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Series: The Living Word**Title: Eat This Book****Text: Ezekiel 2:8 - 3:3; Jeremiah 15:16**

There is a difference between knowing about food and actually eating food. You can read a menu, study recipes, watch cooking shows, learn about nutrition, and even become an expert on different kinds of cuisine, but none of those things will nourish you. At some point, food has to move from the plate to your mouth, from your mouth into your body, and from your body into your life.

The Bible is not simply a book God gave us to inform our minds. It is God's living Word given to form our lives. It is not merely information to master; it is truth to receive, a voice to hear, and a Word to obey. Today we examine how the Word of God is food to consume.

Ezekiel 2:9-3:3

- Ezekiel, a priest in exile in Babylon, receives a strange command from the Lord: "Eat this scroll!" Not "read this book." Not "study this book." Not "memorize this book" or "argue about this book" or "post this book online." Eat it. Chew it. Swallow it. Let it become part of your actual body, the way a meal becomes part of your bloodstream.
- The Lord gave Ezekiel difficult words to say to those exiled in Babylon. The scroll was filled with funeral songs, words of sorrow, and pronouncements of doom.
- In Ezekiel 3:10, the Lord said, "...let all my words sink deep into your heart. Listen to them carefully for yourself."

Jeremiah 15:16: *"When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God of Heaven's Armies."*

Eating is the one metaphor that captures something reading alone never can: assimilation. When you eat a piece of bread, it doesn't stay bread-shaped inside you. Your body breaks it down, absorbs it, and it becomes muscle, blood cells, bone, energy. It becomes *you*.

That is exactly what God intends his word to do in us: to get absorbed into how we think, how we love, how we handle money, how we forgive, how we raise our kids, how we grieve, how we hope. Information you've merely read stays external. You can recite it, but it hasn't changed your tissue. Truth you've eaten becomes structural. It holds weight. It's load-bearing.

Deuteronomy 8:3: *"...people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."*

So how do we actually eat the Scriptures? What does that look like on a Monday morning when we sit down with our Bible? Below are two simple methods that can help you move from simply reading the Bible to receiving, digesting, and living the Word of God. These are not formulas, and they are not the only ways to read Scripture. Think of them as tools that help us slow down and engage God's Word.

SOAP: Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer. SOAP is an acronym to easily remember four movements as you read the Bible: Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer.

S — Scripture. Begin by reading a short passage of Scripture. Don't worry about reading a large amount. Choose a paragraph, a few verses, or a section of a chapter. Read it slowly. Read it more than once. Then write down a verse or phrase that particularly catches your attention. The goal is to begin by actually receiving God's Word rather than rushing through it.

O — Observation. Next, ask, "**What do I see?**" What is happening in the passage? What does it say about God? What does it say about people? Is there a command to obey, a promise to trust, a warning to heed, or a truth to believe? You are simply paying attention to what is actually there. Before asking what the text means for your life, take time to notice what the text is saying.

A — Application. Then ask the question, "**What does this mean for me?**" This is where the Word moves from the page into your life. Is there something I need to believe? Something I need to change? Something I need to confess? Someone I need to forgive? Something God is asking me to do? Application turns Bible reading into obedience. We don't simply want to say, "That's interesting." We want to say, "**Because this is true, what should I do?**"

P — Prayer. Finally, talk to God about what you have just read. Turn the Scripture into prayer. If the passage reveals something about God, praise Him for it. If it exposes sin, confess it. If it gives you a promise, thank Him for it. If it gives you a command, ask Him for the strength to obey it. You're taking what God has spoken and responding to him.

Sacred Reading: *Lectio Divina*. Don't let the Latin name intimidate you. The basic idea is very simple: read the Scripture slowly and prayerfully, allowing God's Word to speak deeply into your life. *Lectio Divina* traditionally has four movements: *lectio* (read), *meditatio* (meditate), *oratio* (pray), and *contemplatio* (contemplate).

Read — Choose a short passage; a few verses is plenty, and read it slowly. Not fast, not skimming for information, the way you might read a news article. Slowly, maybe even out loud under your breath, the way you'd read a letter from somebody you love, savoring the words instead of racing to the bottom of the page. Read the passage more than once.

Reflect — Now you slow down and sit with what you have read. As you read, one word or phrase will usually catch on something inside you. It'll feel like it's got your name on it. You stop there. You don't rush past it. You turn it over, the way you'd turn a piece of hard candy over in your mouth rather than crunching down and swallowing it whole. You ask, quietly: God, why did that particular phrase stop me? What are you saying to me in it?

Respond — Whatever came up in that reflection, you turn it into a conversation with God. Not a formal, polished prayer, but an honest one. If the phrase stirred comfort, thank Him. If it stirred conviction, confess it. If it stirred fear, tell Him you're afraid. This is the moment the reading stops being an academic exercise and becomes a relationship.

Rest — After you've spoken, you stop talking. You sit in silence for a minute or two and simply let yourself be with God, without needing to produce any more words or insights. This is the part almost everybody skips, because silence feels unproductive to us. But this is where the food finally gets digested. This is the stomach doing its quiet work after the meal.