

Proverbs 12:25 - Anxious fear brings depression, but a life-giving word of encouragement can do wonders to restore joy to the heart. (tPt)

I was reading a devotional on the Psalms in which the author, JD Walt, reflects on how we sometimes approach reading the Bible in the same manner as we check off the little box on a software agreement, indicating that we will accept the terms and conditions. How often do we actually read through that legalese? I may have done it once, just to make sure there was nothing sneaky in there. But after that, I just accepted it.

Likewise, sometimes with the Word of God, we move on through the passages, mentally assenting to the truth but not absorbing the content. We get our feet wet but the water of the Word has not penetrated our hearts. But as JD Walt writes, "the Word of God is always looking to land itself in human flesh." Jesus, the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, wants to fully express Himself in our flesh, to live freely in all who desire and call on Him as Savior and Lord.

God's perfect love, expressed through Jesus Christ, does away with fear, anxiety and depression. And that life-giving word of encouragement that is spoken of in today's scripture from Proverbs 12:25 is continually available to all who seek God's Word.

I remember a time about 20 years ago when I was recovering from abdominal surgery. The physical pain was more intense than I had anticipated and was aggravated by my attempts to take care of some little practical details that had gone unattended during my illness. As I threw a container of fermented carrot salad into the garbage disposal, only succeeding in burning out the motor, I cried out to the Lord...and He led me to His Word.

Now, I've never come across a verse for dealing with rotten carrot salad and broken garbage disposals, but the Holy Spirit guided me specifically to 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 - "For we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing glory is from God and not from us. We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; we are persecuted, but not abandoned; we are struck down, but not destroyed. For we always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."

At that moment, this Word of God landed itself in my flesh and became part of my testimony. I felt as though it had been spoken just for me. That life-giving word of encouragement restored joy to my heart.

Today, if you feel discouraged, fearful, anxious, or even despondent, ask the Holy Spirit to encourage you with His Word. A passage from Proverbs 4:20-22 sums it up: "My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, for they bring life to those who find them and healing to their whole body."