

The Happiest People in the Word.

Youth's Bible Study Course

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalms 16:11.

Lesson 2: The Joy and the Rejoicing of My Heart

Memory Verse: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." Jeremiah 15:16.

Into my jungle dispensary one morning many years ago there came a little old grandma. She waited till all the patients had been attended to, then came slowly forward, but seemed unable to say just what she wanted.

"Do you have fever, grandma?" I asked encouragingly.

"Oh, no! no! It's not that," said grandma.

"Maybe sore eyes?"

"Oh, no! no! It's not that."

"Ah, then maybe it's ringworm." I added, naming one of the most common ailments.

"Oh, no! no! It's not that. I'm starving, I tell you!" Then with all her fear broken down she told her story.

"My big son went to Moulmein, Thara, and he promised to send me back some money to buy rice, but he hasn't sent any money at all. When you go to Moulmein next time I want you to find him and tell him his mother is starving."

"Did he find work, grandma?" I asked sympathetically. "Yes, he has a good job in a lumber mill, and he writes letters to me and tells me he is getting good wages."

"But, doesn't he send anything in those letters?" I interrupted.

"Only some crazy little old bits of paper with English printed and written all over them," she replied almost angrily. "But you can't buy rice with crazy little bits of paper. You have to have money to buy rice, and I'm starving, I tell you!"

But I was immediately suspicious about those crazy little old bits of paper, so I said, "Grandma, go home and get all of his letters and all of those crazy little bits of paper, and bring them to me. I want to see them."

The next morning in came grandma, still sad and discouraged; she handed me a bundle of letters carefully wrapped in a banana leaf, and said, "There now, see for yourself."

I looked, and sure enough each one of those crazy little bits of paper was a money order for ten rupees.

"Grandma, grandma," I said as I gathered them up, "each one of these crazy bits of paper is worth ten rupees. You just go to the post office, and put your thumbprint on each one, and the postmaster will give you ten rupees for each one."

For a moment grandma stood mute with amazement, then gasped, "I can? He will?" Then grasping her treasure to her heart, and trembling with excitement, she cried, "And there I was starving! With all this fortune in my hands!"

Would that God would open our eyes today to realize what a priceless treasure we have in the dear Book of God.

Moses likens it to bread: "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." Deuteronomy 8:3.

Paul likens it to a sword, which protects us from the wiles of the devil: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17.

Solomon likens it to a guide, a protector, and a companion: "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." Proverbs 6:20-22.

David likens it to a lamp: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105.

Mrs. E. G. White likens it to a shield: "Faith in God's word, prayerfully studied and practically applied will be our shield from Satan's power, and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ." Messages to Young People, p. 61.

We must recognize, however, that the power of the Bible to guide, to protect, to comfort, and to shield, does not lie in the book as a book in the bookcase, or in one's suitcase, or under one's pillow. Its power is manifest only when we read its precious words. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:63.

Let us notice the priceless blessings of the words of God as given in the following paragraphs:

"Amid the perils of these last days, the only safety of the youth lies in ever-increasing watchfulness and prayer. The youth who finds his joy in reading the word of God, and in the hour of prayer, will be constantly refreshed by drafts from the fountain of life. He will attain a height of moral excellence and a breadth of thought of which others cannot conceive. Communion with God encourages good thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, and lofty purposes of action. Those who thus connect themselves with God are acknowledged by Him as His sons and daughters. They are constantly reaching higher and still higher, obtaining clearer views of God and of eternity, until the Lord makes them channels of light and wisdom to the world." Messages to Young People, p. 247.

"The Bible contains all the principles that men need to understand in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come. As a means of intellectual training, the Bible is more effective than any other book, or all other books combined." Education, pp. 123, 124.

"There is nothing more calculated to energize the mind and strengthen the intellect than the study of the word of God. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose that are rarely seen in these times." Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 460.

No wonder Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Jeremiah 15:16.

Satan is well aware of the power there is in the Word of God, and through the ages has made battle against the Book. Its triumph, however, adds glorious witness to its power.

"Generations follow generations, yet it lives.
Nations rise and fall, yet it lives.
Kings, dictators, presidents, come and go, yet it lives.
Torn, condemned, burned, hated, despised, cursed,
Doubted, suspected, criticized, yet it lives.
Damned by atheists, scoffed at by scorners,
Exaggerated by fanatics, misconstrued and misstated,
Ranted and raved about, its inspiration denied, Yet it lives.

It lives as a lamp to our feet,
As a light to our paths, as the gate to heaven,
As a standard for childhood, as a guide for youth,
As an inspiration for the matured,
As a comfort for the aged.
As food for the hungry, as water for the thirsty,
As rest for the weary, as light for the heathen,
As salvation for the sinner, as grace for the Christian,
To know it is to love it,
To love it is to accept it,
To accept it means life eternal."
Willard L. Johnson. Condensed.

In order for us easily to understand the blessings of reading the Word of God and the dangers of Satan's temptations to leave it unread, Jesus also used the figure of speech of eating the Word, and He said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Matthew 5:6. I have learned many lessons by observing really hungry people and people who are not.

One day while buying supplies for our mission station in the city of Rangoon, I stepped into an eating place for a plate of rice and some eggs. It was a Mohammedan rice shop, with the usual row of charcoal fires with big pots of rice and the various kinds of curry (stew) on a long bench in front, on the sidewalk, and on the tables behind. I took my place at one of the tables and gave my order. While waiting I noticed a little Indian beggar boy in front of another eating place a little farther up the street.

"Salaam! Salaam!" he said plaintively. Then patting his empty stomach he continued, "Please give me some food; I'm dying with hunger. Have mercy! Salaam, salaam!"

But, pestered with beggars all day long, the restaurant owner brandished a big wooden spoon menacingly and shouted, "Go away, go away, jildy jow."

Unabashed, the little beggar boy came to the next eating place and again took up his cry. "Salaam, salaam, please give me some food; I'm dying with hunger. Have mercy! Salaam, salaam!"

But that restaurant owner likewise had no mercy, and shouted, "Go away, go away, jildy jow."

Sadly he turned away, and once more begged in front of the shop where I was waiting to be served.

"Salaam! Salaam! Mercy, have mercy! I'm dying with hunger; give me food! Salaam, salaam!"

But the man who was preparing my food answered the same, "Go away, go away, jildy jow."

Now, every Oriental eating shop has a garbage can at the entrance. That is where people spit their betel nut and tobacco out of their mouths when they come in to eat. That is where the scrapings and leftovers from the plates are emptied after people have finished their meal. And as the beggar boy moved sadly away to find another place to beg, he happened to go by the garbage can in front of the shop where I was sitting, and spied in it some leftover rice. Before anyone could stop him he reached in his long arm, grabbed up a handful of the rice leftovers, and went away eating them.

Suddenly I was no longer hungry, but I knew that beggar boy was! And I have discovered that people who are really hungry are not ashamed. They can eat anything, anywhere. They don't mind how many people see them, or what they say to them or about them. And sometimes I've wondered if I were really hungry and thirsty for righteousness, whether I would mind being seen carrying a Bible to church or reading my Bible when among strangers! I wonder! Do you?

One day as I called the roll in school I noticed that little Clever Queen was absent, so after the opening exercises I went over to the girls' house to see what was the matter. I found her wrapped up in a blanket lying on her mat, sick with fever.

"Are you all hot, Clever Queen?" I asked. "Yes," came the weak reply. "And does your head ache?" "Yes."

"Did you have any breakfast this morning?" "No, I don't want any."

"O Clever Queen," I said, "I know just the thing for little girls who have fever. I'll go home and get you a little piece of toast and warm milk. Won't that be nice?"

"I don't want any," she whimpered.

But I thought I knew best, so went home, got the toast and milk, and was soon back. "Now here we are, Clever Queen," I said. "Come on, sit up, and taste this nice toast."

She sat up, because she was a very obedient little girl. She took a spoonful.

"There now," I encouraged, "isn't that nice?" "No, I don't like it."

"Oh, but," I said, "you must take a little more, and soon you'll be better."

She took another spoonful, and another, with a little coaxing, and another. Then suddenly she clapped her hand over her mouth, reached around for an empty can and I'll let you guess the rest. She was not hungry. She was sick.

I called the nurse, prescribed her medicine and her care, then started off on a five-day trip to some of my outstations.

On my return, as the motorboat touched at the mission landing, I noticed a group of little girls swimming nearby.

"Hello, girls," I called, "are you all happy?"

"Yes, Thara," they chorused cheerfully.

"How is little Clever Queen?" I asked.

"O Thara," said one, "she's all better again, and do you know she's hungry all the time now? She can hardly wait from one mealtime to another."

Just then the dinner bell rang, and looking up, I saw Clever Queen dancing down the path to the dining room. As soon as she got better she was hungry again! And I questioned, if we were quite well spiritually, would we naturally be hungry and thirsty for the Word of God? And if we are not hungry and thirsty for the Word of God, could it be because we are sick spiritually?

I remember one day one of my teachers was sick. I went to see him. He had malaria.

"I'll be better in a few hours, Thara," he said painfully. "I've stopped shaking and I'll soon be sweating. I'll be back to school in two or three hours." You know malaria is like that.

Then I said, "I know something that will help you, a nice drink of lemonade!"

"Oh, thank you," he murmured.

I went home and made a nice, piping-hot glass of lemonade, and brought it to him. His eyes brightened a little, he put it to his lips, took one sip and said, "It's too hot! It's too hot! I like it cold," then handed it back.

I took it home and made another glass as cold as I could get it. Again he took one sip. "It's too cold! It's too cold! I want it just warm a little!"

I took it home and made it just warm a little, and brought it back. He took another sip. I thought this would be just right, but, "It's too sweet! It's too sweet!" he said. "I want it sour.

I took it back home and made another just warm a little, with no sugar in it. Ah, now this time it must surely be right. But he took one sip and said, "It's too sour! It's too sour!" And I have discovered that sick people are just like that. It's too sweet or it's too sour; it's too hot or it's too cold. Well people like hot and cold, sweet and sour.

And I've wondered what God must think of us when we complain: "This Sabbath school is too small; that Sabbath school is too big; this preacher is too dry; that preacher is too long winded; this lesson is too easy; this lesson is too hard." Yes, I wonder, don't you?

"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" Psalm 81:10, comes the assurance from God through David. "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.... Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" Psalm 107:5-9, was the testimony of the children of Israel; and to this let us add the joyful witness of Mary: "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." Luke 1:53.

I find myself to be a very old-fashioned preacher. Do you know how old-fashioned I am? I'm just so old-fashioned that I believe: "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." The Great Controversy, pp. 593, 594. That means that boys and girls, young men and women, the older folks, and the preachers too, must feed upon the Word of God.

During my Weeks of Prayer with our academy and college groups, frequently young people come to me with this problem: "Brother Hare, we believe what you say about the Bible, and we want to read it more. But there is something we can't understand. Sometimes at night we pick up the dear old Book, and begin to read, and after reading a verse or two our minds begin to wander, and we find ourselves thinking over what we have done during the day and what we are going to do the next day. Then we force ourselves to keep on reading, and we read a whole chapter; then when we close the book, we realize that we can't remember a single thing of what we've read! Is there any hope for us? Is there anything we can do to get back our taste for the dear old Book?"

I always smile encouragingly when young people bring this problem to me, for I know there is hope. I have seen scores of young people cured of this type of soul sickness, and I say, "Yes, indeed, I can tell you what to do, and I can guarantee a cure."

"Then tell us, and we will certainly do it," they reply.

Then I say, "All right, first of all, quit reading the comic magazines and the exciting fiction stories in the pulp-paper trash. Then . . ."

"But how did you know we read those things?" they interrupt. "We didn't tell you!"

"You didn't need to tell me," I reply. "For twenty years I was a medical missionary among the spirit worshipers in Burma. Every day, every week, every month, the malaria patients came to my little dispensary; but never once did I have to say, 'Excuse me, but have you been bitten by the anopheles mosquito?' Oh, no! no! All I had to do was to chart their fever for a few hours, look at the hemoglobin in their blood as revealed on the inner surface of their lower eyelids, and feel for that telltale spleen that sometimes half filled the abdominal cavity. Then I knew that the deadly bugs of malaria were at work in the life stream. So when you tell me you have lost your appetite for the Word of God, I know that the poison of satanic literature has gotten into your very life stream, and has made you spiritually sick."

You see, there is a law of the mind known as "the law of contrary ideas." Contrary ideas are exact opposites, such as light and darkness, heat and cold, noise and quietness.

Now think for a moment while I explain: In a certain room we can have light if we want it or darkness if we prefer. If there is darkness and we want light, all we have to do is to switch on the light, and out goes the darkness. If we want darkness back again, all we have to do is to switch off the light, and the light goes out, and the darkness comes back. Light expels darkness, and darkness fills the place of light. We can have either light or darkness as we will, but we cannot have both light and darkness in the same room at the same time.

By placing a few coins in a bottle and shaking it up and down, I can produce noise; I can stop shaking and produce quietness. If I want to overcome noise, all I have to do is to produce quietness, and out goes the noise. I can bring the noise back again, but when I do, out goes quietness. I cannot have noise and quietness at the same time in the same place.

Even so with the mind, we cannot think light and darkness at the same time. We cannot think good and evil at the same time. We cannot think Christ and Satan at the same time. The law of the contrary ideas is that each opposite idea has the power to arrest or repel the other as we will. That is why Paul says, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:21, and Christ stated it thus: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24.

Now for a moment let us notice how very opposite are the two opposing classes of literature. There is one class of literature that uplifts, enlightens, ennobles. It is true and pure. As an example of the best in this class of literature, we will take the Bible. There is another class of literature that debases, disappoints, destroys. It is shameful and impure. As an example of this class of literature let us take the comic magazines. Here is an unsolicited group of statements from prominent men and scholars concerning these two types of reading matter.

The following are statements concerning the Scriptures: Jeremiah says, "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Jeremiah 15:16.

David says, "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it." Psalm 119:140.

Paul says, "The word of God is quick {living} and powerful." Hebrews 4:12.

Patrick Henry says, "There is a book worth all other books which were ever printed."

Abraham Lincoln says, "It is the best book that God has given to man."

Peter says, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21.

Here are some pertinent comments on the comics:

Sterling North, one of the literary editors of the New York Post, says, "They are a national disgrace.... Badly drawn, badly written, and badly printed.... they constitute a cultural slaughter of the innocents."

John Mason Brown, editor of the Saturday Review of Literature, says, "The comic books ... are the lowest, most despicable, most harmful, and unethical form of trash."

Marya Mannes, a great artist, says, "A steady, uncontrolled, and indiscriminate diet of comic books can stunt a child's mental and spiritual growth."

J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI, says, "Crime books, comics, and newspaper stories crammed with antisocial and criminal acts ... are extremely dangerous in the hands of the unstable child."

Mrs. E. G. White says, "We would do well to clear our houses of all the story magazines and the publications containing ridiculous pictures--representations originated by satanic agencies." Messages to Young People, p. 286.

How very different and opposite are these classes of literature! Now, the truth is that no mind can love both kinds. They are so very contrary that the mind that is given to the evil in literature cannot endure the good. The person has never been born who can sit down and gloat over the comics for an hour, and then turn to the Word of God with relish and delight for an hour.

We can see the same thing in diet. If you have children raised on a healthy plant-based diet, they just love to eat fruit! But take those same children and start giving them candy, sugar, and sweetened junk food and you soon see the fruit bowl untouched!

With this law of the contrary ideas in mind, read these two paragraphs from Mrs. E. White:

"The volumes you have read have been devised by the agents of Satan to bewitch the mind with theories formed in the synagogue of Satan. . . . Satan has breathed his poisonous breath upon them, and a deadly, spiritual malaria affects the soul that reads them." Messages to Young People, pp. 276, 277.

"The readers of fiction are indulging an evil that destroys spirituality, eclipsing the beauty of the sacred page. It creates an unhealthy excitement, fevers the imagination, unfits the mind for usefulness, weans the soul from prayer, and disqualifies it for any spiritual exercise." Messages to Young People, p. 272.

But, thank God, the opposite is also true. The mind that is given to the Word of God and good literature learns to hate the evil. To such a mind the comics and trashy fiction become disgusting.

"Take your Bibles, and begin to study with fresh interest the sacred records of the Old and New Testaments. The oftener and more diligently you study the Bible, the more beautiful will it appear, and the less relish you will have for light reading. Bind this precious volume to your hearts. It will be to you a friend and a guide." Messages to Young People, p. 274.

Is it not imperative, young people, that we read the Word of God more and more?

Some years ago an old man came to my dispensary with a bad attack of malaria. His brow was fevered, his tongue was furred, and his head and his back ached.

I gave him a bottle of the best malaria mixture I ever dispensed, made from a formula an old government doctor passed on to us. I gave him implicit instructions when to take the medicine and how much to take, and assured him that if all went right, in three days he would be feeling quite well again.

Wearily he went back to his home four miles away in the jungle. Four days went by, and then his eldest son appeared saying, "Father is much worse. Please come and see him."

"Worse?" I queried, "How can that be? I've given that same medicine to hundreds of patients, always with good results."

"Could I have given him the wrong medicine?" I said to myself, and went over to the stock bottle on the shelf. I looked at it, tasted it. No, there was no mistake. What could the matter be! As soon as the treatments were finished for the morning, I put a few things together and went with the boy to see his sick father.

He was worse, his pulse was weak, his brow was hot, his lips dry and cracked, and I said, "I can't understand it, Uncle. I gave you the best medicine I know of. You should be better by now. Where is the medicine bottle? Let me see if I gave you the wrong medicine."

Slowly he pointed to the shelf over the fireplace, and faltered, "It's-on-the shelf."

I went over to the shelf, and sure enough, there was the medicine bottle, and at once I understood it all! The medicine was still in the bottle!

"Uncle, Uncle," I said, "this medicine is not like a charm; it has no power over malaria here in the bottle on the shelf. You must get the medicine down inside where the malaria is."

I took a spoon and gave him a dose. Bravely he swallowed the medicine and shuddered from head to foot, for it was very bitter. "Now," I said, "take another dose like that tonight, three more doses tomorrow, and three more the next day, and see what that does to you."

On the third day he came down to the dispensary quite bright and cheerful. "That was good medicine, Thara," he said. "I'm all better for this time, but give me another bottle. I want to keep it in the house ready for the next attack."

I gave him the medicine. Then I wondered whether we are not very often just like that poor jungle man. God wants us to be the happiest people in the world. For

this purpose He gave us the Bible, a book that has power to overcome the evil one, provides a light to guide us and words with which to comfort and strengthen us, but we leave it on the table or on the bookshelf and wonder why we are so weak and so unhappy. Let us determine to read the dear Book of God more and more.

"The great motive powers of the soul are faith, hope, and love; and it is to these that Bible study, rightly pursued, appeals. . . . As the student of the Bible beholds the Redeemer, there is awakened in the soul the mysterious power of faith, adoration, and love. Upon the vision of Christ the gaze is fixed, and the beholder grows into the likeness of that which he adores." Education, p. 192.

THE BIBLE THROUGH

I supposed I knew my Bible,
Reading piecemeal, hit and miss,
Now a bit of John or Matthew,
Now a snatch of Genesis,
Certain chapters of Isaiah,
Certain Psalms (the twenty third),
Twelfth of Romans, first of Proverbs;
Yes, I thought I knew the Word.
But I found that thorough reading
Was a different thing to do,
And the way was unfamiliar
When I read the Bible through.

You who like to play at Bible,
Dip and dabble here and there,
Just before you kneel a-weary,
And yawn through a hurried prayer;
You who treat the crown of writings
As you treat no other book
Just a paragraph disjointed,
Just a crude impatient look
Try a worthier procedure,
Try a broad and steady view;
You will kneel in very rapture
When you read the Bible through.
Selected.

Lesson 2 Quiz:

Write True or False [T or F]:

1. _____ The Bible contains many precious Promises that are almost like money orders.
2. _____ Satan is happy when we read the Bible.
3. _____ We can read fiction and comics and still enjoy Bible Study.
4. _____ Jesus told us that His words are life to us.
5. _____ When people are sick they still like to eat a big meal.
6. _____ The Bible can't help us if we never read it.
7. _____ By putting the bottle of medicine on the shelf, the man got well from malaria.
8. _____ Studying the Bible and obeying it, helps us to be wiser and make good choices
9. _____ The Bible is out of date today.
10. _____ God gave us His Word so that we can learn from it and be the happiest people!