

Today we launch a series of three sermons about immeasurable value of the Bible for our lives.

- **acknowledgement** of those who, in their faithfulness to God, passed on to me the good news of Jesus the Messiah and the necessity of feasting upon the Word of God. They modeled and encouraged me to read the Bible carefully, discuss its meaning and applications vigorously, and evaluate everyone and everything in its light.

Proposition

The value of the Bible is often conveyed through accessible metaphors like **bread**. Matthew 4:4,7 (or Luke 4:4) tells us that the Word of God is like bread that feeds us, far beyond physical bread.

Before we jump into this, let's think about some terms. We will be using some terms interchangeably: Scripture, the Word of God, or the Bible. Psalm 119 contains many more descriptors (i.e. commandments, precepts) to denote God's message to us as His people.

A Thought Experiment

As we consider the value of the Bible for our lives, let's begin.

First, reflect on your activities and conversations this past week, especially your first thoughts, now rank them from most enjoyable to least, finally rank them from most valuable to least.

What did you value the most?

How many of us concluded that the most valuable aspect of our lives was, “the word of God”?

Would these words from *Psalm 119* express our approach to God and his Word?

Psalm 119 ^{68, 71-72}

⁶⁸ You are good, and what you do is good;
teach me your decrees.

⁷¹ It was good for me to be afflicted
so that I might learn your decrees.

⁷² The law from your mouth is more precious to me
than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

“God's speaking and acting are the same thing. His Word *is* His action, His divine power.” (*Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, Timothy Keller, Penquin, 2015, 34)

[1] The Bible Nourishes Us

In John 6:27 we are commanded to “work for food that endures to eternal life”. As such, one great metaphor of Scripture is that of bread. A famous preacher of a century ago, Charles Spurgeon, said that when you are presenting God's Word to people, spread the bread with butter, and a little jam doesn't hurt!

We are encouraged to feed on the Word of God, just as we would regularly consume bread (manna) to sustain our physical bodies. In fact, this passage highlights the fact that we can tend to forget how essential God's Word is for day to day living.

We must feed on the written Word as if we are feeding on the Living Word (John 6:33-48). In her hymn Mary Lathbury put it this way...

*Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord to me, as Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea
Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee Lord, my spirit pants for Thee, O living Word*

John is now going to share two texts with us that are critical for us to see the nourishing work of the Word of God in our lives.

Main Texts: Matthew 4¹⁻⁴; Deuteronomy 8¹⁻⁵

This morning's texts, are Matthew 4 and Deuteronomy 8. What patterns do you see between the life of Jesus, the past experience of God's people and our present situation. These Scriptural patterns reveal who God is and how he supplies everything we need to enter into and fully experience his salvation.

Matthew 4¹⁻⁴

¹ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting *forty* days and *forty* nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Deuteronomy 8¹⁻⁵

¹ Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors. ² Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. ⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.

I. The Promise of God:

Deuteronomy 8

¹ Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today,
so that you may

live and increase and

enter and possess

the land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors.

1.1 **live and increase** - a life of grow, not a meager but an abundant existence. Cf. *Genesis 1* ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and **increase** in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

1.2 **enter and possess** - not a temporary residence, not just passing through they are entering a land promised to them by God.

1.3 **the promised land** – listen to the description of the land the Israelites are promised. What is your evaluation of it? Verses 7-9. ⁷ For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; ⁸ a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; ⁹ a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.

1.4

“...through every stage of Israel’s history (promise, conquest, possession, misuse, loss, and recovery), ...to speak of the land is to speak in terms of Israel’s unique relationship with Yahweh. It was the place that guaranteed restored intimacy with God and promoted human flourishing—a new garden paradise.” <https://bibleproject.com/blog/land-thermometer-covenantal-faithfulness/>

This is the repeated message of the Bible, that our God has and will continue to faithfully keep his promise to save, gather together and provide a place for His people to live free from sin.

[2] The Bible nurtures us

As Paul mentored Timothy in the faith, he highlighted the way in which the Scriptures had been part of Timothy’s growth. This is found in II Timothy 3:14-16.

Notice also how Paul tied together the nurturing role of the Bible in our lives with the theology which articulates the values of our faith. The first paragraph of our Cornerstone statement of faith says:

We believe the Bible to be the complete Word of God; that the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament in the original manuscripts, were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and were entirely free from error. Further, we believe that the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

We cannot leave this as theoretical theology...but we must embrace God’s Word and engage with it!

2. Embracing and Engaging the Promise of God:

we must embrace God’s Word and engage with it! One way to embrace and engage with God’s Word is to remember. Remembering leads to knowledge.

² **Remember** how

the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

³ **He humbled you**, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known,
to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. ⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these *forty years*.

⁵ **Know then** in your heart that as a man *disciplines* his son,
so **the Lord your God disciplines you**.

Remember

- what the Lord has taught you about your heart and
- how He has taught you
- your willingness
 - ✓ to listen
 - ✓ to be obedient.
- how obedient were the Israelite people? how obedient we have been.
- that the Lord knows when to cause us to hunger and when to feed us.

Know that the Lord, in spite of our failure, will provide what we need to reach His kingdom, and will correct us as His children.

Lamentations 3

¹⁹ I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.

²⁰ I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.

²¹ Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:

²² Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.

²³ They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

²⁴ I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."

Conclusion – see Digging Deeper
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Survey of Bible reading – use this as a “self reflection” – from Howard and William Hendricks (**Living By The Book**, Moody, 2007,20)

Present Bible reading plan – the plan is called “_____” find on YouVersion/Cornerstone

HOW ABOUT YOU?

The great tragedy among Christians today is that too many of us are under the Word of God, but not in it for ourselves.

What about you? Do you regularly read and study the Bible on your own? Or are you part of the majority of people who rarely if ever open the Bible for themselves? Here's a simple exercise to help you evaluate your Bible reading habits.

How often do you read the Bible? (circle one)

NEVER ONCE A MONTH ONCE A WEEK TWO OR THREE
TIMES A WEEK EVERY
DAY

When you read it, how much time do you spend reading?

5 MIN.
OR LESS 15 MIN. 30 MIN. 45 MIN. 1 HR.
OR MORE

Here are a few reasons that people give for not reading the Bible. Check the ones that express why you don't read the Bible more than you do.

- The Bible doesn't seem relevant to my life.
- The Bible seems confusing and hard to understand. I don't know how to make sense out of it.
- I used to read the Bible, and it made me feel good. But after awhile, it didn't seem to have the same impact, so finally I gave it up.
- I feel guilty when I read the Bible.
- The Bible is hopelessly out-of-date. It may have some interesting stories, but it has little significance for life today.
- I rely on my pastor or minister to explain the Bible to me. If I need to know something, he will tell me about it.
- I have doubts about the Bible's reliability.
- I don't have time. I'm just too busy.
- The Bible seems boring to me.
- I don't own a Bible.
- The Bible is full of myths and half-truths. Why study something that lacks credibility?
- I don't read, period! It's not just the Bible; I don't read anything.