

Watch Your *Life*

Session 2: Feeding on Christ

Presented by Pastor Colin Smith

We're looking today at Feeding on Christ. I could have called this session "Meditating on the Word," but I chose the title "Feeding on Christ" for two reasons:

1. Jesus Christ is the centre of the whole Bible, and we don't understand any part of Scripture fully unless and until we see it in relation to Him.
2. Feeding is more than reading. It involves taking something good into yourself and absorbing it, so that it becomes part of you and is life giving to you.

It would be easy to get the idea that the Bible is simply a book of information about God and life and the world, and that we need to read it in order to know what to believe and how to behave. That's true, but the Bible is so much more than information. The Word of God brings transformation.

You see this very clearly in Psalm 19:7–8:

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Notice that there are four pairs of statements. In each pair, the first tells us what the Bible is, and the second tells us what the Bible does:

- *The law of the Lord is perfect* – That's what it is. What will it do? It will revive your soul.
- *The testimony of the Lord is sure* – That's what it is. What will it do? It will make you wise.
- *The precepts of the Lord are right* – That's what they are. What will they do? They will bring joy to your heart.
- *The commands of the Lord are pure* – That's what they are. What will they do? They will give light to your eyes.

The Bible is so much more than information. The Word of God brings transformation. It will revive your soul, make you wise, bring you joy, and open your eyes. Why? Because the Word will lead you to Jesus and as you feed on Him, these gifts will be yours. So, the purpose of this session is to help you feed on Christ through the Word.

Jesus said, "...whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me." (John 6:57)

"Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (John 15:5, 7)

Christ abides in us through His Word, and as His Word abides in us, we will bear much fruit. Then Jesus said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matthew 4:4). Jesus is using the language of food again. You will be nourished, fed, and sustained by the Word of God. This is your food!

Psalm 1 tells us about the good effect of absorbing the Word of God into your life.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:1–3)

Feeding on Christ through His Word matters because as a Christian leader, you must be able to sustain your own spiritual life. How can you nourish others if you do not nourish yourself? Think about a mother feeding a baby at her breast. She nourishes herself, so that she can nourish her child. In the same way, if you want to nourish others, you must learn to nourish yourself. As the Word of God comes to you, it will come *through* you into the lives of others.

James Alexander says something of preachers that is true of all Christian leaders:

"The preacher who is constantly pouring out, and seldom pouring in, can pour but a little while."

Feeding on Christ through the Word is key to sustaining you and your ministry.

How to Feed on Christ through His Word

Years ago, my pastor taught me to try and identify one verse in a passage and to carry it with me through the day. I have found that really helpful. It's easy to read a chapter from the Bible, but not really take anything in. So try to find a verse to land on. And when you have read your passage, camp on it for a while and meditate on it.

Your aim in this is to carry one verse or truth of Scripture through the day for yourself and for others, and to turn that verse into prayer. When I have found my verse, I start out by asking questions. Which questions work best will depend on the passage of Scripture you are reading.

Questions are like a toolbox. You don't use every tool on every job. You select what is needed for the work you have to do.

Here are some of the questions in my toolbox:

- a. What does this say? That prompts me to restate the verse in my own words.
- b. Is there a promise to believe, a command to obey, a warning to heed, an example to follow?
- c. What do I learn here about God, about myself, about God's people, and about the world?
- d. How does this lead me to Christ? Sometimes a verse will point you to Christ by showing how much we need Him. Sometimes by showing what is ours in Him. Sometimes you will see an anticipation or illustration of who He is, or what He has accomplished.

I find it helpful to keep a notebook and write down what God is teaching me from the Scriptures. We're not talking here about a record of your own feelings or experiences, but a record of what you have learned from Scriptures and how you have applied God's Word to your life.

Remember that Scripture is the Word of God. What the Bible says, God says, so when you open the Bible, you hear the voice of God.

Let's take an example: Suppose you are reading 2 Thessalonians 3 and you decide to camp on verse 5, "*May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ*" (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

This verse is about the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ. Paul prays that God will direct the hearts of Christian believers into the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ.

How can I feed on this verse? How can I nourish my faith on this? Here are three things that I wrote down in my journal from this verse of Scripture.

1. I need love and steadfastness, especially when I am tired of the battle.

May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

What is steadfastness? I wrote down some other words that mean the same thing: patience, perseverance, endurance. I started to think about where I need patience, steadfastness, perseverance, endurance. Where am I tempted to give up? Where have I become discouraged? When I do this, I am connecting this verse to my life. This is very practical.

If you have tensions at work. If you experience the wearing effect of ongoing pain. If you have difficulties in your marriage, a rebellious son or daughter, you will find yourself saying *I need steadfastness!* So my first thought is that I need love and steadfastness especially when I am tired of the battle.

2. The love and steadfastness I need are in God.

*May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God
and to the steadfastness of Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:5).*

Think about “the steadfastness of Christ.” Christ is steadfast. He is patient. He perseveres. That means that He will never give up on me. Now my heart is being warmed with thanksgiving. I tried to think about the words, “the love of God.” How much does God love me? How do I know that God loves me?

That brings other verses of Scripture to mind. “*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8). “*God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*” (Romans 5:5). So God’s love is both proved once and for all at the cross and experienced personally by all who believe.

Now you may say, well I don’t know all these other verses, but you will find that as you form the habit of meditating on the Scriptures, you will soon gather a store of Scriptures and the more you have stored in your heart, the richer your meditation on the Word will become.

3. I can ask God to give me the love and steadfastness I need.

*May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God
and to the steadfastness of Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:5).*

Notice something wonderful about this verse. Paul is not asking believers to do something for God. He is asking God to do something for us! He’s saying to these believers, “I see what you’re up against, and I’m asking God to do something special for you. May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s steadfastness.” He prays this because he knows that God is able to give us the love and patience we need!

So here is something for me to carry with me through the day. God is able to give me love and patience. These things are in Him and so I must ask Him to give me the love and steadfastness I need.

So here is a very simple way to feed on Christ through the Word:

1. Read a few verses.
2. Pick a verse that grabs your attention and write it out in your journal.
3. Express what the verse says in your own words.
4. Write two or three sentences that apply what it says to your own life.
5. Note what the verse tells you about Christ or how it points you to Him.

Then keep what you have learned in mind so that at the right time you can share what you have learned with someone else. If you spend a few minutes each day doing this, your faith will be strengthened, and a year from now, you will be amazed at how much you have grown.

I want to end this session with three encouragements:

a. Habit will help you

Find a time of the day that works for you and form the habit of feeding on Christ through His Word. Choose a book of the Bible and start working your way through it reading a few verses at a time. Read until you come to something that you can feed on and carry with you through the day.

David did this in the morning, and I find that's the best time. He said, "*Oh LORD, in the morning you hear my voice*" (Psalm 5:3). Don't let the fear of legalism rob you of the benefits of a regular pattern of walking with God.

Here are three quotations that have been helpful to me:

"By the grace of God, and the strength of the Holy Spirit, I desire to lay down a rule not to speak to man until I have spoken with God; not to do anything with my hand till I have been upon my knees; not to read letters or papers until I have read something of the Holy Scriptures" (Andrew Bonar, Diary p.136).

"The first act of the soul in early morning should be a draught at the heavenly fountain. It will sweeten the taste for the day. If you can have but ten minutes with God at that fresh, tranquil and tender season, make sure of those minutes..."

(Thomas Murphy, *Pastoral Theology*, page 75)

Murphy then cites a missionary by the name of Henry Martyn.

"My own experience convinces me that the oftener and the more diligently you peruse the Scriptures, the more beautiful will they appear... There is in an intimate, in a daily conversation with the Scriptures something sanctifying, something ennobling."

(Cited in Murphy, *Pastoral Theology*, page 126)

b. Meditating on the Word will give you something to share with others

As you form the habit of meditating on the Word (even if it's just for a few minutes each day), you will build up a storehouse of Scripture that you have applied to your own life. The Holy Spirit will bring these verses back to your memory when you need them and you will have something to share with others.

c. Meditating on the Word will breathe fresh life into your prayers

We're going to look at this in the next session. Please join me for session #3 on Praying in the Spirit.

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