**Feed Yourself – Week 3 - Digest**

**Series Big Idea:** The Bible is God’s Word given to us for daily nourishment. In this series we will challenge one another to grow in our relationship with God by feeding ourselves with his Word everyday.

**Message Big Idea**: When God’s Word becomes part of you, it gives you the wisdom and power to overcome.

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:1-11, Psalm 119:9-11, 1 Peter 5:8-9, James 4:7

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**Introduction: You Are What You Eat**

We’ve all heard the phrase, “**You are what you eat.”** As you think back to the last 24-hours of your life, is that sentiment satisfying or terrifying? I feel good about the green beans I ate as well as the fruit smoothie I had for breakfast. But honestly? I snuck some French fries in there while I was running errands and maybe had a cookie…or two…OK, three throughout the day. I wonder how many green beans I need to eat to cancel out three cookies?

This phrase “You are what you eat” first appeared in 1920 when the nutritionist, Victor Lindlahr, developed a diet and ran an ad saying, “Ninety per cent of the diseases known to man are caused by cheap foodstuffs. You are what you eat.” That little statement stuck in the consciousness of American society, and, of course, drives our modern day emphasis on healthy and organic eating.

Probably the most disturbing portrayal I’ve ever seen of this little statement came in the 2004 documentary, *(Movie poster)* **“Supersize Me.”** How many of you saw this film? If you remember, a guy named Morgan Spurlock did a 30-day experiment during which he ate nothing but McDonald’s fast food. During that time, he gained 24 pounds and his cholesterol shot up to 230! He experienced mood swings, and fat accumulation in his liver. All in just 30 days! To lose all that weight and get back to his original state, it took him 14 months of vegan meals.

I’m suddenly really regretting those French fries.

“You are what you eat.” It is really true. But what if it isn’t just a physical reality? What if it is a spiritual reality as well?

**Series Recap**

*(Series Graphic)* We’re in week 3 of our series “Feed Yourself.” During this series we’ve learned how God’s Word, the Bible, is given to us for our daily nourishment. We’ve been challenging one another to grow in a relationship with God by feeding ourselves with his Word every day.

Oftentimes people will say, “I want to be fed,” but part of maturing as a Christ-follower is learning to feed yourself. Think about it…we expect healthy, full-grown adults to be able to feed themselves physically, and we need to challenge one another to do this spiritually as well.

(**Taste**)In week 1 we talked about “tasting” God’s Word, developing a habit of reading the Bible regularly. (*add* – **Chew**) In week 2 we talked about “chewing” the Word, meditating on it to absorb its nutrients. We’ve encouraged you to attend an upcoming **How to Study the Bible** workshop to learn more. If you haven’t signed up yet, check out our website for information on where and when you can take the workshop…some offerings are even online. Today we are going to talk about (*add* – **Digest**) “digesting” God’s Word, having it become a part of us.

What does it mean for the words of Scripture to become a part of us? Well, let’s look to our best role model for this…Jesus himself.

**Matthew 4: Setting the Scene**

As we come to a scene describe in Matthew chapter 4 of the Bible, Jesus has just been baptized by John the Baptist signifying the start of his public ministry. After his baptism, Matthew writes:

***“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.” –Matthew 4:1-2***

Now, before we go any further in this story, let’s pause right here for just a minute. I want us to understand a few insights from these verses.

First, there is significance to Jesus fasting in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. When the number 40 appears in the Bible, it indicates a time of testing. The Spirit of God leads Jesus into the wilderness for 40 days to face this test.

Yet, we are told that it is “the devil” that actually does the testing. Now, when we read “devil,” we need to clear our heads of the western notion of an evil looking creature with horns and a red cape. The word translated “devil” is the Greek word “**diabolos**” which can literally be taken to mean “slanderer.” Remember, Jesus himself calls this evil being: *(add)*

***“…a liar and the father of lies.” –John 8:44***

The slanderer is our adversary in the spiritual realm who is hostile to God and his people. He continually works to thwart the purposes of God. And in this instance, he comes after Jesus. So let’s walk through this passage noting two things: #1 - How the slanderer attacks and #2 – How Jesus responded.

Attacks Desire

Jesus has been fasting for 40 days, and Matthew makes this deeply profound observation:

*“… he was hungry.” –Matthew 4:2*

You think? He’s so hungry he probably could’ve eaten his own shoe . . . or sandal. *(Matthew 4:3)* And so the slanderer says, *“Hey, you’ve got the power, why not use it to turn some of these rocks into bread?”*

I always imagine him somehow conjuring up the smell of fresh bread. When you’re hungry, what’s better than the smell of fresh baked bread? – Well, besides eating it! Now most of us aren’t likely to be tempted to turn rocks into food, but here’s what this has to do with you and me. Jesus is famished. Physically, he is in a weakened state and he is tempted by the very thing he desires most in that moment.

So how about you? What would you say are your greatest desires or longings right now?

* Maybe more than anything what you long for is relief from the stress and anxiety life is bringing your way – So much so that you’re tempted to turn to anything that can bring an escape from whatever it is you’re going through.
* Maybe you just want respect from the people in your life, and when they don’t give it to you, you get angry and rage at them or get wounded and withdraw. Is respect what you desire more than anything?
* Or maybe your desire has to do with sex and intimacy? God made sex. It was his idea but like so many good things, the evil one loves to twist what God made good into something harmful.

See, we all have desires and sometime we feel like, “Man, I need that more than anything else right now.” There’s nothing wrong with our desires. What’s wrong is how the slanderer tries to twist those desires to tempt us to take shortcuts in an effort to fulfill them.

After 40 days of nothing in his belly, Jesus has to be thinking, “There’s nothing in the world I need like I need food right now.” Yet, he responds to the slanderer with these words from Scripture:

***“It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”–Matthew 4:4***

Jesus is saying, “I may ***feel*** like the one thing I desire more than anything else right now is food, but it’s not. Food isn’t my greatest need. What I can’t live **without** is God – God’s Word, God’s direction, God’s love in my life. I need that even more than I need food right now.” Jesus combats the attack of the slanderer with Scripture.

**Attacks Faith**

*(Matthew 4:5-6)* After this first attack, Jesus is then somehow transported to the top of the temple in downtown Jerusalem. We don’t know if it was like a Star Trek moment (“beam me up, Scotty” style) or if he just climbed up there. And the slanderer says, “Go ahead and jump. God will catch you.”

See how slick the slanderer is? Jesus deals with the first temptation by quoting Scripture so the slanderer comes back in round two quoting Scripture to Jesus. Understand, our adversary knows Scripture too, and he says to Jesus, “Ah, c’mon, God’s got your back. Just jump and then everybody in Jerusalem will be blown away! Everybody will believe in you!”

Now most days, we’re probably not tempted to throw ourselves off of buildings to see if God will catch us. But occasionally the slanderer will say, “Come up with a plan to get what you want or need, and one way or another God will bail you out. Just do what you want to do.”

* Maybe you’re a Christ-follower and you’re dating somebody you really like but he or she doesn’t have the same values as you, but you tell yourself, “It’ll work out. Once I marry him or her, he’ll come around. She’ll come around. After all, I’m praying about it, and God answers prayer.”
* Or it might be the couple who’s irresponsible with their money and finds themselves in a bad situation financially, so they start really praying and asking their friends to pray thinking, “God, you have to come through for us here.”

But God is not a genie in a lamp. He doesn’t do our bidding. Yes, he’s rich in mercy and grace, but before all those things, he’s God. We can’t just do stuff and expect him to bail us out.

And that’s what Jesus says to the slanderer:

***“Jesus answered him, ‘It is also written: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’” –Matthew 4:7***

Jesus refuses to make God prove himself. And once again, where did Jesus get that response? From Scripture.

**Attacks Loyalty**

*(Matthew 4:8-9)* Finally, the slanderer gives Jesus some kind of vision of all the kingdoms of the world and says to him, “You can have it all. Power, wealth, admiration, reputation, influence. You can make Bill Gates’ gig look like a paper route. Just bow down one time and worship me, and it’s all yours!”The slanderer basically says, “Worship me and you can have everything you want, Jesus.”

Now, this might look like a temptation to worship Satan, which again, is not something that a lot of us are probably tempted to do. But this wasn’t about bowing down to the slanderer to gain power and riches; this was about loyalty. This was about bowing down to **anyone** or **anything** other than God.

Aren’t we all tempted to bow down to something *other* than God - to treat something besides God like it’s God?

* Maybe it’s **work**. If I can just have a successful and fulfilling career, everything will be great . . . And what happens? We overwork and mess up our relationships, our health, and our sanity because we’re bowing down at the altar of career or success.
* Or we worship **relationships**. We live like the most important thing in the world is a particular person, and then what happens? We compromise other relationships, maybe put our own self-respect on the back burner just to keep from losing that significant other, and we end up worshipping at the altar of romance.
* Or we can do it with keeping our **kids** happy . . . Sometimes we act like making them happy is the most important thing on the planet, and we bow down at the altar of family.

So how does Jesus respond to this temptation? You will begin to see a pattern here. He responds with more Scripture:

***“Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”’” –Matthew 4:10***

Jesus wasn’t being tempted to worship the slanderer; he was being tempted to worship something other than God. And in spite of his weak condition, he refuses to go there - not only because he’s the Son of God, but because he has the words of Scripture inside him - He’s digested this book.

And after Jesus deals with the slanderer with the word of God, what is the outcome?

***“Then the devil left Him, and angels came and attended Him”*** ***-Matthew 4:11***

**Our Battles**

Understand, Jesus wasn’t just dealing with life circumstances in general; he was dealing with the slanderer, the evil one, our adversary. And I know, as soon as we mention the devil, some people might think it’s silly or superstitious. But look at how the slanderer is described in Scripture. The Apostle Paul wrote this about him:

***“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”*** ***-2 Corinthians 11:14***

If we could see him, he would likely appear to be attractive, suave, and sophisticated.

Peter says this about him:

***“Your enemy the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*** ***-I Peter 5:8***

This is not spiritual **scare tactics**, this is spiritual **REALITY**: life is not just you and God. There are other spiritual forces at work, and some of them are flat out looking to eat you alive. No horns, no cape, no pitchfork, just somebody who’s like a vicious lion looking for someone to devour.

That’s kind of freaky and not exactly good news. But understand this. As cunning and as powerful as this ancient adversary of God is, look at what the James, the brother of Jesus says Christ-followers can bank on. *(James 4:7)* He says if we resist the devil, he will flee. That’s good news.

So how do we do that? Well, we do what Jesus did. We taste and chew and digest the words in this book right here. That’s how Jesus resisted the slanderer and that’s how we can resist him too. When God’s Word becomes a part of us, when we digest it, we will have it accessible when the battle comes. So how does God’s Word become a part of us?

**Lab Time**

If you remember, so far in this series we’ve challenged one another to **Daily** read God’s Word. Last week we talked about *(add)* **Weekly** meditating on Scripture.

Today, we want to challenge one another to let Scripture *(add)* **Forever** become a part of us by memorizing it. Yes, actually committing parts of God’s Word to memory. Understand, we don’t memorize Scripture so that we can recite passages as a party trick to impress our friends. No, we memorize God’s Word so that we spiritually digest it, so that it becomes a part of us, so that we will have it accessible when the battle comes.

Note: If you are using the “Improved” Andy Griffith video or the “Genius” Kids’ Verse Memorization, build that in here (See Planning Center).

In fact, let’s pause right now and memorize a verse of Scripture together. The last two weeks, we’ve had you practice reading and reflecting on Scripture using a passage from James. Today, let’s zero in on one verse in that passage, James 1:19 where James writes:

***“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry…” –James 1:19***

Now, whenever I memorize a passage of Scripture, I start by repeating the verse over and over again. So let’s try that together. On the count of three, let’s say this verse, including the reference, together… One, two, three…” *(Repeat two more times)*

Next, let’s take away a few of the words and see if we can still say the verse: *(Say twice)*

***“My dear and , take of this: should be quick to , slow to and slow to become …” – 1:19***

Great job! Let’s take away a few more and see if we can still recite it: *(Say twice)*

***“My and , take : should be , and slow to …” – 1:***

Do you think we can do it with no help? *(Blank screen)* Let’s give it a try. Ready? One, two, three…

Awesome job! You just memorized James 1:19! And let me ask you… The next time you find yourself in a situation where you are tempted to lose your cool and blow up on a person or in some situation where something happens to upset you, do you think drawing on this Scripture from your memory could help you? If God’s Word is a part of us, it will be accessible to us when the battle comes.

Let me give you just a few tips that can help in **Memorizing Scripture**: *(Build the following tips)*

**1. Write the verse on an index card.**

…and carry it around with you wherever you go. You can work on memorizing in the check out line, during your lunch break, while you’re at your kids’ soccer practice. You can even do just what we did… As the verse becomes familiar, write it out with a few words missing or try writing out just the first letter of each word and see if you can still recite it.

**2. Use the verse in prayer.**

Praying, “God, help me become quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” will reinforce the verse in your mind even as you genuinely ask God for help in living it out.

**3. Use an app like ScriptureTyper.**

I (Tammy) have been using this app for several months now and find that it makes memorizing Scripture feel a bit like a game. And it prompts me to review the verses I’ve memorized. Check it out! It’s fun!

If you are intentional about memorizing Scripture and come back to the verses you’ve memorized periodically to recite them again, you will digest them. They will become a part of you. And when God’s Word is a part of us, we will have it accessible when the battle comes.

**Conclusion**

As I conclude today, I want you to know that God’s Word is not just a defensive weapon against the attacks of the evil one. God’s Word also enables us to go on the offensive. The Apostle Paul calls the Word of God:

***“…the sword of the Spirit…” –Ephesians 6:17***

When what is in this book becomes a part of us, it mobilizes us for mission. It spurs us to acts of love and cries for justice. It gives us confidence to share the good news of Jesus.

So let’s digest it, friends. After all, “You are what you eat.” May the Word of God become a part of us filling every corner of our being.

**Communion Idea**

Every week I come to this table carrying any number of different things.

Sometimes I come tired and weary.

Sometimes I come joyful and fulfilled.

Other times I come burdened with anxiety.

Occasionally I come heartbroken and unsure.

But every time I come, I find the same thing waiting for me here: love. In his Word, God says:

***“I have loved you with an everlasting love;***

***I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.” –Jeremiah 31:3***

No matter what we feel, no matter how we come to this table, what we find here is a God who loves us beyond reason and who is constantly drawing us to his side.

Today, come to him, and let the truth about his love for you spoken in Scripture sink deep into your soul as we remember how his love was poured out for us on the cross.