

ENCOUNTERING
GOD
IN HIS LIVING WORD



*How to Study the Word of God &
Listen to the God of the Word*

C A R L W E S L E Y A N D E R S O N

Encountering God in His Living Word
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Love Letters From God

This is a book about encountering God through His Word: through study of the Word you can receive His guidance in both general and specific ways. Jesus once declared, *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the WORDS that I have spoken to you are SPIRIT and LIFE”* (John 6:63). Later, after His sacrificial death upon the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and just prior to His ascension into Heaven, He appeared to some of His disciples. He was cloaked in

resurrection life and they did not recognize Him at first. *“Then He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures”* (Luke 24:45). How powerful! He Himself, the *“Eternal Word who had become flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1:14) **personally** opened up the minds of these disciples and shared the Scriptures about His mission that He had fulfilled, and for the first time in His ministry (because of this personal touch), they understood! After this moment, His encouragement about the Holy Spirit bringing His words to remembrance began to be fulfilled, and it is still being fulfilled down to this very day. *“These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you”* (John 14: 26-27). Jesus, the Living One, through the Person of the Holy Spirit, still stands ready to personally teach, lead and guide you today by the Holy Spirit, just as He did for those disciples after the resurrection and as He promised He would.

It is vital in the 21st century to learn the balance of being guided by the Word of God in both “general ways” (like the effects of a shotgun on a target) and in “specific ways” (like the effects of a sniper rifle on a target).

I was raised in an evangelical Lutheran church tradition. I thank God for the strong foundation that was laid in my earliest understanding of the importance of God’s word in my life; that is, the importance of living

my life by the principles and standards upheld in the Word, passed along by apostolic tradition.

That being said, when it came to the subject of guidance, and how the LORD speaks, our church seemed to worship the “Trinity;” at least, the “Trinity” as they understood it: the Father, the Son, and the Holy BIBLE. We were taught very strongly that God stopped speaking directly to mankind after the first few centuries and the establishment of the canon of scripture (or New Testament). We were taught to believe in the established, written Word of God as the standard for our life. I would call this, “general” guidance and the “shotgun” approach to guidance. We were simply not taught to consider that the same Word might also be a means by which God might venture to speak *directly* to our hearts when it comes to more specific understandings of His will and plan for our life. So for many years I received “general” guidance from the Word, but the Word itself was silent to me.

Enter my first exposure to some, “crazy” Charismatics during a class assignment in my college religion course; we were asked to visit a church different from ours and make notes on what we saw. They seemed to worship much differently than I was used to. They did wild and crazy things in their services, like actually raise their hands during the opening songs of praise, or dance to the music. My Swedish Lutheran upbringing had taught me to never raise my hands! Then during the music time somebody took the microphone and spoke

spontaneously out a passage of a Psalm, and everybody seemed to respond and clapped and danced even harder. Could it be that God had actually spoke that particular Psalm to that person? No wonder my tradition taught me to keep away from the “crazy” Charismatics—they believed that scriptures like the Psalms can be “fresh words” from God and speak directly to people! And yet—I was strangely fascinated by this genuine experience.

I must admit now, looking back, I had a lot to learn. And I still do. I am quite comfortable now in worship services of both more “traditional” styles and “newer” styles. I personally committed my heart and life to Jesus Christ just about a year after I visited that “crazy” service, and from there I consecrated myself to unlimited growth in Jesus and with a heartfelt desire to learn to communicate with Him in all the ways that He chose to communicate with me. I realize now that in the midst of that service, God was responding in love to His people gathered, through that person who spoke out that Psalm and made that Word personal to many members of the congregation. It was like a “sniper rifle” to many people there that morning and spoke directly to their minds and hearts.

I wanted more of Him, and that meant more of His Word, so I attended a wonderful Bible School and began training in how to study the Word of God and be led by the Spirit of God in that Word.

Of course, there is a ditch on both sides of the road. Those who over-emphasize the “established” word for guidance can have sound doctrine (which we all need) but miss the “still, small voice” of Jesus, the “Living Word” trying to encourage and challenge through the Word; those who over-emphasize the “living” word become seekers of “experience” which, when out of balance with good doctrine, can lead to delusion when it comes to guidance and identity. Let’s always remember that God is “no respecter of persons” and will hold everyone accountable, through His word, for how they handled the Word in their relationship to Him. This book provides a fresh, alternative approach to more of a middle-of-the-road perspective on learning to listen to God more fully in both doctrine and “living truth.”

I have learned now by training, historical study, and experience that a more balanced approach to guidance in the Word is possible to develop.

Change & Growth in Your Divine Ability

I challenge you today to begin to change in your ability to interact with the very personal Holy Spirit. You can accomplish this by developing a new discipline of balance as you approach the Word of God: an approach of balance between (1) study of the “established” Word; (you can thus live out your daily lifestyle according to its truth, its doctrine, and its general revelations of God to man), and (2) exercising your faith and expectancy for

God Himself, by the Holy Spirit, to speak directly to you in the “living” Word; (you can thus live out your daily lifestyle according to its personal truth, its doctrine, and its specific revelations of God to man in guidance)!

Truth is still truth. The Word does not change, but the way in which you act, react and interact with the Word needs to change! This is just part of growth: growing more into the likeness of Christ and learning better how to be led by the Holy Spirit and hear His personal “marching orders” for your own life, by His Word.

The book of Acts reveals multiple ways and means of God having contact with men and women. Learning how to hear from Him in His Word is one of the easiest and most rewarding of these multiple ways He chooses to make contact with us. It truly is an adventure to build faith!

Pentecostal healing pioneer Smith Wigglesworth lived out this adventure daily. Wigglesworth came to faith in his mid-40's and was a poor plumber from the North of England. In fact, he had never learned to read until his wife began to teach him to read the Word of God. After that, he never read anything else in his life (not even a newspaper), except the Word of God! He was known to always have a copy of the New Testament Scriptures on him at all times. He lived out that Word. He was always in study, receiving “fresh bread” from the Bread of Life, every day.

He shared, “Fill your head and your heart with the Scriptures. Memorize passages from the Word so you can learn to quote it. You must be so soaked with the Word of God, so filled with it, that you yourself are a living epistle, known and read of all men. **I have a love for the Word, and an absolute confidence in the God of the Word.**”¹

Love Letters

The Bible is essentially one long “love letter” from God. It is His chief means of communication with you and reveals His heart of love: the love of a Father to His sons and daughters. If you are a follower of Jesus, you have become an adopted son or daughter of the Father, just as He shared on the morning of His resurrection, “*I ascend to My Father, and to your Father*” (*John 20:17b*).

Let me share a true story from WWII to help illustrate how awesome it is to develop a balance of both a study of the revealed will of God (“general guidance”) and listening to God in His Living Word (“specific guidance”). It is wonderful to learn to study the original Word in its’ original context and meaning. It is likewise wonderful to receive that Word for your own context.

¹ Stanley Howard Frodsham, Smith Wigglesworth: Apostle of Faith (Radiant Books, 1948), page 111.

During the invasion of France in June, 1944, a young soldier who had been recently married just prior to shipping off wrote a series of love letters to his new wife. She was pregnant at the time, and he simply did not know how long he had to live in the war and wanted her to know how much he adored her. So from the muddy fields of France, from foxhole to hedgerow, he composed a letter every week for several weeks and sent them home. As his wife received every letter, she would sit for hours and read and re-read them with much emotion, as they described the context of what he was going through and also his personal love for her and for their new baby, soon to arrive.

He lived through the battles in France, Holland, Belgium and Germany, and returned home to his newborn daughter and to much celebration. Shortly after his return, his wife bundled up those letters and stored them away in an old trunk in the attic of their home. They went on to have three more children and he lived out a long and happy life with her. Those letters had spoken fresh life and emotion to her, but now that he was home and their life moved on, she and the children forgot all about them. They lay concealed in that attic trunk for over fifty years.

About a week after his death, the old soldier's wife was clearing out the attic. She opened up that trunk and after the dust cleared her eyes alighted upon a stack of old mail. She picked up that bundle, long forgotten, and within minutes, tears of joy were flowing down her

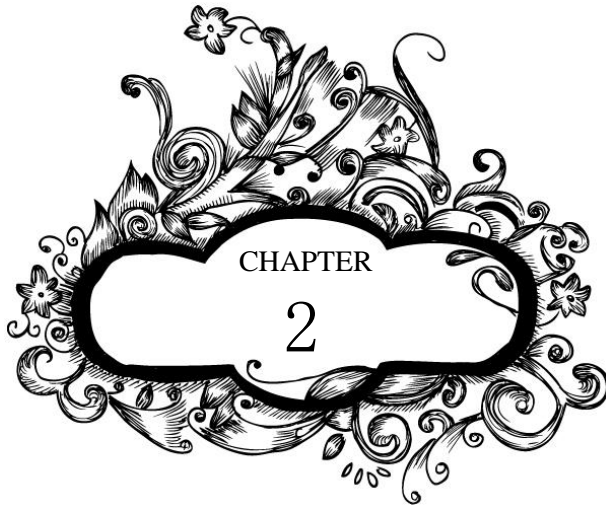
cheeks, as emotion flooded her heart and she sat and read and re-read all of those love letters once again. Minutes turned into hours and the feelings of love permeated her.

Can you begin to see the beauty of this simple illustration? The first time she received each letter during the war, it was very meaningful: in context, she felt love and companionship and joy as he shared his heart with her and walked her through the campaign in which he was fighting, and shared his initial passion for her.

It is a wonderful experience to study the Word and receive its’ “general guidance” even though technically you personally were not a part of the “original audience” to which that part of the Word was written. For example, the Book of Revelation was clearly written to those 7 Churches of Asia Minor; and when they initially received the Word with joy it meant something very specific to them, something that is lost to us today as we were not there. And yet, Revelation was added to the canon of scripture and thus becomes just as relevant to every single follower of Jesus in every generation since then, as we can still receive the truths from it and learn from them. Now, when she opened those letters again, some 50+ years later, can you see how they, now that the context had changed, became even more powerful with fresh emotion and passion and joy? The “words” on the pages had not changed, but because of the context of the fresh receiving of those words of love, they changed the way they related to her heart and brought “fresh life” to her!

ENCOUNTERING GOD IN HIS LIVING WORD

In the next few chapters, you will learn how to begin a balance of receiving from God in His Living Word, both in study of the original Word in its' context and meaning, and in listening to the fresh Word as it relates to your own personal life and situation.



The Word as a Weapon

So allow me to briefly introduce the two “words” in the Word for, “word” and I will share teaching specific to each of them.

The 2 Words for “WORD” in the Word

In Scripture, there are two separate Greek words, with two completely complementary meanings, for understanding Jesus as the “Word.” In essence, there are two different words for the word “word.” Here they are:

1. **LOGOS.** This word can be best defined as, “the established body of Truth” in the whole of scripture. Expect that Jesus will guide you every time you study the word in its’ original context. The “Logos” is important for doctrine, correction, training in righteousness, and truly understanding how the God of both Testaments has chosen to lead, train, and speak to His people in all generations. Whenever you sit down to a Bible study and learn about the time the original passage was written, and try to understand the exact context of what the writer was trying to communicate to his/her specific audience and the context of that culture, you are studying the “Logos.” The LOGOS is like studying those love letters from the soldier and trying to understand what they must have meant to his young wife and first child when they were originally received.

“For you have been born again, not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding WORD (LOGOS) of God” (I Peter 1:23).

Many theologians build their lives upon careful study of the historical contexts, the nuances of original languages like Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, and understanding the audience and the author.

Let us pause here and consider how one man, John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, considered the study of the LOGOS.

“I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. For this very end He came from heaven. He has written it down in a book.

O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God!”²

I love that! Hear in Wesley his cry to make the study of the Word of God a balanced, daily passion!

When you study and meditate on the LOGOS, you are asking yourself this question:

What DID it mean?

² John Wesley, Preface to his published, 53 Sermons, pg. 13 (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1983).

In other words, learn who the original author was, the original intended audience was, and the historical backdrop to the situation. All Scripture is God-breathed, so in its original context it contains power. So in our example from “Love Letters” you would study all about WWII, the battles that the soldier was fighting in, the actual soldiers in his platoon and who lived and died, and more about his own personal life and the path he took.

Another element in studying the LOGOS can be summarized in three simple steps:

1. **Observation** (“What did it say”)?
2. **Interpretation** (“What did it mean”)?
3. **Application** (“What did it mean to the original audience”)?

NOTE: Conformity to the Word of God always brings holiness and leads to obedience and action.

Now to the other word for, “Word.”

2. **RHEMA.** This is the other word in the Greek that is translated “word of God.” This word can best be defined as, “the living, breathing, personal and fully applicable word of God; the fresh manna of the Bread of Life coming down out of heaven through the scripture on the page. It both feeds your spirit the fresh bread of Jesus and breathes life into your spirit; it opens your spiritual eyes and adds fresh illumination from the word into your spirit.”

Ask yourself this question: have you ever sat down to study the word of God, and as you are reading along, suddenly a particular passage of the Scripture literally seems to shine like a brilliant light into your heart and you feel the nearness of God and believe that He is speaking that scripture directly to you for your particular situation? If you can answer, “yes!” to this question, you can now rejoice that by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Himself, the Living Word, has utilized the word itself to “shout an answer from Heaven” to your particular situation. That is the power of RHEMA for you, and the RHEMA of the word is the other edge of the Sword of the Spirit; it penetrates the darkness and illuminates your heart with light.

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” wrote the Psalmist in Psalm 119.

He understood a thousand years before the appearance of Jesus the Messiah how important it is that we allow the word of God to speak personally to us and lighten the darkness around us, like flickering candle light on the path ahead.

When you study and meditate on the RHEMA, you are asking yourself this question:

What DOES it mean TO ME?

What DOES it mean to me personally? In other words, apply faith and your current situation to the text. Could it be that Jesus Himself is initiating contact with you through His Word, and shouting an answer to your prayers *before* you call out? All Scripture is God-breathed, so in its fresh and relevant context it contains power. You will need integrity and make sure you receive confirmation from another scripture too.

Ask yourself, “Is Jesus REALLY SAYING THIS TO ME?” There could be multiple interpretations and guidance for you in every RHEMA so get ready for an adventure, and also remember to apply obedience and action by faith through the text to your situation.

When Paul writes to the church at Rome he shares this revelation, “*So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the WORD (RHEMA) of Christ*” (Romans 10: 17).

He specifically uses the word, “RHEMA” and so he’s talking about the power of the “Living Word” to bring growth in faith. I think in the past two thousand years of strong historical church doctrines and traditions that we have lost something of the power of these words. As I read them, Paul is simply sharing that our faith is grown by hearing (listening to what God is saying in the word) and applying the fresh LIVING WORD of Christ into our personal situation.

To put it another way, place yourself in the presence and glory of God through praise and worship and create inside of you an atmosphere of expectation; expect today that as you open your Bible and are led to a

particular story, or Bible character, or passage of wisdom, or prophetic utterance, or the words of Jesus in His teachings, or the apostle's words of doctrine, that as you read there will come a specific passage that will apply to you; and as you read it, you will "know-that-you-know-that-you-know" that Jesus Himself, the author and perfecter of your faith, has taken a word of scripture and made it personal and real for you.

One of my mentors once described to me RHEMA words as God Himself taking the initiative and shouting an answer to a prayer from Heaven but through the pages of Scripture.

Sometimes the prayer has just been spoken, other times it may be something you are simply thinking about but haven't even prayed yet (yes, God knows your thoughts afar off) or other times it may be a prayer you have prayed and you have been persistent in your prayers and sought God until He answers.

So true growth in faith would constitute ½ "study" of the Word to receive "general" guidance and understand better: "what it meant."

The other ½ is "listening" to the Living Word for "specific" guidance and daring to ask the question, "what it means" to you personally!

The Holy Spirit is unlimited in His capacity and can utilize the same passage of scripture to apply to thousands of hearts in thousands of places, all at the same time!

The Word is Your Weaponry for Defense & Offense

1. **Question:** How do you turn the “established” Word of God (the LOGOS) into a DEFENSIVE weapon against the Enemy?

Answer: By MEDITATING ON IT and STANDING ON IT by faith in alignment with your lifestyle.

Here is a scripture which teaches this principle. God spoke to Joshua just prior to his campaign to lead a new generation of people into the battle for the Promised Land,

“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law (the “established” Word of God) which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left (STAND YOUR GROUND UPON IT), so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth but you shall MEDITATE on it day and night” (Joshua 1: 7,8a).

So here Joshua is taught to both meditate upon and to stand upon the Word as a **defensive weapon** as he moves forward into his calling.

In a word-picture from the modern-day battlefield, the LOGOS is like a shotgun approach: very powerful in the short-range to destroy your target and walk in daily victory by the established doctrine and truth of God.

Practical Application: Stand on the Rock of the Word

You can also imagine the LOGOS as the bed-rock of established truth that you can stand upon to be elevated above your circumstances and share in God's vision for them.

Here is a sample of 5 general situations where you can achieve victory by meditating and standing upon the "established" Word of God. On the left is the "need" and on the right is the "answer."

Memorize the Scriptures on the right and no matter what your own circumstance, believe them to be true; meditate and stand upon the Word in faith.

It is like you are truly "in Christ" as you stand upon His Word; it is the Old Testament word picture of Christ as our "high tower" of strong defense against our Enemy.

I encourage you to study the Word of God and learn to discipline yourself daily in consecration to the truth in any area of "need" that may not be on this list.

Whatever the need, there are answers in the Word!

THE NEED

THE ANSWER

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Healing | <i>Isaiah 53: 4-5, I Peter 2:24</i> |
| 2. Encouragement | <i>Psalm 27, 2 Corinthians 4</i> |
| 3. Repentance | <i>Psalm 51, I John 1:9</i> |
| 4. Peace | <i>Psalm 23, Philippians 4: 6-7</i> |
| 5. National Crisis | <i>2 Kings 19: 14-19, Rev. 12:11</i> |

2. **Question:** How do you turn the “Living Word” of God (the RHEMA) into an OFFENSIVE weapon against the Enemy?

Answer: By SPEAKING it and DECREEING it by faith in agreement with your lifestyle!

Here is a scripture which teaches this principle. Paul wrote to the Ephesians with a list of word-pictures from a Roman soldier to illustrate deeper spiritual realities, and he shared, “*take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the WORD (RHEMA) of God*” (Ephesians 6: 17). Here he equated the use of the Word of God as **an offensive weapon**. The Greek word for “word” here is, “RHEMA” and as I have defined it means, “LIVING.”

Question: When can the Word of God be considered “living” for you? It is, of course,

always “living” inside your spirit, right? The Word of God is Jesus Himself, the Resurrected One, alive and active and who once spoke of the simplicity of relationship with Himself as the Good Shepherd who desires to speak to His sheep, “*My sheep hear My voice*” (*John 10: 27*).

Answer: the Word comes to “life” when you PROCLAIM it and DECREE it (out loud, with faith) and literally speak it out into the spirit realm around you! There is power in agreement with truth. Suddenly you begin to realize the Word of God can become an offensive weapon. There is real spiritual power available continuously through agreement with the Word!

As was already shared, Paul used the Roman sword as an illustration of the power of the word of God as a weapon. We don’t use a lot of swords anymore in modern warfare, so let me add to this illustration with more of a modern-day concept of weaponry: the sniper rifle. The RHEMA is like the sniper rifle as it can be utilized to help zero-in on the Enemy and target your prayers and guidance with precision. It works with equal effectiveness in both prayers for yourself and prayers for other people. It takes practice, but every member of the Army of God can become proficient with this sniper rifle! Imagine being able to help other people with their prayer

requests by hearing a Living Word from God and defeating the Enemy on their behalf through prayer!

If you can picture it, it's like a sword appears in your mouth and goes forth to strike against your circumstance and any blockades or schemes of the Enemy and destroy them, or like the scope on the sniper rifle helps you zero in on your target and with one pull of the trigger (speaking the Word) you create the victory. Boom goes the dynamite!

Practical Application: Time to Decree the Word

Now it's time to proclaim and decree! This principle is revealed in Scripture here,

“You will pray to Him, and He will hear you; you will also decree a thing, and it will be established for you; and light will shine on your ways” (Job 22:27).

The truth is, what comes out of your mouth holds power! That same power can be utilized for blessing or cursing, for good or evil (see Deuteronomy chapter 28 for a further description of the power of blessing or cursing).

Early in my walk with the LORD, He was encouraging me through His word that I was truly one of His “special sons.” Of course, since He has no favorites, you too are “special!” You are either a “special son” or a “special daughter” of His, just like me. When I was a kid

I was picked on constantly for my blazing red hair. This bullying by my peers, who every day in school made fun of me, affected my self-worth in a negative way, and I was never really able to see myself as a person of self-worth or high self-esteem. So when I became a follower of Jesus, He tenderly led me in His word, over and over again, to remind me about how I am, “a child of God” and of far more value than I ever thought possible. I began to DECREE the word of truth. Whole scriptures that describe the person who has consecrated themselves to Jesus came pouring out of my mouth in declaration. Over and over I proclaimed them.

Then one day I sort of woke up and KNEW I was a “special son” and a true “child of God” and I even began to thank God for my red hair! I knew-that I knew-that I knew-that He loved me, and His love for me had nothing to do with the color of my hair. He would have loved me the same even if I had been born with blonde hair! My point? There is true power in agreement with the Word of God and putting the Word to work in DECREE holds spiritual power to change you and transform you and create breakthroughs in your path ahead.

Ambassadors of God Utilizing His Authority

In Luke 10, Jesus offered His Name as the basis of authority for expanding the Kingdom as He sent the 70 disciples out. They were enabled and empowered to carry on the very works of Jesus Himself, through the shared

authority of the use of His very name. They proclaimed the Kingdom, spoke/decreed the word, healed the sick, and cast out demons, all in His name (under His authority).

So from this, we learn among other things that as He sends us out on our own unique missions, and as He shares His name (and thus, His very own authority with us), we ourselves can operate in faith and begin to move mountains by our decrees. **Note: it takes humility to decree a scriptural truth over your situation!** You are “sharing” in His authority, and the real authority and power comes directly from God as you tune your ears to listen to Him in His word and by His Spirit.

“I think our authority comes primarily through confessing the truth,” shared my friend Ben with me one day, “and through confession, we bring our mind/soul into alignment with what God has decreed, and the authority He has given us. So, the source of the authority is from God, and we experience the blessing, freedom and power by bringing ourselves into agreement with what God has already decreed.

A metaphor I like is that of an ambassador (*see 2 Corinthians 5:20*). The ambassador has no authority on their own, but represents the authority of the one who sent them. So, they are repeating the message of the one who sent them, not creating their own message.”

Here are 5 principles of DECREE:³

- (1) Decrees of the LORD must be “based on” Revelation—that is given to us—in Scripture (with personal revelation comes His shared authority).
- (2) Decrees release God’s power, light, love and blessing, and open doors of favor!
- (3) Seek the Holy Spirit to guide you in any area where you are needing breakthrough (financial, health, relationships, etc.) and base your decree on Scripture (that He gives you).
- (4) Begin to break the power of lies and curses that have been spoken over you—by declaring the TRUTH of God’s word—who you ARE in Christ!
- (5) Decrees establish a change or even can create something new—many times by canceling a curse and establishing a blessing. *“Call those things that are not as though they were” (Romans 4:17).*

³ Adapted from an Email summary of a sermon from Pastor Rick Bennett, a good friend of ours, pioneering a mission in Arizona.

ENCOUNTERING GOD IN HIS LIVING WORD

Let's turn now to 4 real-life examples from "ordinary" followers of Jesus (common foot-soldiers in what I like to call, "God's Last Days Army," like you and I), who experienced God's leading in his Living Word and were able to live "extraordinary" adventures in their lives. These people both learned both how to stand on the "Established" word and listen to God for His "Living" word in their own day and generation.

By encountering God in His Living Word, and learning to relate in new and exciting ways to the Holy Spirit, you too can live out a "naturally supernatural" existence, as He speaks and you listen and follow Him.



Baked Fresh Daily

There is a wonderful and simple truth we can learn from one of the ways God's provision came to the children of Israel as they endured their wilderness wanderings. The story of the manna falling from Heaven is recorded in both Exodus 16 and Numbers 11. You probably remember the story: the provision of the Heavenly bread was only good for one day; it could not be eaten the next day. So faith had to be applied to each and every day in order for fresh provision to be enjoyed.

The following 4 real-life stories in this chapter, taken from a splash of 500 years of church history, can

likewise be applied to the subject of encountering God in His Living Word: He desires us to seek Him daily in His Word. We too cannot live solely on the revelations He has given yesterday; we need to seek Him afresh every day to receive “fresh bread” as spiritual nourishment from His Word.

Here are just a few examples from history (even up to present day with a story of my oldest son, Ethan) to encourage you that the principles I am laying out in this book have, in fact, always been in operation since the Kingdom of God was inaugurated by Jesus Himself. These are ordinary people who grew into extraordinary faith in their guidance in the Word.

Scottish Manna Falls From Heaven

During a time of intense persecution of the church in Scotland, a group of courageous men and women arose. It was the 17th century, and political and religious upheaval caused the people of God, known then as the Covenanters, to have to take a stand to not abandon the orthodox faith of their fathers. Many were driven from their homes, some were imprisoned, and some became martyrs for their faith (and convictions of the importance of obedience to the Word of God). One of the inspiring stories I uncovered comes from the life of Alexander Peden. Peden was a powerful preacher and was driven by the authorities to live a life on the run. He traveled through the countryside, sleeping in barns and haystacks,

and secretly meeting with small groups of believers and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.

Early one morning he walked up the side of a mountain and spent many hours in prayer along with his Scriptures. An eye-witness account records what happened next, “He returned singing the 32nd Psalm, from the 7th verse to the end, then repeated that verse,

*“Thou art my hiding place, thou shalt
From trouble keep me free:
Thou with songs of deliverance
About shalt compass me.”*

“These and the following,” he said, “are sweet lines, which I got at the mountain-side this morning, and I will get more tomorrow; and so will get daily provision. He is never behind with any who put their trust in Him, and we will go on in His strength, making mention of His righteousness, and His only.”⁴

The “manna” fell: the Living Word fed His servant, and the encouragement kept Peden on the move, in the midst of persecution, strengthened by God’s presence in His Word.

⁴ John Howie, quoting from the life of Alexander Peden, in, The Scots Worthies (Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1870), pgs. 515-516.

Isn't that beautiful? You will notice that Peden exercised the spiritual discipline of waiting on God to receive from Him: the idea here is: EXPECTATION After you have spoken in prayer to God and await His presence, believe and expect that God will respond to you, (through many ways, including His great love letters), and share in love a fresh word, just for you.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer Heard the LORD

Dietrich Bonhoeffer became a leader of the underground church in Germany during the time that Hitler had come to power. Hitler began persecuting both Jews and true Christians. In July, 1939, he was given the opportunity to visit America, and it was while he was in New York that he began to think deeply about the idea that he needed to potentially choose to suffer persecution, among other believers in Germany, rather than take the path of least resistance and sit out the war in America.

This is intensely important as a lesson to the readers of this book, especially as I have also published a book called, “Marching Orders: Discovering Your Place & God’s Presence in His Last Days Army” which details a coming time of un-precedented persecution for the Church. People who hold to faith in Christ will be tested for that faith and perhaps face imprisonment and suffering in huge numbers. What will you do in your situation? Will you remain in an area that is experiencing great suffering for true faith, or will you be

called to a place like Goshen, where the ancient children of Israel received provision during a time of famine (*for further study see Genesis 46*).

For Bonhoeffer and his conscience, he simply couldn't decide what to do. Should he stay safely in America? Should he return to Germany? He went for prayer walks, trying to listen to God for His particular direction. He was agonizing over his escape while friends and family he knew were suffering back in Germany.

"You can't be a Christian unless you hear from God," shared Bonhoeffer with his theology students, "He wants to speak to you personally, not just in principles, and beliefs, and orthodox theology. But God wants to speak to you personally."⁵

One morning, trying to "live out" his own teaching, he paged through his Bible looking for inspiration. He expected to feast that morning on fresh manna, right from Heaven. He came upon a verse in Isaiah 28, verse 16:

"He who believes WILL NOT FLEE."

It was as if Jesus Himself was shouting an answer from Heaven for his particular situation at this moment. Bonhoeffer knew-that-he-knew-that-he-knew that God was speaking to him to return to Germany. So

⁵ Eric Metaxas, quoted in a magazine article quoting Bonhoeffer, CBN.com, on his biography, "[Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy.](#)"

Bonhoeffer booked passage on a ship to return to the suffering church in Germany and bring encouragement to believers there, help to the Jews who were likewise undergoing great suffering, and challenge to the Third Reich. Ironically, it was the last ship to sail from America to Europe as war erupted. Bonhoeffer ultimately paid the greatest price for his faith: he became a martyr and was killed for his faith in April, 1945, just a few weeks before the war ended.

What a powerful lesson! Sometimes God calls His people into the darkest places, (where others are fleeing), and commands them to take a bold stand and shine the light all the brighter. May it be so in the days to come.

A “Talent” of Gold

Another wonderful example of Jesus personally speaking to us in situations through His Word is from the life of Rees Howells in Wales in the first half of the 20th Century. After an incredible revival in Africa, Rees and his wife returned to Wales and during a time of prayer with some friends, in 1922, the subject came forth of beginning to pray for a Bible College to be formed in Wales, as there were so many young people responding to God’s call but they had nowhere to be trained. Here’s how the narrative went.

“It never dawned on Mr. Howells that he was to have a part in it. But as they got down to pray, the LORD said to him, “Be careful how you pray. I am going to

build a college, and build it through you!” It came as such a shock to him that the only thing he could say was, “If You are really speaking to me, confirm it through the Word,” and that night the confirmation came to him through I Chronicles 28, where these three promises stood out before him, *“Be strong...and do it...for the LORD God will be with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work...of the house of the LORD”*; *“There shall be with thee...every willing, skillful man, for any manner of service”* (verses 20, 21); and the third from the next chapter (29:4), that *the LORD would give him a “talent” of gold*, which from the margin of his Scofield Bible he learned was worth 6,150 pounds sterling **exactly**.

A short while later, as Mr. and Mrs. Howells were walking along the Mumbles Road, which skirts Swansea Bay, they passed a large estate on the rising ground overlooking the bay, and noticed that the house was vacant. They went up to the gate, and found the name of the place to be Glynderwen, and as they stood there, the LORD’s word came, “This is the College!”⁶

During one period, the disappointed Howells cried out in prayer, “But you haven’t given me the money!” to which God replied, “Didn’t I promise you a talent of gold? If you believe, go on your knees right here and claim that

⁶ Norman Grubb, Rees Howells, Intercessor, (Christian Literature Crusade, 1952), pgs.174, 176.

place.” So he knelt down there on the lawn by a little bridge and claimed it by faith, with no money at the time.

The story continues that although that estate was at the time worth more than 10,000 pounds Stirling, after much prayer and fasting, the owner agreed to sell it to Howells for 6,300. But Howells had to refuse that generous offer, as the LORD had very specifically given the figure of 6,150, and not a penny more! The man agreed and they signed an agreement. At the time of the signing, Rees had to pay the deposit within 10 days, and on the 10th day, he was still 140 pounds Stirling short. But he was a man of true faith! “In faith he set out to the office without it. He hadn’t been there long when Mrs. Howells arrived. She had followed him down with the post, and in it were three checks, which made up the 140 pounds Stirling to the very penny!”⁷

Here’s the amazing end of the story: just as the original word had spoken to the situation, so it came to pass; the presence of the LORD was hovering over the land, skillful men of various backgrounds came and helped build the property into something beautiful, and as for the finances, over a three month period, as the word spread that Howells was buying this estate in faith to begin a new work of a Bible College, multitudes of gifts from all kinds of people were sent, from the sums of 5

⁷ Ibid, pg.181.

cents up to 300 pounds Stirling; and on the very day that they needed to pay the money in full, they added it all up, and it was indeed “a talent of gold”: 6,150 (with a few coins extra to buy some food)! How’s that for a LIVING word?

Your Sons & Daughters Will Prophecy

And this kind of guidance from Jesus is still happening today. A couple of years ago we had enrolled our oldest son, Ethan, in a summer kids camp that had an emphasis on praise, worship, and prayer. His good friend Micah was spending the night here at our home before we brought them both to camp the next day.

On the morning of the camp I came down for my usual cup of coffee and this note was awaiting me, “Dear Dad and Mom, we were awakened by what we thought was GOD telling us to pray and worship God. You will find us in your office. 4:13 a.m., Love, Ethan and Micah.”

Hmmm. So the boys, aged 11 at this time, “thought” they heard God’s voice and so they went up into my office, which is actually my study and my prayer room, all combined. Like the ancient Celts, I believe in dedicating “holy space” to God and so this room is consecrated to Him. I have a CD playing with worship and praise music, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and my Bible is always accessible.

I found out that morning that indeed the two young boys went into my office to worship and pray: at 4 a.m. When they arrived there, there “happened” to be a worship song by artist Chris Tomlin playing in the background, (titled, “How Awesome is the LORD Most High”). As they began to sing that song, they opened my Bible on the desk, and prayed, “LORD, give us a word from your word.” Simple, right? As they opened the Bible, it fell open to Acts, Chapter 2, and they began to read, out loud, and declare by faith, “*And it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy*” (Acts 2:17-18).

They wrote these scriptures and some following ones out on paper. I still have that paper. Their note at the top reads, “Verses that spoke out to us as powerful verses.”

The next day was the first day of this Christian camp. Towards evening a very excited Ethan came up to us after a session. “Dad!” “Yes, son?” “Do you see the t-shirts? Do you see the shirts?” I confess I hadn’t looked at anyone wearing t-shirts but I suddenly looked around. The leaders of the camp all prayed each summer and asked God for a particular theme for the teachings of the camp and a particular scripture that would be the central theme of that week; they only revealed this theme on that day and passed out the t-shirts with the custom scripture printed on the back. Here is what they had printed, weeks ago, for the kids,

“And it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy” (Acts 2:17-18).

Ethan, again at age 11, smiled broadly and said, “Dad, you’ll never guess the song that they opened with today in our first session? It was the same song that was playing in your study early this morning when we got that scripture from God, called, ‘How Awesome is the LORD Most High.’

I am hearing from God, right Dad?”

I smiled back and hugged him, exclaiming, “Yes you are son!” Wow. Out of the mouth of babes.

Can you see in these stories BOTH the power of the LOGOS (standing on the Word as established truth, in the midst of circumstances which themselves need to come into alignment over time TO that truth) and the RHEMA (fresh words from the Word to guide and encourage)?

God’s promises are TRUE. They are true as you read them in the word, with all the historical context, doctrine and instruction. And they are likewise true when Jesus Himself applies a portion of that Word as Living Word, breathing upon it, illuminating it, for your personal situation. Learn to read the word and study it and meditate on it, like John Wesley did, and also have times of exercising your faith in the Word and letting it

become life inside of you, like Peden in Scotland, or Bonhoeffer, or Rees Howells, or even my own son, did.

The following chapter will conclude some teaching on this balanced way of learning to relate differently to the Holy Spirit in the Living Word. Let's turn to the life of Jesus Himself, the true Manna from Heaven.



It Is Written

Jesus Himself is the Eternal, Living Word. I felt it helpful to close out this book with an example from the life of Jesus Himself. You will discover that as Jesus faced Satan, (His Enemy and ours), in the wilderness, that he intimately knew the “established” Word; He had taken many hours to both memorize its precepts and understand its deeper meanings to bring life and direction. He also knew how to come into agreement

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with it. By speaking it into the atmosphere of the wilderness, He showed us the way to defeat the Enemy.

Jesus Stood on the Word & Spoke the Word

One of the greatest understandings of the authority of the word of God for the believer is that we have, as it were, a legal right, based upon the name of Jesus Himself and His finished work on the cross, to utilize the word as our Sword and cut the lies of the Enemy; to utilize the word for many reasons; to resist temptation, to be filled with hope, to trust, to obey and find life, and to be encouraged by how the Father has dealt with so many of His children throughout the ages.

We find one of the most powerful examples of just how to defeat the Enemy by speaking the word and agreeing fully and trusting fully in the word, even when our circumstances might seem opposite to what it says. This example is from Luke's gospel, chapter 4, and involves a clash-of-words that teach us just how powerful both the LOGOS and the RHEMA can become, and it involves Jesus Himself and Satan. Since Jesus here shows us how He Himself personally overcame attack in His mind and was tempted to sin but remained holy, we too can apply this lesson and find the same victory He did.

In Luke 4 Jesus has been spending time with His Father, full of the Holy Spirit, and fasting and praying in the wilderness for 40 days. At the close of this intense season of alignment of His Spirit with the full purposes of the Father for the full redemption of mankind, Satan appears to him (somehow; I don't imagine he actually walked up to Jesus in a red cape and carrying a pitchfork; I do imagine that he probably came as a flurry of thoughts in Jesus' mind, just like he does today when he speaks lies and half-truths to you and me).

Satan challenges Jesus in three distinct areas: questioning the Father's provision, challenging Jesus to become prideful and take a position of power in the world by worshipping him, and in the area of Jesus' identity as the Son of God and the Father's ability to protect Him as such. In all three instances, Jesus takes the "LOGOS" and by speaking it out, makes it fresh "RHEMA" and thus the Enemy is resisted in his foul attempts at defeating Jesus. All three times, Jesus agrees with the word of God as written in Deuteronomy and announces,

"IT IS WRITTEN."

And from Him, sharing in this wonderful passage, we learn of the Father's original intent in leading the

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children of Israel for the 40 years in the wilderness and feeding them the manna; that indeed “*man shall not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God*” (Deuteronomy 8:3 and Luke 4:4).

In other words, the daily provision from God in His Kingdom is not related to anything we think we “need” in the physical realm; you must instead re-focus your prayer life and expectation around the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Word of God and receive His inward provision of that Word daily. The flesh profits nothing. Those who set their minds on the flesh encounter spiritual death. Listen and obey every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God and you will walk in daily victory!

So when you are in need, find a scripture passage that fits your situation, and speak it out several times a day until you see the fulfillment of that Word for your life; use the LIVING WORD to fight like Jesus did. Eat fresh, living bread today!

Speak and Keep on Speaking

Once you have learned that Jesus will speak to you daily in this way, you can truly learn to wield your Sword (or, as we looked at earlier in this book, your “shotgun” or “sniper rifle”); to strike with it against the enemy who assaults you in your mind and through circumstances. As

you speak the word with all boldness, that is, as you take a word of the LOGOS which by personal revelation has become “Living” to you, and then declare it as a proclamation (and hence putting your spirit into agreement with the Living Christ), it takes on the authority and power of becoming a sharp Sword, (again, or a shotgun or sniper’s rifle of weaponry), which is able to defeat the doubts and fears in your situation! The truth can bring you into the fullness of what the LORD intends for you!

And do not stop after speaking the word one time; learn to keep proclaiming & decreeing the truth (like Jesus did) over your family, your prayer requests, your personal situations and crises. As you exercise persistence, the Accuser who is speaking against you will have to cease and he will have to flee. Jesus taught us this powerful principle when He said the following in the Sermon on the Mount,

“Ask, and keep on asking, and it shall be given to you. Seek, and keep on seeking, and you shall find. Knock, and keep on knocking, and it shall be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7, Amplified Translation).

The Amplified Bible brings out the original context of the phrases with powerful clarity: Jesus was

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teaching persistence! In the study of the LOGOS (as when you study the original text, and the way the Greek is written) Jesus tells you to keep praying and never give up. It usually is not enough that you “ask once” and think that that is all you need to do. Instead, He is encouraging you to “*ask and **keep on asking** until the answer appears.*” Speak, and **KEEP ON SPEAKING!** So in the context of His speaking to you in the word, there is great power in listening to Him in His word and then both believing He has spoken and to keep speaking out verbally the truth over your life until you see the breakthroughs you are seeking.

Sometimes real breakthroughs take hours, days, weeks, months, or even years: so remember the power of persistence.

Always remember, Satan did not tempt Jesus once and then stop. He kept coming in waves of attack. After successfully resisting by standing on the LOGOS and speaking forth the RHEMA, prepare for further waves of attack. Keep standing. Keep speaking.

Practical Application #1: **Seek Him for a Fresh Word For Yourself**

It’s a new day. Time to receive fresh manna from Heaven, not falling upon the ground as bread, but arising

out of the pages of your Bible and feeding your spirit. Jesus, the Bread of Life, is ready to be consumed!

Note: I recommend that if you have understood everything in this book, please prayerfully proceed to the following “application” as soon as you are able to carve out a private place and time to seek the LORD. If anything was unclear or requires another reading to understand it, re-read it tomorrow and ask God to help you understand it, and then proceed with the following application.

First off, you are seeking the LORD for a fresh “word” from His Word. Once you have that, you can decree it. Your decree is always accompanied with authority when it comes directly from God to you. You are sharing in His authority, and there is no greater authority.

How do you receive a fresh “word” from His Word? There are 2 main methods that I like to use. First, I have a small book full of topics and encouraging Scriptures to go along with them. This is an excellent tool to have handy. Second, if you don’t have one of those, you only need a copy of the Word and you can begin BY PRAYER.

“The next time you read your Bible,” wrote Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of evangelist Billy Graham, “pray

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first and ask the Spirit of Truth to open your eyes to Jesus.”⁸ I like those opening words: pray first!

Begin quietly to pray for the next several minutes. As you pray, you are expecting God to share a Scripture with you that will be one of 3 possibilities: either EDIFYING, ENCOURAGING or COMFORTING. Believe for a Scripture in one of these 3 categories!

Seek the very presence of the LORD. Praise Him for all He has done for you in the past week.

Thank Him for the many ways that He makes Himself real to you. Thank Him for the little things.

As you wait upon the LORD, wait “actively” with your Bible in front of you. Perhaps ask Him for a particular “book” of the Bible from which He desires to speak to you. Some good choices filled with encouragement are Isaiah chapters 40-66, or the Psalms, or the Gospel of John. These are only suggestions. Every page of Scripture is filled with passages that are meant for edification, exhortation or comfort.

Often as I am doing this spiritual discipline, I will be reading through several passages, and “suddenly” one of them will seem to leap off the page, (or leap off the Smartphone screen or iPad screen!), and leap “into” my

⁸ Anne Graham Lotz, Facebook Quote, Wednesday, July 23, 2014.

heart and mind and begin to give me hope. In the inner-witness of my spirit along with the Holy Spirit, I quietly sense Him saying something like, “That scripture applies to your situation. Can you receive it and believe it?”

Practical Application #2:

Seek Him for a Fresh Word For Another Person

Are you ready to experience the power of these truths by blessing someone else with a fresh “word” from the Living Word?

Here is a simple, yet profound, method I have learned from God to bless others. Just like you “actively” listened to the Holy Spirit by looking through several passages of Scripture for yourself or your own context, so you can repeat that exercise, but this time you simply choose a person from your life (preferably one that you have their name and phone number stored in your Smartphone) and put that person before the face of God as you are attempting to listen for a fresh scripture for them. As soon as you find a scripture verse that is either EDIFYING, ENCOURAGING, or COMFORTING, I would like you to use your Smartphone in a text, or any form of messaging via Social Media, and send it to them. You don’t have to freak them out with the words, “GOD SAID!” You can simply text them with, “I was praying

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for you today and I felt led to send you these words to bless you” and then add the scripture and send it. You’ll be surprised how often you can change a person’s perspective in the midst of their circumstances or trials by sending them Fresh Manna from Heaven! Be sure you add a prayer too: pray that encouraging Word over their life and context to bless them.

The Psalmist wrote,

“Oh that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would quickly subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries. I would feed you with the finest of wheat (THE LOGOS); and with honey (THE RHEMA) from the rock I would satisfy you” (Psalm 81: 14,16).

In Conclusion

In this little book I have endeavored to share some simple and yet profound truths about a balanced way of encountering God in His Word: both the “Established” word and the “Living” word. No need to get stuck in a ditch on either side of the road: learn to walk in the middle and utilize both!

Always remember the power of the moment when Jesus personally opened the minds of the disciples to

understand the Word: “*Then He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures*” (Luke 24:45). How wonderful! He Himself, the “*Eternal Word who had become flesh and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14) **personally** opened up the minds of these disciples and shared the Scriptures about His mission that He had fulfilled, and for the first time in His ministry (because of this personal touch), they understood! He will do the very same for you, today, if you ask Him.

Remember the words of Smith Wigglesworth, who lived out his daily life by intense study of the Word of God (LOGOS) and knowing intimately the God of the Word (RHEMA). Remember the idea of this method of encountering God in the story of the love letters; they meant something unique in their original context to the wife of the soldier, and after his death, 50 years later, they meant something equally unique and spoke fresh words of love to her heart.

The Living Word equips you with weapons; the Word is both your shotgun and “Rock” for defense, and your Sword or sniper rifle for offensive warfare. Remember the power and the sharing of Christ’s authority in decreeing the Word over your life.

Remember the examples of Peden, Bonhoeffer, Howells and my own 11 year-old (if an 11 year-old can encounter God in His Word, you can too)!

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And finally remember the manna must be eaten every day, and Jesus wanted to teach us how to meet the Enemy on his own ground and take the higher ground by declaring the Word in the atmosphere, “IT IS WRITTEN.”

I challenge you today to begin to change in your ability to interact with the very personal Holy Spirit. You can accomplish this by developing a new discipline of balance as you approach the Word of God: an approach of balance between,

(1) Study of the “Established” word. You can thus live out your daily lifestyle according to its truth, its doctrine, and its general revelations and general guidance of God to man.

(2) Exercising your faith and expectancy for God Himself, by the Holy Spirit, to speak directly to you in the “Living” word. You can thus live out your daily lifestyle according to its personal truth, its doctrine, and its specific revelations of God to man in guidance!

Let me close with this eternal truth, and encourage you to SAY YES TO GOD today! The next time you open your Bible, expect to be changed by making the truth apply in fresh ways to your daily experiences.

Expect Jesus to speak to you in both the original context of the Word AND the fresh context as it comes to LIFE for you!

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the WORDS that I have spoken to you are SPIRIT and LIFE” (John 6:63).

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Carl is a bold evangelistic preacher and also holds special teaching and training seminars in churches and

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Born to Blaze Ministries began in 1992 as an International Outreach. There is a stirring in the heart of Born to Blaze to serve and support the work of leaders in the Body of Christ around the world—to add fire to what leaders are already doing—planting fresh passion for the things of God and a call to go deeper in Him.

Carl writes a special weekly Blog with a unique perspective on a variety of subjects dealing with Last Days theology and practical application to challenge you to passionate discipleship. Join thousands of others who receive his free devotionals on Email! Simply send an Email to: info@borntoblaze.com

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