

Jesus said, *“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God”* (Matt 4:4). OK... Now Seriously! Let me ask: Is that true of you? ... Have you found that you REALLY need God’s Word to *live*? ... Evaluate yourself. ... Would you feel hunger pangs if you went without reading your Bible? ... Can you truly say (as Job said): *“I have treasured the words of His mouth **more** than my daily bread”* (in Job 23:12)? ... Have you ever lost any of your hunger than you once had...?

You say: *“Oooh! That’s a little too harsh... Pastor! You have barely started and already you have turned the heat way up!”* OK... I’ll turn it down a little... and take a different approach to today’s passage – which is all about God’s Word (Holy Scripture.) I will try to engage you with a little less fire.

Did your mother (or grandmother) ever tell you: *“You are what you eat”* ?

Physically speaking... this saying has some truth. ... If all you eat are carrots... you’ll eventually be as skinny as a carrot with yellow skin tones. ... If all you ever eat are Big Macs... you’ll eventually look (and probably smell) like a Big Mac... and the cow that it came from.

You are what you eat.

Spiritually speaking... this proverb rings even truer. What you feed your mind and soul - will **shape** who you become. ... That’s why Scripture constantly uses the image of eating - as a metaphor for Bible intake:

- *“Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.’ So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth”* (Ezek 3:3).
- *“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth”* (Ps 119:103).

- “*When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight*” (Jer 15:16)

God’s Word is compared to milk... bread... and meat (in places like 1 Pet 2:2; Deut 8:3; Heb 5:12). ... How disastrous it is when our diet is NOT God’s Word.

True story: a young Austrian teenager wanted desperately to be an artist... but twice his application to the prestigious Vienna art school was sent back with the words “*drawings unsatisfactory*” scrawled across the top. ... Stung by the rejection... he did what many teenagers do — he withdrew into his own world. ... Isolated in his room... he devoured the writings of German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche (who taught that God was dead and that the purpose of life was to gain power.) ... He immersed himself in the music of Richard Wagner (whose anti-Semitism and rabid Germanic nationalism bled freely into his compositions.)

Of course... those books and that music profoundly shaped that young man ... whose name was Adolf Hitler ... and shaped the course of world history.

You are what you eat. ... **[P A U S E]** ...

The music... television... books... magazines... conversations... movies... and Internet sites you constantly expose yourself to will... mold your character. ... A Chinese proverb says: “Sow a thought; reap a deed. Sow a deed; reap a habit. Sow a habit; reap a character. Sow a character; reap a destiny.” ... Notice it all starts with a thought. ... “As a man thinks within himself, so is he” (Prov 23:7, KJV). ... What you put into your mind will determine who you become. ... You are what you eat.

In 1 Timothy 4:6... Paul tells Timothy that a good minister of Christ Jesus is “*brought up in the truths of the faith,*” the word for “*brought up*” literally means “*nourished.*” ... Timothy is to nourish himself on Scripture.

In our passage today (2 Timothy 3:14–17)... Paul once again explains to Timothy that he must draw strength from God’s Word. ... The words of the Bible need to get into his marrow... course through his veins... and metabolize into new energy... courage... and power. ... Whenever Timothy (or you or I)... feels like giving up... God’s Word will give us the faith to cross the finish-line.

The question being addressed by the Apostle Paul throughout his second letter to Timothy is:

“How can a Christian survive during stressful and pressure-filled times? In a world gone insane with hate and passion, amidst a race that is destroying itself with moral filth and shameless self-indulgence, in a church which ‘maintains the form of religion but denies the power thereof,’ how can a Christian maintain his integrity against the current of the day?”

When these times of stress—which the apostle describes so eloquently in the opening words of Chapter 3 of the letter—come upon us with their pressuring, smothering, overwhelming push to sweep away our faith and destroy all that we believe in, what are we to do?

Paul’s answer is two-fold. Last week we studied the first part of Paul’s answer.

1. First, he says, “**Follow my model...Do what I have done. All through my ministry I came up against those kinds of pressures.**”

What the apostle, he tells Timothy and us to do: “Continue teaching the truth with boldness among a confused world.” he says; then, “Live righteously (with purpose, faith, patience, love, and perseverance); and third, “Expect trouble (persecution from others)”; and finally, “practice His presence”-the One Who opens doors that no man can open is always with you. The battle is the Lord’s, not yours.

2. The second part of Paul’s answer, which we come to this morning, is **“Saturate your mind with the Scriptures. Let your thinking be controlled by the Word of God”**— And this is what we will be looking at today.

2 Tim 3:14-15

It is impossible to follow the model we saw in last week’s verses... unless we also do what the apostle tells us to do **here** (which is saturate our thinking with the word and the thoughts of God.) ... What I am saying is: you cannot possibly **“teach boldly”**... **“live righteously”**... **“endure persecution”** from others...and **“practice His presence”** throughout the day- **unless** you immerse yourself in God’s Word. ... Don’t even expect to be halfway successful in these things unless you are willing to set aside time every day to allow God’s Word to pour into your soul. ... Churches are full of defeated Christians-who constantly set out to do these things and fail - because they simply refuse to saturate themselves with Scripture.

Paul urges Timothy to continue in the gospel. Timothy had become convinced of the gospel through the instruction of three people — his beloved mother Lois... his grandmother Eunice... and his closest friend (the Apostle Paul.) ... His Hebrew mother and grandmother had educated Timothy in the Old Testament Scriptures... **since he had been an infant!** (The word for **“childhood”** in verse 15... is actually **“infanthood.”**)

I am not sure if there is a better verse in the Bible that shows the importance of grounding children from an early age in God's Word. ... Timothy's early training served as the basis for his later understanding about Christ... and his ministry decisions.

I occasionally run into young adults around town... who tell me that they used to attend AWANA at our church. ... Think what it would mean if we could say to children who have been part of our AWANA program:

"But as for you... continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of... because you know those from whom you learned it" (v. 14). "You know your AWANA leaders... you know your Sunday school teachers... you know your fathers and mothers and grandparents. You know what they have taught you... and you know that their lives match the teaching of their lips. ... So continue in the gospel because you know from whom you learned it."

Grounding the next generation in the Word of God is EXACTLY what every church needs to engage themselves in! ... If you believe that... would you say "**AMEN!**" ?

Lois and Eunice began to teach Timothy from the earliest possible age the substance of the Old Testament. His first stories were Bible stories. There were no picture books... but Timothy was blessed by the beautiful oral tellings and retellings by those godly women. ... From them he learned of the great events and grand passages of the Old Testament. ... And building on that... they taught him the Bible's precepts and principles. These godly women filled his head and heart with God's Word... which built the foundation for how God would use him... (and now to Paul's point) - **sustain** him.

The phrase “*the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*” echoes Jesus’ post-resurrection declaration to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus... that the Old Testament Scriptures point to Him. ... As Timothy came to faith... he understood that Jesus fulfilled the sacrificial system... the Passover lamb... the Tabernacle... and all the array of messianic prophecies. Indeed, Timothy had been made “wise for salvation” through the holy writings and their gospel counterparts.

Then... when Paul and Timothy travelled together (as missionaries around the Roman Empire)... they did not pass out tracts like the “Four Spiritual Laws” or “Steps to Peace with God.” ... They taught the Old Testament... pointing people to Jesus. ... Regarding the gospel in the Old Testament... Paul says: “*For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day **according to the Scriptures***” (1 Cor 15:3–4). These “Scriptures” - were the Old Testament! ... In Galatians... Paul reaches back to Abraham as a pattern of how people are saved: by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Gal 3:6–14).

We are to nourish ourselves on the Scriptures... because they are *about Christ*. ... The Bible was written to reveal Christ. ... All the stories and decrees... prophecies and proclamations... lists and laments... proverbs and prayers - somehow ALL find their focus in Him.

How then can you grow in your love and knowledge of Christ? Read His Word. St. Augustine said, “*Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.*”

How well do you know Christ? ... If He is your “*Friend who sticks closer than a brother*” ... your “*Rock and Redeemer*” ... the “*Desire of your heart*” ... then regardless of trials... you will find spiritual energy coursing through your veins. ... But if you think little of Christ... are content to live without awareness of His presence... care little for His concerns... then you will find your soul weary and weak.

Dr Donald Gray Barnhouse, for years past of the great Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia... used to illustrate in this fashion the way some people approach the Bible. ... He would tell of imagining himself renting a room in a resort hotel in which there was a window that looked out on the beauty and the vast expanse of the ocean. ... He would imagine himself sitting in that room... writing a letter to a friend (who had never seen the ocean)... and saying:

My room looks out through a window onto the ocean, let me describe it to you. The window is about 4 feet high and 6 feet wide, and it is covered by a pane of glass which is exactly 3/8" thick. I have taken some pairings and scrapings of that glass and had them analyzed and find that it is a very fine grade of glass, the best you can buy. In fact, I am attaching to this letter a research article on the kind of glass this is, where it is produced, what kind of sand it is made from, the process by which it is manufactured, and how it is finely spread out in open form and put in a window like this. I find that window is locked into place by a substance that is called putty. It is a most unusual substance. It is very pliable at first, then it gets harder as it is allowed to dry. It is made of a strange chemical substance, and I have attached to this letter a series of research papers done on putty. If you read it through, you will understand the high quality and high grade of this putty. I have also attached a series of studies on the art of putting glass into windows, and the kind of training it takes to be a window installer, etc., etc., etc.

The folly of all that talk about the window (of course) is that nothing is said about what he could see through the window.

Many people study the Bible that way. They focus on all the details of the Book and fail to see Jesus (Whom the whole Book reveals.) ...They fail to understand Who He is... that He has come to dwell within us... to strengthen us... and to deliver us... to forgive us and guide us through life... that all power in heaven and earth is given unto Him.

There is no point in reading the Bible - unless you can see whom it points to. “*I know*” Paul says is Chapter 1 of this letter (verse 12)... “**Whom I have believed**”— NOTICE: it is not what I have believed. ... The glory of this Book is that it brings us face to face with Jesus Christ Himself.

Alright... Go with me now to a verse which I am sure MANY of you are familiar with...

2 Tim 3:16

All Scripture is breathed out by God! Many Bible translations use the word “inspired.” I am so glad that the ESV (which I am reading from) has it “breathed out.” That is exactly what the Greek says: “ θεω ”God” πνευστοζ “Breathed out.”

Genesis tells us that God created man by heaping a pile of dirt and breathing into it (out from Himself)... the very spirit of life... and man became a living being. ... The wonder of this Book (the Bible) is - **that is what God did** – here - in the writing of it. He breathed His very spirit of life into it. There is NO OTHER book like it..

Many (today) struggle with the Bible being inerrant. They say, “*We know sinful and fallible men (who are just like us)... wrote these books... so their words are no more trustworthy than ours.*” ... The answer to that... is in this phrase. ... Just as God breathed into the dust of the ground and made it to be a living... vital person... so He breathed into the words of men the Spirit of vitality and life. ... So... these words have a unique quality about them: Whenever a heart is touched by them it moves toward life. That is the quality of the Word of God. It can do four remarkable things.

First... it will teach you: it is “*profitable for teaching.*” ... The Bible will instruct your mind about things that no one (*except God*) knows anything about. ... It will tell you things about yourself... what can happen to you... and... what will happen to you - *that only God knows.*

Everybody wants to know these things. For instance, everyone wants to know what lies beyond death. ... People are hungry to know what lies beyond. They are asking, “*Is this all there is? Are we just going to fade away and crumble into dust, or is there something beyond?*” ... The human mind has been questing in that area all through history.... But there is only one Book that will tell you the answer to that question. ... It tells about One who came back from the grave and told us what is beyond. ... He demonstrated in ways that can never be denied... or explained away... that He had returned from death. ... This Book becomes a reliable guide in areas we know nothing about.

This Book will tell you what is wrong with this crazy mixed-up world of ours.

- Why do we act the way we do when we know it is wrong?

- What is this strange power that grips us, this evil tendency that permeates all of our civilization, where we want to destroy one another to bomb each other out of existence?
- Why can't we do anything about it?
Why can't we educate it away or legislate it away?

This Book will tell you the answers. The Bible has the power to teach men what they cannot otherwise know.

Second... the Bible has the power to reprove. ... The word is really *convict*. How many of you have had the experience of reading the Bible and becoming aware that something you had been doing all your life... something you did not think was wrong at all... was the reason why you yourself were hurting or were hurting others? ... The Bible suddenly made you aware that... in order to be free... you had to change... you had to commit yourself to a different direction. ... That is called *conviction*. The Bible has tremendous power to point out to us the areas of wrongdoing in our lives.

But more than lay conviction... the Bible never does that without setting us on the right path... correcting us and making us walk in ways that lead to life. ... The amazing testimony of this Book... is that... (when taken seriously)... it leads people to freedom and to life... while those who follow the principles and practices that this Book warns about... are always led to degradation... to enslavement... to a narrowing and limiting of the joys and the beauties of existence.

Finally, the Bible is for "*training in righteousness*." That phrase suggests that the Bible has the power to finely tune you (like a skillful coach... to

enable you to walk day by day in a more righteous way; and righteousness always leads to peace.)

The Scriptures teach us how to live “*the life you’ve always wanted.*”

Charles Spurgeon said it well, “*A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone whose life isn’t.*” ... Scripture is useful for:

- **Teaching**: *telling us what’s right.*
- **Rebuking**: *telling us what’s not right.*
- **Correcting**: *telling us how to get right.*
- **Training in Righteousness**: *telling us how to stay right.*

Those who read the Bible regularly will find that (over time) their lives are being transformed. ... Bible reading is not like drinking caffeine — that instant jolt to get you through the next few hours. ... It’s more like taking vitamins — strengthening you with greater health over the long haul. As you meditate on the words of Scripture... you will slowly become a person who is marked by goodness and joy and courage and patience and wisdom.

Everything God wants you and I to do... He furnished through His word. So... you’re completely... thoroughly (through and through)... outfitted by the Bible. ... All that I need to know... all that I need to have... is revealed to me in God’s Word.

2 Tim 3:17

The purpose of Bible study is *not* just to understand doctrines or to be able to defend the faith (as important as these things are.) ... The ultimate

purpose is the equipping of the believers who read it. ... It is the Word of God that equips God's people to do the work of God.

(You and I both know) that the times are not going to get better. ... But we can become better people - even in bad times! ... We (simply) must separate ourselves from that which is false... nourish ourselves on that which is true... (continue in our study of the Word of God.) ... Then God can equip us for ministry in these difficult days.

In closing, may I suggest two practical applications? How exactly can we take God's Word into our lives?

1. Get It in Your Hand

Here I'm referring to regular Bible reading. In a Barna survey, over 80% of born-again Christians said they do not read the Bible daily. Almost 25% said they *never* read the Bible. We're facing what Amos 8:11 calls "a *famine of ... the words of the LORD.*" ... Here in the United States... we have greater access to the Word of God than any people in history. —It is available online... our cell phones... and in dozens of printed translations. The banqueting table is set - but we're starving ourselves!

So find a regular time that can be your standing appointment with God in His Word. ... Find a place that becomes your sanctuary (the Holy of Holies where you meet Him.) ... Make Bible reading a daily habit. As D.L. Moody put it, "*A man can no more take in a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough for the next six months. We must draw upon God's boundless store of grace from day to day.*"

So put down the remote control... the cell phone... the magazine... the iPod (the things that distract us)... and pick up the knife and fork. ... Dive into the meat and potatoes of God's Word. Nourish yourself on Scripture.

2. Get It in Your Heart

Here I'm referring to Bible meditation. Psalm 1:2 says the man of God "*meditates day and night*" on God's Word. ... While Eastern meditation seeks to *empty* the mind... biblical meditation seeks to *fill* the mind with God's truth. ... How?

By giving time and reflection. ... Rather than gulping your Bible reading down and running on to your day's schedule... meditation chews Scripture slowly. ... This kind of reader often leans back... closes his/her eyes... and mulls over a line... concentrating on its meaning. The meaning enters his/her soul... as food enters his stomach... spreads through his blood and becomes: kindness... and courage... and wisdom... and holiness. This must be done slowly; you can speed read... but you cannot speed meditate.

Like a dog gnawing on a bone... turn the verse or phrase over and over in your mind... examining every word. ... Pray through it. Rewrite the text in your own words. Ask each word what it means. ... Savor every word... allowing all of its nutrients to soak into your mind and heart.

Warren Wiersbe says, "*If you don't talk to your Bible, your Bible won't talk to you.*"