

Here is some help in focusing on this Psalm in a very profitable way. What do you learn about God from all He has created? Don’t stray into thinking about HOW He created it right now. Just think about what His work says about Him. What have you learned from His written word, His book, that would otherwise be unknown to you? How does that change your perspective on what He has made? What is the great thing about each of these messages? And think this thought, “Since this that I am reading is true then the implication for me is that ...”

Mark Psalm 19 in your Bible so that you can find it and return to it often. Each short phrase has great meaning and each is life-giving. Each one is easily forgotten. Remember, His word to us is our life-blood as we live in this fallen world!

## 1 PETER COMMENTARY

**1:22—Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.**

Acts of love are neither natural nor easy. They come about consistently only through the greatest intentionality. This is reflected in the wording orchestrated here by the Holy Spirit through Peter. He notes that they have “purified” their inner beings in accordance with the admonishment of truth. “Purified” is in the perfect tense, indicating that it is something they have done and that there is the abiding result that goes with that action.

This purifying likely does not refer to their salvation, but to subsequent acts of obedience after it. This is most likely because it is represented as something done with a desired result in mind, that of love for fellow believers. It is doubtful that this would be a motive in seeking salvation. It is likely a part of their spiritual growth after salvation because it involves casting aside old prejudices and personal likes and dislikes. Such things are strongholds in us. They tend to die a slow death. But they must be made to do so.

In the context of that culture, Peter was likely talking about classic dislikes between Jew and Gentile, free men and slaves, rich and poor and the like. The fact that they had cast these distinctions off was no small feat and these words are a great commendation with respect to their progress in the faith.

But even with this progress firmly in place they had to be commanded by Peter to ratchet up their love. They had to be certain that they actually followed through and that they did so with fervency. “Love one another” is in the imperative, a command. It is an aorist imperative indicating that they are to “start loving one another.” Peter recognized a deficiency in some sense in their fellowship and saw this as essential. So acts of love persist only when we have purified our hearts of all the old baggage, the ways of thinking and the selfish motives that dictate against selfless action. Acts of love then can begin in earnest. The Holy Spirit adds these. They are intentional acts that express love in concrete, unmitigated ways. Loving others is no easy or natural process.

**1:23—for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.**

This thought is linked to the previous one by the conjunction “for.” This indicates that it is providing further information that explains the previous idea. Love, as opposed to self-gratification, is to be that which regulates our conduct toward each other because of the source of our present lives in Christ. We are different people than we once were. There is that within us that does not wind down but grows to produce the eternal. That planting is to be nurtured by us, sought and enhanced in every way possible so that its fruit is produced in us.

The seed is said here to be “the living and abiding word of God.” This likely is a reference to more than what we call the Bible. It IS that which God has given us in writing. It likely also includes the decrees of God associated with salvation, all of which bring about our new birth. So, it is a reference to His decrees about Christ and the Holy Spirit. But it is still more. It is the extensive, thorough and complete work of God, from our election and predestination to our eventual glorification. It brought about our birth into the family of God. It is all that falls in between God’s choice of us in eternity past and our future glorification. This includes our coming to understand the great truths of God that He has made clear through revelation. These bring about in us a steady process of change if we show diligence toward them.

The great decisions and actions of Yahweh are seeds that never lose their capacity to produce life. They are more certain than wildflower seeds in the desert that may lie dormant for years, but will spring to life once conditions are right. They are seeds that are imperishable, like all that God has decreed. Our new birth places within us capacity for new life that never expires. Though we are slowly dying physically, that seed continues to reproduce itself and the process can move along in us unless we become distracted or indifferent.

**1:24—“For ‘All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord abides forever.’”**

This is a quotation of Isaiah 40:6-9 from the Septuagint. It came to Isaiah as a message that was to be cried out, or spread and proclaimed. It remains a message that teaches and emphasizes three things. There is a glory to humanity but it passes. There is an order humans establish but it passes. There is a decree of God that causes this, and that decree stands forever unalterable.

This is a quotation that supports what Peter has said in the previous verse about the imperishable seed that brings about our new birth. There is a glory and splendor to humanity and their works that we must not allow to deceive us. What a person desires for themselves and what they decide to accept as true can motivate a string of impressive achievements. Their execution might be a thing of beauty. Don’t be fooled. It will not endure.

## **1:25—“But the word of the Lord abides forever.’ And this is the word which was preached to you.”**

What God has decreed is absolutely unalterable. There is no law that He is subject to, except that of His own character. What He desires is always good and right because of His infinite perfection. What He desires to do He has infinite power to do and what He has power to do He has the infinite moral right to do. In this He is like no other ruler. He is truly sovereign.

The truth of God that is preached by His followers brings this to the lives of those who believe. It is truth upon which a life can be firmly founded. It is the foundation that will never fail no matter what the seasons of life may bring. It abides forever, and it is in the possession of all who will hear and listen. It is why Jesus persistently said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” There is nothing of greater value than the truth.

## **2:1—Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,**

There are thought patterns and living patterns we must set aside if we are to experience salvation from sin in this life. This setting aside is called the sanctification process. Allowing that process to be freely carried out by the Holy Spirit allows us to experience salvation to the fullness of God’s plan for us. His power and grace have made available to us everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), so that we can say that we have only to take up those weapons and our fight will be won.

But to take up we must first set aside. To think rightly we must turn from thinking wrongly. Peter names five things that thwart our progress and growth in the faith. The first is malice. The Greek word is κακια, meaning badness, which refers to what is intrinsically bad (as opposed to what has a bad effect). It is rendered in various ways in the New Testament and refers to depravity, malignity or what is troublesome. We must say “no” to that within us that we know to be the fruit of our depravity. Our depravity expresses itself in ways that vary from person to person. We must put aside the particular habits in our life that spring from our depravity.

The second thing mentioned is guile. This word is δολω. It likely comes from an obsolete word δελλω, which meant to decoy. It referred to a trick or a bait. It includes what we refer to as hidden agendas, or manipulation and con jobs. It is duplicity, saying and doing what appears to be one thing while all the while embracing the other. We must separate ourselves from that human tendency to work things to our own advantage and to “cover our tracks” so as to appear good. Guile was the sin of Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5), that Peter dealt decisively with.

The third thing we must put aside is hypocrisy. The word is υποκρισεισ, which comes from two words, the preposition for “under,” and the word for “judgment.” It is easy to respond incompletely to the Lord’s conviction and judgment. We can easily deal with some visible part of our sin and yet hold on to the sin. The term “under judgment” describes us perfectly in that case, because we have obviously been convicted, but we have not really dealt with the issue, so we are still “under judgment.” It is important that we deal with those matters about which we are convicted.

The fourth thing we must put aside is envy. The word φθονουσ is used. It is from a word that means to pine or waste away, shrivel or wither. It means to spoil or ruin by moral influence. So this idea was incorporated into a word that expresses a thinking pattern that brings ruin in and around us. It is a thinking pattern that occupies itself with the things or the state others have been blessed with, and then with the feeling “that should be true of me as well.” It is the feeling that things should have turned out different for me. As all sin is, this is a lack of faith in the plan and goodness of God. It is seeking the blessing rather than the blessing.

The fifth thing we are to put aside is slander. The word is καταλαλια. It is composed of the preposition meaning down or against, and the word for speech. It is easy for us to “speak down” others. We do it to make them look worse, make us look better, to “settle a score,” and for a host of other reasons. What we need to realize is that when we do this we are a direct reflection of Satan. He is a slanderer. Slander is in the meaning of his name (the word rendered devil is διαβαλλο, meaning one who accuses, maligns or slanders). When we speak against someone in order to damage them for selfish reasons we are slandering them. Now there are times when we must state the truth about someone, but we must be careful that we do not hide behind this pious sounding excuse. It is far easier to sin when we open our mouths than when we keep them shut. It is more typical of human nature to say too much than it is to say too little.

If we desire to grow with respect to our salvation these are the things we must continually separate ourselves from. They are directly disobedient to that which God is trying to do within us. We fall into them by listening to the flesh rather than the Spirit. But it is not just a question of putting off some things. We do not understand Christianity fully if we view it as a matter of not doing certain things. In fact, the “not doing” is something we engage in so as to do certain things that are more noble and are God’s heart. The motive for setting aside is the glory of what we are then free to do. That is what the next verse speaks of. It is a continuation of the sentence and thought of this verse.

## **2:2—like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,**

This verse continues the sentence started in the previous verse but does not complete it. It is more thought on what we should do in light of the truth spoken of at the start of Peter’s letter. The previous verse speaks of a “putting off” that we must do. This verse takes up the idea of what should fill the void. Verse two speaks of what should govern our thoughts instead of the fleshly instincts of verse one that we distance ourselves from.

We are told to behave like babies. This is the only time in the Bible we are told to behave like babies! The reason for this switch in the normal metaphor is that Peter wishes to identify and emphasize that which nourishes growth. His concern is that his readers grow up, that they not remain the same, stagnated in their Christian life. To do this we must put aside the things that stunt the process of God in our lives, the things that tend to “lock us on” to the voice of the flesh and the desire of the devil. We must crave something else like a baby craves milk. This thing will do for us what milk does for a newborn. It will provide all that we need to sustain and advance spiritual life.

What is this thing we are to crave? The NASB renders it “the pure milk of the word.” This rendering translates the adjective, λογικον, with the English phrase “of the word.” That is a legitimate rendering, the adjective conveying the essential character of the particular nourishment Peter has in mind.

It is important to consider why this rendering is to be preferred. Other renderings inject the word “spiritual” into the text. This word λογικον occurs only one other place in the New Testament, in Romans 12:1. There we are told to give our bodies as a living sacrifice and that this is our “λογικον” service. In that text there is the same challenge. What English word represents the idea of this Greek word best. The English translations vary, many using the word “spiritual,” some using the word “reasonable.” Since the word occurs only on these two occasions in the New Testament, it is of value to consider how it was used in secular Greek literature.

In Greek literature we see that λογικον was almost exclusively used to express the idea of “rational.” It was used in particular of those fundamental principles that govern the behavior of all things. To the stoics, god was rationality embodied in an actual substance, called λογος. Λογος was understood not as a person but as reason or what was rational thought. As a substance it was everywhere present. This god-force/substance as it reacted with the substances of other things gave those things definition and explained their essential properties. Another way of saying this would be to say that the λογος explained the reason things were as they were. It was the basis of reality and to the Greeks, all should strive to understand this essential thing, reason or rationality, that shaped reality. In this striving, understanding of rational wisdom was to be found. Rational wisdom was logic that made things logical or at least acceptable.

So the Greek’s use of this word had to do with underlying rational explanations of things, mysterious in nature, but nevertheless rational. Λογικον was something that had the character or nature of the λογος about it. It described what was germane or foundational to the understanding of reality. This usage would cause us to favor a rendering in this text that in some way reflected this idea of logical or reasonable, as the King James Version did in Romans 12:1.

Now if we move backward in the context of this 1 Peter passage to the end of chapter 1, we find that the subject at hand is “the word of God.” Its living character and its enduring character is emphasized. It is likely that by the phrase “the word of God” Peter was not thinking of the Bible as we would, it not having been completed yet. He was thinking of all that God had revealed about Himself in the Old Testament and in the life of Christ and all that God had decreed that shaped and maintained His creation. The chapter ends with these words, “And this is the word that was preached to you.” So Peter is speaking of the truth of God as it was being proclaimed by himself and others. The word “therefore” begins chapter 2 and so connects the thoughts. So the thought of “the word” (λογος), in chapter 1 and the adjectival form of that same word (λογικον) in chapter 2 are connected. The revelation of Yahweh as it has been made known to us by Him should figure definitively into our definition of what the phrase “the pure milk” is. It is what nurtures our faith. A condensed treatment of this “milk” that nurtures faith is found in Psalm 19.

Our placing of the word “spiritual” in the English text, as for example in the NIV, creates a couple of problems. The first is that the word “spiritual” to most Americans conveys an activity that is other than rational. This violates the clear usage of the Greek word in the era of Peter’s writing, when it meant “rational,” and referred to the principles that governed and explained the universe and made things behave as they do. Second, the term “spiritual” leaves wide open what the “milk” actually is that nourishes our growth. It would be difficult to imagine Peter telling his readers to crave something the nature of which was uncertain. He was not telling them to simply engage themselves in spiritual activity. He had a specific body of truth they were to be immersed in. The pure milk Peter wants us to crave is “of-the-word” milk.

So it is best to understand the word λογικον as an adjective meant to specify, along with “pure,” the specific nature of the milk that induces growth. The pure milk is the objective revelation of God about Himself. It is His message about Himself, us, the world, its affairs, its fallenness and a host of other things. This revelation in its pure form when understood and applied, produces spiritual growth. It also guides the more subjective aspect that is part of a healthy relationship to God, the activity of listening for the voice of His Spirit.

The last part of the verse states succinctly what that milk will yield as it does its work in us. It is of the nature that it produces growth with respect to our salvation. This too is an important point. We view our salvation properly when we view it completely, as referring to justification, sanctification, and glorification. One of the misnomers of American nomenclature is that we have used the word “salvation” and “saved” to speak exclusively of justification. We view “salvation” as an event. God means for that event to begin a process that continues for the rest of our lives. If we wish to enter into the full experience of our salvation we must grow with respect to it. We will advance and make progress in it through the pure, of-the-word milk.

This is why every Christian should have a habit with regard to the Bible. It is the purest form we have of God’s message about Himself and His creation, including us. It is better than books about the Bible and it is better than books based on the Bible.

### **2:3—if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.**

This phrase is added on at the end of this long sentence that started in verse one. It is really intended to be the motivation for obeying all that both verses command. It re-captures the thoughts of chapter one and sums up the work of grace and what some have called “irresistible grace.”

The writing styles of the apostle’s varied, but their understanding of sanctification was uniform. They saw it as a partnership that flowed from a proper understanding of what God had done in our behalf. They seemed to approach a lack of sanctification with reminders of who we are in Christ. In their writings this seems to be uniform, a concern with the linkage between understanding grace and all its various expressions and responding obediently to God’s commands. This allusion to the kindness of the Lord is just such a ploy by Peter.

The force of the statement is simple and down to earth. If you have tasted the food and it is good, why not return for the whole meal? Worded in more theological terms, if justification was a sweet experience of God’s grace, why not continue in that grace and experience sanctification?

In this verse we encounter the whole tactic of God in His desire to restore man’s glory. His tactic is, to put it very simply, kindness. He seeks to woo us back to right relationship with Him. This is perhaps to demonstrate His great power in the face of the evil one’s rebellion. He recruited us to his cause by deceit. God in the end will showcase a family re-gathered by love out of the kingdom of evil marked by fear, by rivalry, jealousy, and all the abuses of evil.