

## Eat This Word, Part 1

Psalm 19:7-11 -

By Russell Muilenburg

Sunday, 05 September 2010 00:00

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Psalm 19:7-11      *Eat This Word, Part I* □ **The Bible as Food** One of the Bible's favorite metaphors for reading scripture is that of eating. God's Word is food. When we read it, we are eating it. Psal  
m 119:103 says:

103

How sweet are your words to my taste,

sweeter than honey to my mouth!      In Matthew 4, after Jesus has been fasting in the desert for 40 days and forty nights and the Bible says—in dramatic understatement—that “he was hungry”, the tempter comes to him and suggests that a simple word of command will turn all the surrounding stones to bread. Jesus answers by quoting Deuteronomy:

“It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Matthew 4:4

And at the beginning of Ezekiel, God reveals himself in a stunning vision to the prophet and then calls him to go to the exiled nation of Israel and proclaim the Word of the Lord. Three times, God says “whether they listen or fail to listen” it is important for Ezekiel to do his job.

Then God gives Ezekiel the message he is to proclaim, and it is pictured as eating. Ezekiel 3:1-3:

1

And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel.”

2

So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

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3

Then he said to me, &quot;Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.&quot; So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

“Eat this scroll.” Eat this book. Eat this word.

God is telling Ezekiel to take His words and make them a part of himself. To read them, memorize them, meditate on them, and learn from them. As important as food is to our physical lives, so is God’s Word to our spiritual lives.

We cannot live by bread alone. God’s Word is sweeter than honey. We must eat this word.

### ***Psalm 19***

Another passage which compares God’s Word to food is Psalm 19:7-11. I want to make this passage the focus of our attention this morning. Psalm 19:7-11:

7

The law of the LORD is perfect,  
reviving the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right,  
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes. <sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever.

The ordinances of the LORD are sure  
and altogether righteous. <sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;

they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the comb. <sup>11</sup> By them is your servant warned;

in keeping them there is great reward. There it is again, in verse 10. The ordinances of God are sweeter than honey. God’s Word is sweeter than honey from the comb.

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We all need to eat. Physically, and spiritually.

And because the Bible is God's Word, it is the best thing we can eat for our souls. Because the Bible is the revelation of the living God, it has effects on us that are better than the effects of anything else we can read or study or watch or listen.

□ **Because the Bible is God's Word, we must eat it.**

□

So there are 2 halves to my message today. First, I want to talk about what it means to say that the Bible is God's Word. Second, I want to talk about the good that comes to us from taking it in.

### ***God-Breathed***

#### **First, the Bible is God's Word.**□

This is evident in the text because six times David repeats the phrase "of the LORD."

#### **Verse 7:**

"The law of the LORD;" "the statutes of the LORD." Verse 8: "The precepts of the LORD;" "the commands of the LORD." Verse 9: "The fear of the LORD;" "the ordinances of the LORD."

All those words—law, commands, statutes, etc—are synonyms for the scriptures. The written word of God. The Bible. It is the LORD's. Yahweh, Jehovah, the God who says "I am who I am" and there is no other. The God who created all that is and holds all of it in being. The God who knows all things that have happened and are yet to come. The one who holds oceans in his hand and places the stars in the sky and who designed gravity and photosynthesis and particle physics. This God—the holy, uncreated one--has spoken with a law, and with statutes and precepts and command and ordinances.

## **2 Timothy**

### **3:16**

says: "All Scripture is God-breathed..." The theological term for this is inspiration—which literally means "to breathe into."

The Bible is the product of God's breath. Not that He dictated every word in the Bible, or wrote it

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with His own hand, but we believe His Holy Spirit superintended the human authors as they wrote what God wanted to be written. Even though this book was written over a period of 4000 years by several different human authors in a variety of styles and genres—the doctrine of inspiration teaches that God is the ultimate author of the Bible.

Nothing is in this book that He does not want there. It is the revelation of His will for humanity.

But more than a collection of laws and ordinances—the Bible is a living communication from a personal God to the human race—specifically to *you*.

Stop and think about that for a moment.

The God of the universe wants to speak to you.

And in His wisdom, He has ordained that this speaking would occur in the signs and symbols of our human languages—written and printed on paper in a book that we can hold in our hands.

One of the best explanations of what the Bible is can be found—surprisingly enough—in the introduction of a children’s book. Sally Lloyd-Jones writes this in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*

:

Now, some people think the Bible is a book of heroes, telling you what you should do and shouldn’t do. The Bible certainly does have some rules in it. They show you how life works best. But the Bible isn’t mainly about you and what you should be doing. It’s about God and what he has done.

Other people think the Bible is a book of heroes, showing you people you should copy. The Bible does have some heroes in it, but (as you’ll soon find out) most of the people in the Bible

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aren't heroes at all. They make some big mistakes (sometimes on purpose). They get afraid and run away. At times they are downright mean.

No, the Bible isn't a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a Story. It's an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It's a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne—everything—to rescue the one he loves. It's like the most wonderful of fairy tales that has come true in real life!

You see, the best thing about the Story is—it's true.

There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them.

It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. And at the center of the Story, there is a baby. Every Story in the Bible whispers his name. He is like the missing piece in a puzzle—the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together, and suddenly you can see a beautiful picture. (quoted by Josh Harris, *Dug Down Deep*, p. 59-60)

□

So, the first point is that the Bible is the Word of God, and that's why it is the most important thing any of us can take in. Newspapers, magazines, novels, text books, books on psychology or theology, blogs, television, radio, music, lectures in the classroom—nothing can have the good effects on us that the Bible has because those things are always the word of man, but the Bible is the word of God.

### Verse 10

of our text says this about God's words:

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They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the comb. Take the most precious thing in the world and compare it to God's Word, and there is no comparison. To prefer gold to the Bible is like the child who chooses the penny over the dime because the penny is bigger. Gold and wealth may get our attention, but they are not comparable in value to God's Words.

Take the sweetest food you can imagine—which for David would have been honey straight from the comb—and compare it to God's Word, and there is not contest. God's word is much sweeter. It is much more to our benefit and our good health to eat God's Word.

### ***Great Reward***

#### **So what is the good that comes from eating God's Word?**

Eating the Word is clearly a metaphor in the Bible for reading it. For savoring it. For drawing strength and nourishment from it. So what is the good that comes from this?

I believe what the text says can be summed up in three benefits: life, wisdom, and happiness. Let's consider each in turn.

□

#### **Life. □ Verse 7**

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7

The law of the LORD is perfect,  
reviving the soul. Another good translation would be: "restoring the life." Life is either non-existent or in jeopardy, and the law of the LORD brings it back.

Just like we need food to strengthen and maintain our physical bodies, we need God's Word to strengthen or maintain our souls. Without God's Word, our souls wither and shrink and fall ill and eventually die.

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That's why Jesus told the devil: "Man shall not live by bread alone." Instead, man really LIVES "by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Food can only give physical life. But the Word of God gives spiritual life, life that never ends, life which is life indeed.

Consider the story of Tokichi Ichii:

Tokichi Ishii had an almost unparalleled criminal record. A Japanese serial killer in the early 1900's who had murdered men, women and children in the most brutal way. Anyone who stood in his way was pitilessly eliminated. Now he was in prison awaiting death. While in prison he was visited by two Canadian women who tried to talk to him through the bars, but he only glowered at them like a caged and savage animal. In the end they abandoned the attempt; but they gave him a Bible, hoping that it might succeed where they had failed. He began to read it, and, having started, could not stop. He read on until he came to the story of the Crucifixion. He came to the words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." and these words broke him. "I stopped," he said. "I was stabbed to the heart, as if pierced by a five-inch nail. Shall I call it the love of Christ? Shall I call it his compassion? I do not know what to call it. I only know that I believed, and my hardness of heart was changed." Later, when the condemned man went to the scaffold, he was no longer the hardened, surly brute he once had been, but a smiling radiant man. The murderer had been born again; Christ had brought Tokichi Ishii to life.

Our life begins with the Word and we stay alive by the Word. If we abandon the Word of God, we will die spiritually.

Or, Psalm 19 tells us that God's Word brings

### **Wisdom**

. The end of

### **verse 7:**

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple. And **verse 8:** The commands of the LORD are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes. A wise person is a person whose life makes sense in the light  
of reality. So, for example, if you are in the dark about heaven, then denying yourself pleasure  
here on earth will look foolish. But if you live in the light of the reality of heaven, then you will  
know it is far wiser to store up treasures for eternity than to spend your time and treasure on

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things that are temporary.

And where is the light of reality shining? How do we get out of the darkness? We go to the Word of God.

Mark Buchanan relates a story about the playwright David Lodge who—on November 22, 1963—was in a playhouse, watching one of his own creations being performed. There was a scene in the middle of the play where a character, according to the script and the demands of the plot, turns on a transistor radio and tunes in to a local station. On this day the theater was full. The actors were caught up in the drama of their performance... The audience was spellbound, pulled into this world powerfully conjured up before them. And along comes this scene. The character takes the radio, flicks it on: a crackle and hiss of static. He dials the tuner: a jumble of noise... And then, stark and urgent, a voice breaks through: "Today in Dallas, Texas, President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed..."

The actor quickly switched off the radio. But it was too late. The reality of the real world had, with just a few plain words, burst in upon the closeted, self-created world of a play being staged. And the play was over.

Buchanan writes: "There is only one reality big enough to burst in on all the little plays we script and stage and act out with dramatic intensity... Only one thing can break in and break us out... The Word of God." (*Your God is Too Safe*, 201)

God is Reality. Everything disconnected from God is an unreal world. Make-believe. Dark. Shadowland.

But the commands of the Lord are radiant. They break in and give light to the eyes. To eat His word is wisdom. To neglect it is folly.

And then there is

**Joy. Verse 8**

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8

The precepts of the LORD are right,  
giving joy to the heart. The Word of God is the best source of deepest and lasting joy.

The book of Nehemiah tells the story of the Israelites returning from exile to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. After the wall is completed they gather in sacred assembly and ask Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses.

These are people who haven't been able to gather for worship in decades. Now, Ezra stands on a high platform and praises the Lord while the Levites read from the Book of the Law and give the meaning so that the people can understand what was being read. As the people listened, they began to weep. Nehemiah had to stand up tell them not to grieve—saying “the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Then, the Bible says, “all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the word that had been made known to them.” (Neh. 8:12)

They read God's Word, and they were filled with joy.

We talk about joy a lot here at Hope Church. Joy is what we are after. And the place to find joy is in the Word of God.

### ***Gather Food With Your Own Hands***

Mark Buchanan tells a story about one of his professors when he was a student at Regent College in Vancouver named Klaus Bockmuehl. A short man with a thick German accent, Buchanan says Bockmuehl was “one of the most humble and godly men I've ever known”.

Though He could be brusque and wild in his manner, it was evident that Dr. Bockmuehl loved God deeply and passionately. This love was most evident during the first 10 minutes of every

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class when he would give a devotional based on his Scripture reading that morning. In the tradition of trappist monks, Dr. Bockmuehl often read only one verse in the morning and then meditated on it throughout the day.

Buchanan says that his devotions were like seminars unto themselves. Every student who studied under him marveled at the depth of his insights into Scripture, as well as the passionate eloquence with which he delivered those insights.

One morning he came to class and instead of his devotional, he read a portion of a letter he had received from a former student. It went something like this:

Dear Dr. Bockmuehl:

I wanted to write to thank you for all those devotionals you gave before your lectures. When I think back on my days at Regent, I see that those devotionals kept my faith alive. The other studies somehow depleted me. Only your times of sharing filled me. In some ways, your devotionals saved my faith.

All other students were nodding their heads in agreement with the letter writer. They felt the same way about Dr. Bockmuehl's devotionals. They expected the professor to be pleased by the kind words.

But instead, Dr. Bockmuehl was visibly upset. He put the letter down with a curt, sharp motion. His mouth was tight; his eyes were wild. "Why," he asked, "is it possible for a student to be in danger of losing his faith at a Christian college? Why did he depend on my devotionals to feed him, and not his own? Why did he need to eat from my hand? Why didn't he gather food with his own hands?" (p. 199-200)

"Why didn't he gather food with his own hands?" This fall we are going to begin a Bible reading program as a church. We are going to eat God's Word. We are going to gather food with our own hands.

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This book is the best thing we can eat for our souls. It is the Word of God. Containing precisely the information he wants us to have, the most important story ever told.

And in eating it we gain life. We gain wisdom. And we gain joy.

So I urge you to take up the E100 challenge. Gather food with your own hands. And live.

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