

THE HERALD

Newsletter of the Orrville Grace Brethren Church

Sometimes the Bible Bores Me

By Paul David Tripp

I have a confession to make. It's embarrassing and humbling, but I'm willing to make it publicly: I'm not always excited about reading and studying the Bible.

I know we've spent nearly every Wednesday this year examining the doctrine of Scripture, its beauty, and its benefits. But I'm just being honest. I go through periods of what I would call spiritual boredom when the "old, old story" isn't very exciting to me.

On my worst days, reading God's word feels burdensome to me, and my heart is motivated more by duty than a worshipful joy. Can you relate?

When I hit these periods, there are three things I require myself to remember:

1. I remember God's grace

One of my favorite passages in all of Scripture is Isaiah 55. This chapter gives us visual picture after visual picture of God's amazing grace, and specifically, what the Bible can do in us and for us.

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but wa-

ter the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.' (vv.10-11, ESV)

You'll never find joy in Bible study until you understand that reading God's word is not first a call to duty but an invitation to receive a wonderful gift.

2. I remember Jesus

Reading God's word is much more than reading dusty, abstract theology, becoming familiar with ancient religious stories, or getting principles for daily living. You'll never have joy in your Bible study unless you understand that it's God's invitation for you to commune with his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (see John 5:39).

Open your Bible and what do you encounter? Not a thing, but a Person, and his name is Jesus. Reading and meditating on your Bible is God's means of welcoming you into daily fellowship with your Brother, Friend, Savior, and King—Jesus.

3. I remember my forgetfulness

I'm so prone to forget God, forget his grace, forget my identity as his child, forget that he supplies all that I need, forget his unstoppable sovereign plan, and forget his eter-

nal kingdom. So I need to be reminded every day of God's awesome glory, his gracious presence in my life, and my unique identity as his child. His word was given so that day after day, I would remember.

So, tomorrow, when you don't feel like opening your Bible, remember God's grace, remember your friend and brother, Jesus, and remember how quickly you forget.

Pick up God's word not with the burden of guilt or as a call to duty, but because it's a gift given to you by a God of amazingly tender mercy and grace.

I would like to conclude with a lengthy Charles Spurgeon excerpt on the purpose of Scripture.

"Great peace have they which love thy Law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165).

"Yes, a true love for the great Book will bring us great peace from the great God and be a great protection to us. Let us live constantly in the society of the law of the Lord, and it will breed in our hearts a restfulness such as nothing else can. The Holy Spirit acts as a Comforter through the Word and sheds abroad those benign influences which calm the tempests of the soul.

Nothing is a stumbling block to the man who has the Word of God dwelling in him richly. He takes up his daily cross, and it becomes a delight. For the fiery trial he is prepared and counts it not strange, so as to be utterly cast down by it. He is neither stumbled by prosperity—as so many are—nor crushed by adversity—as others have been—for he lives beyond the changing circumstances of external life. When his Lord puts before him some great mystery of the faith which makes others cry, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" the believer accepts it without question; for his intellectual difficulties are overcome by his reverent awe of the law

*of the Lord, which is to him the supreme authority to which he joyfully bows. Lord, work in us this love, this peace, this rest, this day."*¹

1 Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Faith's Checklist, April 9 reading, Spurgeon Archive, archive.spurgeon.org/fcb/fcb-bod.htm

—

This content was originally posted on the Wednesday Word, a weekly devotional with Paul Tripp on www.paultripp.com"

We will Answer for What We Watch

By: Kevin DeYoung

"And Jehoash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all his days. ... Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away."

(2 Kings 12:3-4)

It is possible for God's people to get many things right, while still getting one very important thing wrong. Several times during the years of the divided monarchy, we read of basically good kings who basically did what was right—kings like Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Amaziah, Azariah, and Jotham. Each one walked in the ways of God. And yet, all of them failed to address one critical area of disobedience. "The people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places" (2 Kings 15:35). These local shrines were used for making sacrifices, burning incense, holding feasts, and celebrating festivals. They were pagan places devoted to the worship of pagan gods. The high places were too normal and too popular for God's people to remove them.

Which brings me to Squid Game, the South Korean television series about 456

indebted and down-on-their-luck players who receive a mysterious invitation to participate in a survival game, with hopes of winning 45.6 billion won (more than \$38 million). Although the contests involve children's games (of which squid game is one), the premise of the show is anything but kid-friendly. Every game ends in death (often extremely graphic and violent), with each death adding another 100 million won to the grand prize. Since its worldwide release on Sept. 17, Squid Game has been watched in more than 142 million households, becoming Netflix's most watched series to date.

Isn't this just another Hunger Games? Not exactly. According to IMDB Parent's Guide for Squid Game, the sex and swearing are bad, but according to the Parent's Guide the level is only "moderate." It's the violence that rates "severe."

Does the presence of sensuality, swearing, and violence make a piece of entertainment out of bounds for the Christian? That question can be complicated. But when a show has graphic nudity and graphic violence (all the time), we ought to ask the question of our hearts: why do we find this entertaining in the first place?

Some Christians will be quick to point out that the Bible is full of sex and violence. And indeed it is. But there is a world of difference between sin described honestly on a page, never with the intent to stimulate or amuse, and sin depicted on the screen with multi-million dollar budgets, real nudity, and realistic gore. Can we freely watch something like Squid Game and honestly give thanks to God (1 Corinthians

10:30)? Does anything with an MA rating on Netflix help us think about what is pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise (Phiippians 4:8)?

Recently I preached on 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, which includes Paul's command, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers." Who talks like this anymore? "Be separate from them." "Touch no unclean thing." "Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit." That's not the message we want to hear from the church. But it is almost certainly the message virtually all of us need to hear. It is hard to imagine many of us are too careful with the sex, nudity, and graphic violence we put before our eyes.

It's easy to look at Christians from an earlier age and see what they got monumentally wrong (e.g., racism, slavery, cultural prejudice), even when they strangely got many other things right. We are right to criticize our spiritual ancestors for the sins that seem so obvious to us. But let us beware that they would be equally baffled by our sins. I dare say you could not find an orthodox Christian writer or pastor before the 20th century (or maybe prior to 1965) who would countenance a fraction of what we consider "moderate" entertainment today. If they were too rigid at times, certainly we are far too relaxed—to the impoverishment of our churches and of our souls.

We have grown accustomed to what should shock us. We no longer see the sin in what we see. Are today's pagan high places to be found on a screen?

FUNNIES

Fred decided to sell his house and realized that before he could sell it, he'd have to clean out his garage. Everybody tried to get him to throw this away and that away. "No, I'm going to need this..." Fred would reply, "No, that's too good to throw away..."

So he rented a mini-warehouse and moved all the stuff from the garage into it. He secured it with a special magnet-type lock. But that wasn't secure enough. Burglars broke into it. "But what really hurt," said Fred, "was that they didn't even take anything."

"Quite a number of flowers and shrubs have the prefix *dog*," the teacher explained to her class. "For instance, there is a dog rose and dogwood. Can anyone name me another?"

After a long silence, a small boy called out, "Collie flower!"

A sausage manufacturer made a reputation for a certain brand of sausage. He called it rabbit sausage. A sanitary inspector called one day to make an analysis.

"Don't you use some horse meat in making this sausage?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, I use some," was the reply.

"How much?"

"Well, I make it a fifty-fifty proposition. One horse and one rabbit."

The local restaurant was so sure that its host was the strongest man around that they offered a standing \$1,000 bet. The host would squeeze a lemon until all the juice ran into a glass, then hand the lemon to the patron. Anyone who could squeeze one more drop of juice would win the money.

Many people had tried over time (weight lifters, longshoremen, etc.) but nobody could do it.

Then one day, this scrawny little man came in, wearing thick glasses and a polyester suit, and said in a tiny squeaky voice, "I'd like to try the bet."

After the laughter died down, the host said, "Okay," grabbed the lemon and squeezed away. Then he handed the wrinkled remains to the little man.

But the crowd's laughter turned to total silence as the man clenched his fist around the lemon and six drops fell into the glass.

As the crowd cheered, the host paid the \$1,000, and asked the man, "What do you do for a living? Are you a lumberjack, a weight lifter, or what?"

The man replied, "I work for the IRS."

Little John was bothered with a question that he had to ask his Sunday School teacher, "Miss Davis, are there any animal in heaven?"

"I'm not sure, Jonny," his teacher responded.

"Well, I just wanted to know, because last Sunday we sang about 'Gladly the Cross-Eyed Bear.'"