

Gut Check: Are You Hungry? – Various Scriptures

Ps 19:7-11; This is the last message in our Gut Check series, where we've been doing an internal evaluation of qualities to live by; It's a gut check
We started with – Are You Loving? And then moved to – Are you thankful, grieved, ready, and fervent? Which brings to – Are you hungry?
As in hungry for the Word – the Bible; The written revelation of God, as he inspired and moved various men to record his thoughts; Are you *hungry* for that?
B/c given what King David said, *one* of those men, we should be **(Intro)**

Ps 19:7 – [7] *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; [8] the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; [9] the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. [10] More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. [11] Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

- If I told you that I just discovered a daily supplement, a vitamin, that lifts you emotionally, makes you wise, gives you joy, enlightens your perspective . . .
Tastes great, is highly desirable, and greatly benefits your life – would you want it?
You would; You'd take it in a heartbeat
Even if it cost you a small amount of time and effort

And yet, when it comes to the Bible, we don't; We don't want it; We don't "take it"
In spite of the fact that it revives the soul, makes us wise, gives us joy, satisfies our hunger, and leads to *great reward* as the text says – we set it on the shelf
We let it collect dust; We barely open it; Even on the *weekends* at most churches

Which totally flies in the face of what it teaches; That . . .

Hunger for God's Word is a defining mark of God's people (Ez 2:8-3:3)

That's the first thing I want you to consider in your gut check
That hunger for the truths of this book, is one of the common denominators of every serious-minded God-fearer, since the days of Moses; Just like we saw in v10
More to be desired are they [referring to God's truths] *than gold, even much fine gold*
There's a hunger there

And I say that it's a defining *mark*, b/c it's a theme repeated over and over by *another* Psalmist, in Ps 119; Where he says . . .
[20] *My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.* Consumed
[40] *Behold, I long for your precepts;* He's hungry
[72] *The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.*
[103] *How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*
[131] *I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments.*
There's a hunger there; And since the Psalms are intended to give expression to our heart, it's a defining mark of God's people

- The Psalmists talked about it, and so did the prophets; Like Jeremiah (**Jer 15:16**)
Who said – *Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.*
He was hungry; He found God's Word, and *internalized* its message*****

- And the same is true of Ezekiel; Who I want you to see for yourself; Ezekiel 2:8-3:3
In the middle of God's call on his life to preach, God says in v8 . . .
[8] *"But you, son of man [as opposed to the house of Israel], hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."*
[9] *And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. [10] And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe* [referring to God's message of judgment at that time].
[3:1] *And he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."* [2] *So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. [3] And he said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it."* Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

Feed your belly and fill your stomach; Not literally of course, but metaphorically;
Spiritually; Soak it up God said
And he did; B/c Ezekiel was hungry for it – that's the implication
He yearned for it; He wanted God's message; He wanted God's truth
And so does every other child of God; It's a defining *mark*

- Why do you think great crowds followed Jesus in the NT? And traveled great distances to do so? And sat on the hard ground sometimes; And went without *food* on occasion
B/c they not only wanted to see and experience his *healings*, they wanted to internalize his *words*; They were hungry
And the same was true of those who filled the synagogues when *Paul* came to town;
And stayed up past midnight to hear him preach (Acts 20)

Hunger for God's Word is a defining mark of God's people, and has been since the beginning of time
How about you? Are you hungry? I hope so
But the answer isn't just based on your desire

You know you're hungry if you read God's Word (Neh 8:1-3,8)

Neh 8; Nehemiah was a trusted leader, who petitioned the king of Persia to lead a group of Israelites back to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls
And right after they were completed, it says in v1 . . .

[1] *And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. [2] So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. [3] And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. [8] They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.*

They read it; Even in the days when there was only 1 copy
And they came from far and wide to do so
Why? B/c they were hungry; And when you're hungry, you eat

Unfortunately, most people aren't and don't; At least according to the statistics; Most people are not hungry for the Bible

LifeWay Research did a survey in 2012, and found that only 19% of church goers read their Bible every day; And 40% read it less than 2 or 3 times a *month*

Not good; B/c it not only leads to biblical illiteracy, but makes for unbiblical living

- How about you? What's *your* stat? Are you hungry for the Word? And does it show? Do you want to read *more*, the more you read? Or are you hungry for something else? B/c we're all hungry; It's just a matter of what we're hungry *for*; And it's human nature to be hungry for what we're fed
So the question is, what kind of diet are you on? Is it the Word of God, or the word of man? This book, or other books? What's your stat?

And if you *do* read, do you read for *understanding*, like the Israelites of Nehemiah's day? Or is it a check off – in one eye and out the other
It says in v8 that Ezra and the other leaders read it, and *gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading*
They read to know what it means, not just what it says
IOW they read the Bible for *all* it's worth; Not just for the sake of *information*, but *application*; Or like it says in 2 Tim 3:16 – *for training in righteousness*
They read for understanding

- Would that describe *your* reading? Do read the Bible for all it's worth?
Or do you tend to reduce it like so many, to a *book of rules* – with all the do's and don'ts you could ever want?
Or a *book of promises* – where it's all about what we *get*?
Or a *book of blessing* – like Kitchen Soup for the Soul? Where you read it to feel good, and that's it; Is that your Bible reading?

Or do you treat it like a *book of devotions* – where everything it says is all about me? How it makes *me* feel, how it impacts *me*, and how it addresses *my* life
So instead of allowing the Bible to say what it means, and mean what it says – we force it to mean what we want, and say what we think

Or maybe it's a *book of facts* to you – where all you have to do is master the content
Or a *book of theology* – you know, an academic presentation where it's our lot to tear it apart, put it back together, and ferret out the nuances that nobody else can see
Or worst of all, maybe it's a *book of options* to you – where you can choose the parts you like, and ignore the parts you don't

I hope not; I hope you read it for *all* it's worth; I hope you read it to know *everything* it says; I hope you read it to understand and *apply* it in your life
B/c if you don't, you'll never be hungry for it; Do a gut check

That's the first means of assessing yourself; Here's the 2nd . . .

You know you're hungry if you study God's Word (Ezra 7:8-10)

If you examine it, and scrutinize it, and explore it, and probe it; Ezra 7:8-10

Once again, the people of God were in exile; But here, it's just *before* Nehemiah's day;

When the king of Persia *first* began allowing some of the Israelites to return

And one of them was a scribe named Ezra

A spiritual leader who was skilled in the Law of Moses it says (6)

And Ezra [v8] came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. [9] For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. [10] For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

The reason Ezra made it to Jerusalem, is b/c *the good hand of his God was on him* – he was blessed by God's favor (9b); That's the idea of the word "for"

V9b – *on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for [or b/c] the good hand of his God was on him.* God's favor

And the reason God's hand of favor was on him, was Ezra's heart to study the Word, v10 – *For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD; He was hungry*

Which ultimately led to: (A) another wave of Israelites being released from captivity . . .
(B) The re-establishment of worship in the temple; (C) Corporate confession of sin
And (D) The restoration of their nation; All b/c of Ezra's heart to study the Law

- Don't miss the impact and implications of *studying* God's Word
Who *knows* what God's going to do in your life b/c of it?
Who knows what opportunities it will lead to?
Who knows who you'll be able to influence or teach? Don't miss out on that

And who knows what you'll find

This book has more depths to plumb than the deepest oceans we've never seen
It has more to offer than all the libraries, in all the world, filled with all the books, we could ever write

And on top of that – it's living, it's active, it's powerful, and it's written by God himself; God; Which not only makes it worth reading, but worth *studying*

How else could you ever hope to know his mind? Or his perfect law? Or his sure testimonies? Or right precepts? Or pure commandments?
How else could you ever hope to understand the height and breadth of his great love?
How else could you hope to see the world his way, and know his heart?

- Back in 2007, The Willow Creek Association released the results of a multi-year study they did on their flagship church; Assessing their effectiveness in ministry
And one of the conclusions they came to, was summed up (**quote**) by their pastor:
"We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and became Christians – we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self-feeders.' We should have taught people how to read their Bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own."
(Bill Hybels)

That's humble; And even more important, it's true*****

One of the best things I can do in *preaching* the Word, is pique your interest to *read* it
And *urge* you to study it; And encourage you to search it, and know it for yourself
Not only b/c that's how you grow in Christlikeness, but b/c there's no book like it
That in and of itself warrants study

➤ Check out this little **video** to that effect, by John Piper (*Look at the Book*, 0–1:16)

It's true; From plot lines and story lines, to prophecy and fulfillment – the Bible is a treasure; A treasure from *God* no less
And one that keeps on giving – the more you hunt, the more you find; The more you study, the more there is
The question is – Are you hungry for it?

And then last, a 3rd means of doing a gut check in this respect . . .

You know you're hungry if you delight in God's Word (Ps 119)

Ps 119; Delighting in God's Word, is the surest indicator you're hungry for God's Word
B/c you'll never hunger for something you don't like
That would be like me yearning for Brussel Sprouts; Or diet pop
It just doesn't happen; In fact, it makes me break out in goose bumps

But talk about Hershey's with Almonds, or Milk Chocolate Dove Bars, or Peanut Butter
Crispy's & my eyes light up; B/c I *delight* in those things; Maybe a bit too much
We hunger most for the things that delight us; And God's Word, as God's people,
should be near the top; Just like the Psalmist indicates here, throughout the chapter

[14] In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.

[24] Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.

[35] Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

[47] I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.

[92] If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

[111] Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.

[143] Trouble and anguish have found me out, but your commandments are my delight.

*[162] I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. [163] I hate and abhor
falsehood, but I love your law.*

[167] My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly.

[174] I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight.

That's the confession of the Psalmist, as our example – he *delights* in God's Word

How about you? Does that describe *your* feelings about the Bible?

If so, keep on; Keep reading, and studying, and applying it in your life more and more

Eat as many Dove Bars as you want, and be hungry for what you're fed

➤ But if the Bible is more like Brussel Sprouts to you – let me give you **5 Practices** to
awaken your hunger

1. Hear it preached

At the very least, come to church, and hear God's Word preached, every weekend

Stirring and preparing the soil of your heart to receive it on your *own*, throughout the
week

2. Start a reading plan

We have several different kinds listed on our website, and you can find a whole bunch
more on **BibleGateway.com**; Go to "Reading Plans," find one, and follow it
B/c chances are, you'll wander without one, and spoil your appetite in the process

3. Join a Discipleship Group

We have all kinds around here; From Small Groups, to Frameworks (our discipleship
curriculum), to various Bible studies in men's and women's ministries . . .

To Alive and Free (our recovery ministry)

All Discipleship Groups – where you can read, study, and talk about the Bible with
others; Spurring one another on, all the more

4. Record your thoughts

Like in a journal; Or on a notecard; Find a place to write your observations down; B/c few
things will reinforce your desire for more

5. Memorize key verses

Hide the Word in your heart, and you'll feed your soul non-stop

5 practices to awaken your hunger and fuel your delight (**Summary**)

Do a gut check, and get started; B/c it may not be a pill, but it sure is a treasure

Prayer – Lord, your words are spirit and life; We believe it, and our soul knows it very
well; So would you increase our hunger accordingly? Would you stir our hearts and
minds for more? Would you so reveal yourself through your Word, that we can't stay
away? Would you mark us as a hungry church? I pray that you will
Receive our tithes now; And help us use them to ignite a passion in your people, for your
truth