

Ephraim Is a Cake Not Turned

by Stephen Kaung

Maintaining balance between knowledge, life, and the spirit is crucial for spiritual growth and maturity in our Christian life.

Duration: 59:50

Scripture: 2 Samuel 6:22, Psalm 36:9, Hosea 7:8, Matthew 2:5, Matthew 22:29, 1 Corinthians 14:15, 2 Corinthians 5:13

Topics: "Balanced Christian Life", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between life and knowledge. He warns against being extreme in either direction, as it can lead to negative consequences. The speaker uses various illustrations, such as the story of the seducer in Matthew 22, to highlight the significance of knowing the Scriptures and the power of God. He also cautions against being self-important and critical, and emphasizes the need for knowledge to be balanced with life. Additionally, the speaker encourages listeners to be open and flexible to what God may lead them to next, rather than restricting the Lord's work in their lives.

Transcript

That we may behold thee, behold thy son with unveiled face. We pray that this morning thou will open our eyes to see thee and thee alone. Thou will open our ears to hear thy voice because thou dost say my sheep hear my voice and they follow me.

O Lord, we do pray that this morning thou as the son of righteousness will rise in our hearts with healings in its wings. We do commit this time into thy hand. We pray that we may be delivered out of ourselves and into thyself.

Lord, we pray that thou art able to finish thy good work which thou has begun in Christ Jesus in each one of us. We do desire that thyself shall be exalted, seen and glorified, loved and adored. We ask in the precious name of our Lord Jesus.

This morning we would like to just use one clause in the Bible. And if you are able to find it, try it. Hosea chapter 7 verse 8. I'll give you one minute to find it.

Hosea chapter 7 verse 8. The second clause. Have you find it? Well if you cannot find it, it's very easy. I will read it and you'll remember it.

Hosea chapter 7 verse 8. The second clause. Ephraim is a cake not turned. Ephraim is a cake not turned.

Through the prophet Hosea, God gave his estimate of Ephraim which represents Israel. It is the judgment of love, not of negative criticism. It is important that we may see ourselves in God's light.

You remember that very precious verse in Psalm 36. In thy light shall we see light. And in thy presence there is fullness of life.

We can only see ourselves in the light of God. It is no use. It is unprofitable.

It is even harmful if we try to see ourselves in our own light. Or in the light of others. Now of course the Bible does say examine yourself and see if you are in the faith.

Or the Bible says if we judge ourselves then we may not be judged. But that doesn't mean that we are to measure ourselves in our own light or we are to measure ourselves in the light of other people. No.

That only means that we have to place ourselves in the light of God that we may see exactly where we stand, what we are in the sight of God. The psalmist pray examining me and know my heart. True me and know my thoughts.

See if there is any grievous way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting. And I believe this is a prayer that we should always pray.

One thing that is very important in our Christian life and that is to know ourselves in the light of God. To know where we are and where we stand. And this will help us greatly in our progress in the Lord.

So again I will say it is good to know ourselves in the light of God. But never try to analyze yourself. You will never be able to know yourselves with the light of your own soul.

It is futile. It is unprofitable. Now here you'll find God gave his estimate of Ephraim.

From time to time I believe we need God to give an estimate of ourselves. And God's estimate of Ephraim was you are a cake not turned. Now I believe the sisters know much better than I do.

But of course you remember this is baking not the modern oven. So there is a little difference here. Now here you'll find a woman.

She makes the dough. She puts in all the ingredients for the cake. And she may even put it in a pan of a certain shape.

Whatever shape you want it to be. You'll find that everything is ready. And then she begins to bake it over an open fire.

Not the oven that you get the heat all around. You don't need to turn it. But it is an open fire.

So when you put the dough, you put the prepared material for the cake on that open fire. Now it begins to bake. It suddenly comes to me.

Is it the King Bruce? When he fled from his enemy he went into a lady's home, an old woman's home. And that woman said all right I have a cake baking on the fire. Now you watch it.

And the woman went away to some other errands. And King Bruce was so occupied with his kingdom and all his thoughts that he forgot all about that cake on the fire. So when the woman came back he found that it was burning.

And of course he scolded King Bruce. So you find that when you try to bake a cake, say on an open fire, you have to be very watchful. If you don't, you'll find one side will be scorched, burning.

And the other side is still raw and undercooked. Now can you eat such a cake? Have you ever tasted such a cake? A cake not turned is a cake that is burned on the one side and raw on the other side. Such a cake is not fit for food.

It can only be cast away. Ephraim is a cake unturned. Do you know what is the spiritual meaning of this metaphor? Well to be very simple.

The spiritual meaning of a cake not turned is spiritual imbalance. Spiritual imbalance. God has gathered us out of all nations.

As wheat, out of the field, the world. He works upon each one of us. He grinds us.

He mixes us. He makes us flour. He makes it with water, the word of God.

That we may become a dough. And he may put some spices to make it more tasty. Now he prepares all the time in order to make us a cake, presentable to himself.

Now you remember in the Old Testament, there is the showbread or to be put before God as food for God. Now this is what God desires of his people. He saves us from the world.

He gathers us together. He unite us into one. He cement us, make us a dough.

And he gives all his gifts to us. The ingredients are mixed in that dough. Why is it that God has done all these works in our life individually and collectively? Why? Because he wants to make us a cake.

As food for himself as well as for all the hungry ones. That is the purpose of God. But after he has joined us together, after he has unite us together, after he has given us gifts, after he has put us together, there is something more he has to do.

We are raw yet. We cannot be eaten. He has to put us over the fire.

He has to bake us. But dear brothers and sisters, very often in the process of baking, some forgetfulness comes. We let the dough bake over in fire, but we forget to turn it.

And the result is, we are overcooked in one way and undercooked in another way. In other words, we become unbalanced. Dear brothers and sisters, remember one thing.

If we are unbalanced, in spite of all the works that God has done in our lives, we cannot be presented to God as his food. It is scorched on one side. It is raw on the other side.

Spiritual balance is a very important principle in our Christian life. The Lord Jesus himself is the most balanced person in the whole world. If you read the full Gospels, does it strike you how balanced is our Lord Jesus? The Word became flesh, full of grace and truth.

On the one side you will find he is full of grace, and yet it doesn't mean he lacks in truth. He is full of truth, but on the other hand he is no lacking in grace. Yes, he is the son of God.

He is above everything. He can do everything. Nothing is impossible with him.

And yet on the other hand he is the son of man. The man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Have you ever met a person so well balanced as our Lord Jesus? Spiritual balance is the sign of spiritual maturity.

The lack of balance is the lack of spiritual maturity. The Lord Jesus is the most balanced person in the whole world. And this is what the Lord expects us to be.

That we may not be a cake not turned. That we may turn around and go out balanced. Let me illustrate with a few thoughts.

We need to maintain a balance between life and knowledge. You know it is our human nature to be extreme. It is very difficult to our natural life to be balanced.

We either swing to one end or we will swing to the opposite end. It takes some time for us to swing back to balance. Very often we find people who emphasize so much on knowledge.

Knowledge is power. Yes, they want knowledge. They search the scripture very diligently.

Now do not say that we should not search the scripture. You remember in the book of Acts, it is said that the Philistines were more noble than the Thessalonians. Why? Because they searched the scripture.

It is important that we search the scriptures very diligently. The cry of these people who emphasize so much on knowledge is to the law and to the testimony. If you want to talk with them, the first thing they say, show me the verse.

If it is not in the verse, they cannot accept it. To the law and to the testimony. That's their cry.

They want to base everything on some bible verse. They profess they know a lot of the bible. Like the scribes and the Pharisees.

They can recite the bible by memory. You remember when the Lord Jesus was born, the Magi, they went to Jerusalem and asked King Herod, where shall the King of the Jews be born? And he gathered the scribes and the Pharisees and said where? Without saying, now let me go back and look up my concordance. They didn't do that.

Immediately they said, well Christ shall be born in Bethlehem of Judea. Why? Because it is said in the prophet Micah. I wonder if you can find the prophet Micah.

But they know the scriptures so well. They know it all. But the trouble is, they pass on that information to King Herod, in order to give King Herod an opportunity to kill the child.

They do not go to Bethlehem, to worship the King. Knowledge, full of knowledge. But it can be purely mental exercise.

You do not go beyond your mind. And you may pass on the information of your mind to the mind of other people. There is very little, if any, spiritual value in such knowledge.

Knowledge as the Bible says, pops up. Oh, if you are in the know, you feel yourself important. Knowledge pops up.

But love. Do you profess to be full of knowledge? Do you think you really know? The apostle Paul says, if you think you know, you know nothing. Oh, I have heard people say, I don't want knowledge.

Knowledge is dead. Knowledge is useless. May I ask you how much knowledge you have? Probably you have very little.

So you can dispense with it. Knowledge, pure mental knowledge, is dead, is cold, is useless, not much spiritual value. All these are true.

Knowledge without life is dead. If you search the scripture, and all you find are the letters, without going beyond the letters to the spirit of it, it is dead. If you know the Word of God, you store the Word of God in your mind, without ever opening your heart to the Word of God, your knowledge will remain an outward thing.

It will never become an inward knowledge, which is of great value. It is very true, dear brothers and sisters. You can be a cake and turn in this respect.

You can dig and dig and dig and dig into the Bible, and you can try to analyze and analyze and analyze the Bible. You can try to gather and accumulate information after information in your mind, until you are the doctor of divinity. But dear brothers and sisters, if your hearts are not open to the Lord, and let the Word enter into your heart, it is completely useless.

No spiritual value before the Lord. It can be very harmful. Why? Because it makes you self-important, self-contented, critical, hard, proud, and cold, and dead.

Knowledge must be balanced with life. But on the other hand, dear brothers and sisters, there are some people who emphasize life. Oh, life is everything.

We don't want knowledge. We don't want to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Very good.

Come eat that. We want to eat the tree of life. It is true.

Life is of supreme importance. What's the use of all these objective knowledge? What's the use of filling your mind with information? If your life does not prove that you are what you know you are to be, it is useless. Life is very important.

But do you know what is life? This is the eternal life. To know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. This is... You say you don't want knowledge.

You mean you don't want life? Because life is knowledge. What is eternal life? Eternal life is an inward knowing of God and of Jesus Christ, his son. It is true, life is not that outward knowledge, that mental knowledge, that objective knowledge.

Life is something more than that. It is an inward knowledge. But remember one thing, this inward knowledge is nevertheless based upon outward knowledge.

This subjective knowledge is based upon objective knowledge. If there is not the truth, there can be no life. Because there is the truth there.

And in knowing the truth inwardly, that gives life. A life that is not based upon the truth is not the real life. A life that can dispense with the word of God is not the life of God.

You find that the life of God is always based upon his word, the objective truth, the Logos. And with this objective truth, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, you'll get into it and beyond it and you'll get that inward knowledge, which is life. And you'll find life is very precious, very precious.

Have you read the epistles? In the letter of Paul to the Ephesians, he prayed for the believers there. May the God of our Lord Jesus give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that you may know him. He prayed for the Philippians.

And this I pray, that you may abound more and more in the full knowledge of him and all intelligence. And he prayed the same prayer for the Colossians. Dear brothers and sisters, sometimes in our emphasis on life we despise knowledge so much that we even throw the truth away.

Remember, this is a take, not turn. Life is measured by truth. If it is not because of the fact, of the truth, that our Lord Jesus has come to this world and died on the cross and fulfilled the work of redemption for us, nobody, however you try, can be saved.

You will not be able to enter into any experience of Christ, if there is not the truth of Christ. Let me illustrate. Throughout the centuries, especially in the middle age, you know in the middle age, Christianity at that time, it was almost like a superstition.

The Bible was not read. There might be some copies of the Bible chained in the monasteries. And even the monks did not read the Bible.

It took an exceptional monk like Martin Luther to read the Bible. So you find that people were ignorant of the truth of God. And yet there were people who really had a heart for God.

We call them Christian mystics. Now don't be afraid of that. It is a little bit mystical, but still don't be afraid of that.

Now these so-called Christian mystics throughout the centuries, they had a very strong longing for God. They sought God. They wanted to reach God.

They gave up everything for knowing God. What did they do? They wore hair shirts, jackets. They slept on nailed beds.

They used sharp instruments to beat themselves until their blood flowed profusely. They fasted so often that oftentimes they were given up as dead. I read many of their stories.

I admire them. Their love for God, they inflicted a lot upon themselves. They wanted to know God.

Do you think they could know God that way? In the mercy of God. God came to them and said, children, you don't need to do that. Just believe in me.

And they did. They did. And yet, because they had no Bible to guide them, so even after they had experienced a breeze of God in a very real way, yet when they came out to teach and instruct people, you know what they did? They told people, if you want to know God, you have to inflict sufferings upon yourself.

Do penance. They taught people according to their own particular experience. I have experienced God in this way, therefore you too must experience it in the same way.

Because that's the only way they know. And do you know what is the result? The result is they teach the traditions of the Fathers instead of the Word of God. Do you see the point? You may think that life is all I want.

But you can be overcooked. You can try to develop your life to such an extent that you get rid of the Word of God and insist on the traditions of the Fathers. Which is your experience.

Do you think that God is greater than your experience? Do you not know that someday God will lead you into further experiences? Do you think that your experience limits God? God is nowhere to be found except in your experience. You are overcooked. Brothers and sisters, Ephraim is a cake knocker.

We easily can be that way. We can easily emphasize knowledge to the exclusion of life and become dead. We can easily stress life and despise the Word of God.

And that will make us well undisciplined. We need to maintain, turn over the cake. Don't let one side be overcooked and the other side be undercooked.

Let me use another illustration. Oh, before I do that, I should give you a scripture. Well, in Matthew 22, you remember, the seducers came to the Lord with a very difficult supposition.

I won't go into it. They thought that they had caught the Lord. The Lord can never get out of that.

But you remember what the Lord said in Matthew 22? The Lord said, you are. You are wrong. For what reason? Because you do not know the scriptures, nor the power of God.

How can we be wrong? Curious. If we do not know the scriptures, the Word, we can be wrong. And if we do not know the power of God, we can be wrong.

The scriptures and the power of God are well balanced. Knowledge and life must be balanced. Alright.

Let me use another illustration. I'll give you the scripture verse first. 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 15.

1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 15. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray also with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing also with the understanding.

Of course we know that this verse refers to the way that God's people should meet. When God's people meet together, they should sing in the spirit as well as with understanding. They should pray with the spirit as well as with understanding.

But I think the principle can be applied even over a wider area. It is a principle. So here you'll find we need to maintain the balance between spirit and understanding.

Christianity is such that those who have a real heart for God are disgusted with the formality of Christianity. God's people everywhere are seeking for something living. In other words, the spirit.

If you may allow me to say it, the Pentecostal movement is sweeping the whole world. Why? They want something living. Something living.

God is spirit. He who worships God must worship Him in spirit. Am I right in my quotation? God is spirit.

He who worships God must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Don't forget that. Balance.

It is very true because God is spirit. Unless your spirit is released, unless your spirit gets in contact with God, there is no other way to worship God. No other way.

That's very true. You may prostrate yourself on the floor for hours before a candle or an image. You may gather all your noble thoughts and try to think and imagine God, His mercy and grace.

You may let loose all your emotions to jump and leap before God. You may make a very strong denomination, I want God. That doesn't mean you are in contact with God.

You think you are, but you are not. Because God is spirit. He is to be worshipped only in spirit and in truth.

Dear brothers and sisters, I do believe that in these days God's people ought to know more about the spirit. Not only the human spirit, but the spirit of God. God's people need to have some real experience of the spirit of God.

To make spiritual things real to you. Otherwise spiritual things are just unreal. You need it.

Desperately you need it. But the Bible says, you sing in the spirit and you sing in understanding. You pray in the spirit and you pray with understanding.

It is true that we must emphasize the spirit. We must have spiritual experiences. We must touch spiritual things in a real way.

Yet on the other hand, the Bible says, remember, that doesn't mean you should get rid of your understanding. How often we said, we want the spirit, we don't want the mind. As if our mind is sinful.

God creates your mind. God means that you use your mind. But your mind alone is not enough.

There must be the spirit. May the spirit of wisdom and revelation be given to you. That you may know Him and that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.

Spirit and understanding. It is never the will of God that Christians should be people devoid of understanding. The policy of fooling the people is not God's policy.

God wants us to understand. But of course, it has to go deeper. It has to be in the spirit as well as in the understanding.

Why is it that the spirit alone is not enough? Oh, as long as I am in the spirit, that's alright. Well, if you are in the Holy Spirit, that's alright. Nothing can be wrong.

But are you sure you are in the Holy Spirit? That's where your understanding comes in. What needs you to understand? Spirit is only a means. It is not an end.

Your human spirit needs to be released. That it may be the channel of the Spirit of God. Do you think God is so interested in your spirit to be released? Not at all.

God is interested to see your spirit released that His spirit may have a free channel. It is the Holy Spirit that is the substance. Your human spirit is just an organ.

It's just an organ. Remember that. One day the Lord Jesus, and immediately you find the sons of thunder.

James and John came to the Lord and said, Now Lord, this ought not to be done. Do you wonder? All fire comes down from heaven and burns them up. All full of spirit.

Spirit is people. The Lord said, You do not know what kind of spirit you are. My spirit, the spirit of the Lamb, of love, of selflessness, of meekness, of humility.

You that does demonstrate a spirit that is hard, harsh, selfish, critical, cruel. Because your pride is this spirit. You do not know what spirit you are.

Remember, even our spirit needs to be purified. 2 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 1. Not only your flesh needs to be purified, your spirit needs to be purified. Because your spirit is just an organ.

Your soul, right? Occupy your soul. And me is the soul, not the spirit. Do you need this understanding? To understand what? The spirit needs to be disciplined.

2 Corinthians chapter 14. The spirit of the prophets are subject to discipline. The spirit of the prophets are subject to discipline.

The prophets had to exercise control over their spirit. With understanding. Even the prophets, who had the spirit, when to speak and when to be quiet and silent.

Read Father chapter 25 verse 28. He said, Spirit is like a city broken down without walls. Have you ever read that verse? He that is low to anger is better than the devil.

But dear friends, with understanding. Knowing that your spirit is but a channel. For God is the release of his own spirit of truth.

And structure. And ten thousand words of tongues. Spirit and understanding.

I give you one more. I can go on and on and on. If balance covers all areas.

2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 13. For whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God. Or also God, it is for you.

Here you find another balance. If we are beside ourselves, it is to God. Dear brothers and sisters, we need to be beside ourselves.

The trouble is, we are too self-conscious. We are always thinking of ourselves. And what will people say of us? Oh, that one day we may be beside ourselves.

What can I say? I will say that one day we may be so abandoned unto God. We may be so eternal towards God that we forget ourselves completely. David danced before the ark.

David the king danced before the ark. And David's explanation was, it is before the Lord. I will make myself even more vile than this.

I look at myself more abased than I have ever thought of. Dear brothers and sisters, how we need to be beside ourselves. Delivered from ourselves.

Wholly occupied by God. Abandoned to God. This is what we need to have.

But on the other hand, Paul said, if I am sober, it is for your sake. When you are alone before God, be beside yourself. But when you are with other people, be sober.

Remember, there are other people who do not understand as you do. They may be offended, stumbled by your liberty and freedom. All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable.

All things are lawful, but not all are edified. Let no one seek anything for himself, but seeking for others. Another balance.

Oh, many more I can mention, but I won't. The Spirit of God can do the work He needs. Lastly, I would just like to mention a few things as to how we can keep the balance.

Number one, the secret of spiritual balance is to look unto Jesus. In other words, our Lord Jesus is the whole. All your experiences and knowledge are parts.

Whatever you know, whatever you have experienced, remember, these are just parts. They are not the whole. If you focus your attention on any part, you lose the balance.

But if you focus your attention on the whole, you get the balance. Christ is the balance. Let me illustrate.

You see a wheel here. All these books of the wheel. These books of the wheel represent experiences and truth.

Many teachings and doctrines, oh, many experiences. All these books are necessary in a wheel. But they are parts.

These books must be all centered upon the whole. That is Christ. If a spook is out of the whole, it is out of joint, out of balance.

It not only does not profit, it hurts, it hinders. Every truth, every experience must be centered upon Christ the whole. And then it must be joined together by the rim of the wheel, which is the church.

This is the secret of balance. Oh, dear brothers and sisters, allow me to say this. If we see only a certain truth or certain experience and make so much of it that Christ is disappeared, we are out of balance.

Let every truth and experience be centered upon Christ and be circumferenced by the church. Number two. In order that we may arrive at spiritual balance, each one of us must be open to what God may lead us.

In other words, be flexible. Do not take a hard position and say, this is it, nothing else. You are finished.

Be open to the Lord. Oh, the Lord has much more for you. Do not restrict the Lord, as if He is just that small and that's all.

You are looking at the heaven at the bottom of the well. Don't do that. Get up to the mountain and see the horizon there.

Be careful of one thing. Be careful of yourself. You know, we are our worst enemies.

We always try to go the way, the easiest way, the line of least resistance. Even in spiritual things. What is the line of least resistance? It is according to our natural temperament.

God against that. God against that. Discipline that.

Be open to whatever the Lord may have to say to you. That is the only way to reach a balanced life. Number three.

Not only in yourselves be open, but learn to respect others, their experience and their understanding. Try to understand them. Try to adjust yourselves to them, as they adjust to you.

Dear brothers and sisters, you need your brothers and sisters to balance you out. I need your balance and you need my balance. We have to balance one another.

That's the church. What's the use of talking about the church, if we do not balance one another and all go one way or the other. Do not demand your brothers and sisters to adjust to you.

Learn to adjust to them. This is love. The Spirit of Christ is love.

They are very simple. But if we learn these secrets by the grace of God, we can grow in spiritual life. The Lord will not say to us, Ephraim, you are a cake.

Our Heavenly Father, put us in thy light, that we may see light. Deliver us from judging ourselves or judging others, but judge us with thy light. Show us where we are unbalanced, overcooked on one side, undercooked on another side.

O Lord, give us that spiritual balance which belongs to thee. Teach us how to center upon thyself. Teach us how to be open to thee.

Teach us how to tolerate and to adjust ourselves to our brothers and sisters. O that thy church may be a well-balanced church, as thou art balanced. Lord, we commit these words into thy hand.

We do not trust in the words of men. We trust in thy Spirit to finish thy work, thy good work, in us. That I shall may be glorified and honored.

We ask in the precious name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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