

Search for the sizzle

"You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!" (John 5:39 New Living Translation)

There's a term used in marketing that encourages companies to 'sell the sizzle, not the sausage'. This phrase conveys the truism that consumers are far more interested in the benefits they may derive from using a product, rather than the features of the item. By way of illustration, when the first live television shopping channel in the UK was looking for potential presenters, the audition included 'selling' a pencil for ten minutes. The feature – the sausage - is a slim, usually wooden object containing a lead. That fact is hardly likely to encourage folk to buy a pencil. The benefits – the sizzle, if you will – are that it can be used to write to a loved one, produce a striking picture of a scene, jot down important dates to remember, and so on.

But what, you may be asking, have sausages got to do with a *Day by Day* column that promotes Godly living? Without showing any disrespect to God's written word, the same sausage and sizzle principle can be applied to the Bible. Its features include the fact it has been preserved for centuries, it is authored by many personalities from diverse walks of life and that it has been translated into numerous languages. But those facts are of little benefit when it comes to our daily lives. What we need to understand are the benefits – the sizzle – contained in its pages. And for that we need to see what Jesus Himself had to say.

In fact, Jesus addressed this very situation with the religious leaders of His day. As the title scripture points out, those leaders did look at the bible of their time – the Old Testament – but they didn't 'get' the benefits. They wanted eternal life (who doesn't?), but missed the point of the scriptures. They failed to appreciate that those words pointed to Jesus Himself – proving, indeed, that He was who He said He was!

Jesus made the same point later when He explained to two disciples on the road to Emmaus that *all* scripture foretold in some way or another the coming of the Messiah (Luke 24:27).

And that's the way we must look at scripture, too. Jesus Himself tells us that the stories of Adam, Noah, Abraham, the exodus and so on, all contain truths that point to the life, death, resurrection and ascension of our Saviour. The written word of God contains the message of the living Word of God (John 1). That's the underlying message of the bible. That's the sizzle of the scriptures.