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OUR DAILY BREAD

Pledge

As members of this church, we pledge:
To ^a treasure the Word of God as our ^b daily bread by ^c obeying it,
^d meditating on it, and ^e hiding it in our hearts;

^a Psalm 119:11; 19:10; 119:72; ^b Matt. 4:4; ^c Josh. 1:8; 1 Sam. 15:22; ^d Psalm 1:2; 119:15;
^e Psalm 119:11

Scripture

He answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread
alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Matthew 4:4

Lesson

Man Shall Not Live By Bread Alone

Several years ago, I was preaching to a group of children.

“What would happen,” I asked them, “if you didn’t eat anything tomorrow?”

Their answer was predictable: “We’d get really hungry!” And the next day, and the next? One bright boy raised his hand: “Eventually, we’d starve to death.”

Exactly.

But then I changed the question. “What would happen if you *did* eat tomorrow, just as normal. And the next day. And on and on?”

“We’d live!” was the children’s response.

“But what if you *kept on* eating as normal—year after year, decade after decade?”

The intelligent lad figured out where I was going. “Well, we’d die after all.”

Exactly. Don’t eat, and you die. But keep on eating, and eventually... You die, just the same.

That was the lesson that the children of Israel had to learn as well. They had everything they needed to eat—even bread that rained down from the sky. But that wasn’t enough to keep them alive into the Promised Land. God had given them his word, which told them to love and obey him. But they didn’t. Because of their disobedience, they stayed out in the wilderness where they eventually died. If they had feasted on God’s word as well as bread, they would have lived and entered the land. But they chose to live by bread alone, and not by every word that came from the mouth of God. So that generation never made it.

Thousands of years later, Jesus used this very principle to counter Satan’s attack (Matthew 4:1-11). Satan suggested that Jesus use his power to satisfy himself instead of obeying God: “Turn these stones to bread,” Satan said.

At that very moment, Jesus was hungry. He hadn’t eaten for forty days! But he knew that life was sustained by more than eating bread. True life comes ultimately in obedience to God’s Word. “Man,” he said, “shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” To have *real lasting* life, he was saying, you don’t only need to eat what God gives you; you need to obey what God tells you.

This is why we pledge to treasure God’s word as our daily bread. Life is not just about food, homes, cars, jobs, vacations, and school. It is,

at its core, about a relationship with God which is possible only if our lives are aligned with his will, revealed in the Bible.

The Written Bread and the Living Bread

At this point, we should ask an honest question: Then who can have such life, if no one can perfectly keep God's word? The answer is truly good news. Jesus said:

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. (John 6:48-51).

The reason Jesus called himself the bread is because he offers his perfect life to us—so that, even though we are deeply flawed, we can have eternal life with God. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by Jesus the true Bread of Life.

Does this mean that if we believe in Jesus as our Living Bread, we don't need the Bible, the "Written Bread"? Definitely not. It means that now, with the life of Jesus in us, we turn to his Word to learn more fully who God is and how he wants us to live. Since the Bible reveals to us this good news and its many implications for our lives, we approach it with the enthusiasm of a hungry man in a bakery.

A Steady Diet of God's Word

As members of this church we are pledging to have a steady diet of God's Word, the Bible. How can you make this happen for yourself? If you have never had a consistent habit of reading the Bible, consider starting with these steps:

1. **Make time.** If you don't make time for it, it won't happen. Choose a time when you won't be interrupted for at least twenty minutes.
2. **Decide your reading plan.** Instead of picking passages at random, find a systematic reading plan that gives you a passage for each day. For example:
 - a. Read through Psalm 119, eight verses per day (this will take you 22 days).
 - b. Read through the Gospel of John, one chapter per day (this will take you 21 days).

Mobile apps can provide you with many good Bible reading plans, but if you are the sort of person who gets distracted easily with your phone, it's probably best to stick with a printed plan which you can keep in the cover of a physical copy of the Bible.

3. **Have a strategy.** Actually, two: one for *the time you spend*, and the other for *how you respond* to what you read.
 - a. **A strategy for the time.** If you have blocked out twenty minutes, use the first part to pray, the middle part to read, and the third part to pray again—this time about what you have just read. So:
 - i. **Pray.** Ask God to help you understand and respond to what you are about to read.
 - ii. **Read.**
 - iii. **Pray again.** Talk to God about how you are responding in faith to what you have just read.
 - b. **A strategy for your response.** As you read, you are seeking to understand the text so you can respond to it, just as you would do with any other kind of writing, whether a text message, recipe, or assembly manual. (The challenging thing about Bible reading is that we are culturally, historically, and chronologically removed from original audiences. Therefore, it is important to use a good study Bible (for example, the *ESV Study Bible* or the *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*). As you read, consider following the sequence of T-C-P: *truth*, *confession*, and *praise*. In other words, look for a *truth*, consider what that truth leads you to *confess*, and how that truth teaches you to *praise*. The helpful thing about T-C-P is that it can be used for any passage of Scripture.

A church can thrive and flourish when its members consistently feed on God's Word, engaging in real communion with God through meditation and heart-felt prayer. These daily, ongoing activities, which require discipline and persistence, will over the long run yield untold benefits. As Jesus himself prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17).

Putting the Pledge to Work

1. What does it mean that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"?

2. In what sense is Jesus the true, living Bread?
3. What practices have you found effective for maintaining a regular habit of Bible reading and prayer?
4. What are some ways members of our church can help each other make Bible reading and prayer a consistent practice?