

Background on **“FEEDING YOURSELF ON GOD’S WORD!”**

The average church member is not usually given the tools for feeding herself or himself from God’s Word. For the first time during the period of history known as the Reformation, the Bible was translated into the common language of the people on the street. Before this period, in the west Scripture had been written only in Latin. Only priests, scholars and the well educated understood this language. Sunday services were also conducted in Latin.

A central step forward at this time was the translation and printing of the Bible in the languages of the average citizen. So Reformation churches turned away from Latin and turned to the common language of the people. However, many church members of that period could not read or write. Therefore, Sunday services were ordered around a trained person reading a portion of Scripture in the language understood by the people. Then this “preacher” would explain in everyday speech what the passage meant.

After the Reformation many of the first educational institutions were designed to train preachers to understand the Bible and read Scripture in the language of the people. The purpose in doing this new work in churches was so people could hear God’s Word in their own language. Educated preachers would thereby explain what Scripture meant to people who could not read or write. “Preachers” were given the tools to cut up, to chew on and to digest God’s Word. They would do this during the week and then present the pre-digested Scriptural food to members on Sundays.

This way of organizing church services continues down 400 years later to American churches. Preachers continue to use the tools they were given in seminary to cut up and digest God’s Word for themselves. Then they present their conclusions in a weekly sermon.

Today, the average church member reads and writes, even if some only read minimally. Research also indicates that people retain only 6% of a spoken message regardless of how entertaining and inspiring it may be. A steady diet of pre-digested food, such as milk, does very little to put muscle on a person’s bones. A person cannot grow very strong physically only on milk. In the same way, a church member cannot grow to maturity in Christ on someone else’s pre-digested, pre-processed scriptural food. Church members need to be given the tools to cut up, to chew on, to ingest and to digest God’s Word for themselves and to be trained in using these tools for themselves. The purpose of these guides is to give you such tools.

The Foundational Practice: **“Meditating on God’s Word!”**

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: To introduce the practice of “*meditating on God’s Word*”, e.g., reflecting on a specific piece or bite of Scripture!

THE METHOD: i.e., meditating, according to Psalm 1, on God’s Word.

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND: The original Hebrew words, translated by the English words “*Law*” and “*mediate*” refer in the Old Testament to real life experiences among the Hebrew people.

a. For instance, the Hebrew root of the English word “*torah*” or “*law*” is “*javelin*” or “*spear*.” A javelin or spear was thrown in battle in order to pierce an enemy’s body. Ancient Hebrews understood that God intended His word to pierce, to stick, and to penetrate into the hearts, souls and minds of His people, so that His Words shaped and governed their lives, their relationships and the entire congregation of Israel.

b. God charged His people in His law to accept personal responsibility to do what God says!

c. The four “Action Pictures” or mental images contained in the Hebrew word translated “*meditate on*” in Psalm 1 are:

1. Chewing on a bite ‘til it nurtures. The word literally in some contexts refers to a lion chewing on its prey.

2. Talking under your breath. In Exodus, the same root word for “*meditate*” describes the people who are “*murmuring against the Lord and His anointed.*” They were talking under their breath or to each other. In Exodus that anointed leader is Moses. “*Meditating on God’s law*” refers to “*talking under your breath to yourself or to others about a bite of Scripture until it speaks personally to you.*”

3. Developing a step-by-step strategy of obedience. In Psalm 2, the same root word for “*meditate*” is translated “*plot*.” Meditating on God’s “*law*” also pictures a person developing a plot or a step-by-step strategy for what God’s word says to do. In other words, it pictures doing in a very practical way what the penetrating word says to do!

4. Rolling a bite of Scripture over and over in your mind. Hebrew meditation also carries with it the concept of rolling something over and over in your head until insights of understanding spark in your mind.

“Method 1: The Psalm 1 Process”

We will be practicing a variety of methods for “meditating on God’s Word.” This guide employs the Psalm 1 Process and the “Verse by Verse Method.”

Learning Objective: To build an accurate knowledge base of what Scripture says about learning to draw personal nourishment from God’s Word through Hebrew Meditation on a “bite of Scripture.”

Psalm 1 gives the Bible’s introductory instructions for how God’s children are to feed themselves from Scripture!

Instructions for personal review of Psalm 1:

1. First, read Psalm 1 [You may want to review the questions below before reading Psalm 1.]
2. Second, answer the following questions by going verse by verse to locate the answer from each verse for each question.
 - a. What does verse 1 say the person does not do whom God blesses?
 - b. Whom does verse 2 establish that God blesses?
 - c. What does it mean to “*delight in*” something?
 - d. What is the Hebrew root meaning of the word translated “*Law*”?
 - e. What do you predict it means to “*delight in the law of the Lord*”?
 - f. What four basic action-pictures did the Hebrew root for “*he meditates*” convey to the original reader of this Psalm?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - g. From these four actions, what would an ancient Hebrew understand to do by the phrase “*he meditates day and night*”?
 - h. What results are predicted for the person who “*meditates on God’s law day and night*”?
 - i. What are the predicted results for those who have no interest in meditating in God’s law, i.e., the wicked?
 - j. In verse 6, what two “*ways*” are contrasted and what does the Lord say about each “*way*”?

“Reflecting upon your personal experience!”

1. Think of and describe a time when a “bite of God’s law” has pierced, penetrated and stuck in your heart, feelings and mind?
 - a. What was the verse or passage?
 - b. What was the experience like? (Describe it.)
 - c. What did it do ‘under your skin’?
 - d. What did you finally do about it? What specific steps did you take?
 - e. What did you gain or learn from the experience?
 - f. What, if anything, do you regret about the experience?

2. Identifying hindrances that stand in your way from doing the four things the OT and Psalm 1 reveal is involved in “*meditating on God’s Word*”?
 - a. What hinders you in **chewing** on a “bite of Scripture” until it nurtures you personally?

 - b. Is there anything that holds you back from **murmuring** or talking to yourself or with others about a verse of Scripture until it speaks to you personally?

 - c. What dynamics get in the way of **plotting** or struggling until you have your own plan for applying what God says in Scripture– for carrying it out to completion?

 - d. What hampers you from **roll a penetrating bite of Scripture over and over in your head** until insights of understanding are sparked in your head?

3. To remove these obstacles, what will you first have to accept responsibility to do?

4. Write out your plot, your strategy for removing these obstacles:

5. Do you ever talk to yourself about a penetrating bite of Scripture? Why or why not?

“Your Personal Discoveries!”

Instructions:

1. Upon completing your practice of “Meditating on God’s Word” and your reflections on “Feeding Yourself,” jot down the personal insights and discoveries you have gained from your own study, reflections, and interactions with others.

2. List any questions or issues at the end of your summary, which you may need to do further study in, and reflection upon at some other time!

“Your Personal Plan”

1. What is the one change you are committed to make due to your meditating on God’s Word?
2. What are the specific steps you are committed to take in order to make this change?
3. On what date/day to you intend to start working on making this change?
4. How long do you anticipate it will take you working at making this change until it is completed?
5. To whom have you shared your personal goal and your steps for making this change, i.e., to whom do you plan to report your progress and the delays and obstacles you encounter?
6. Write out your prayer about making this change: