

Digesting the Word of God (Go To Meeting)

Lindsay Stephens—November 11, 2023

Greetings everyone and happy Sabbath to you all wherever you are! It is a great opportunity that we have to be able to learn more of God's Word and to be able to learn it and digest it.

It's only a few weeks ago that the Feast has finished and at the Feast we were blessed with an abundance of good things. We had lots of fellowship and food both physical and spiritual. We had time away from the world and all of its problems. I'm going to emphasize the subject of food in this message.

Physical food can be good for you, or on the other hand it could be junk food with little or no nutritional value. We've all heard the saying 'we are what we eat.'

But in this message I want to go beyond that and say that we are what we digest into our system. If the food we eat is not digested whereby the nutrients can be extracted and put into the bloodstream, then of what value is it? In this message I intend to apply this principle to the Word of God and how this applies in our Christian growth.

We know that the human body is a wonderful creation by God.

Psalm 139:14—*David writes*: "I will praise You, for I am awesomely and wonderfully made; Your works are marvelous and my soul knows it very well."

At this point I want to briefly cover the physical digestive system. It's one of the six systems in the human body. The digestive system is a remarkable system in itself, and just bear with me as I'll go through this.

The body has an irregular shaped tube beginning in the mouth and ending in the anus. We take in food through the mouth breaking it down by the teeth through mastication so that it will eventually be usable in the bloodstream.

The salivary glands in the mouth moistened food and contains digestive enzymes that breaks down carbohydrates. The tongue is not only used for speaking. In the digestive system it is used to push food to the back of the throat so it can be swallowed into the esophagus, which carries the food down into the stomach.

The food enters the stomach through the cardiac sphincter at the end of the esophagus. The food is broken down further by contractions in the stomach's muscular wall and the gastric juices,

hydrochloric acid and enzymes. After being in the stomach generally for one-four hours depending on the type and combination of food that was eaten. It passes through the pyloric sphincter into the small intestine.

The small intestine is about 20 feet long where the food passes through three sections the duodenum, the jejunum and the ileum. The mucus lining of the small intestine contains thousands of microscopic glands called intestinal glands that secrete intestinal digestive juices.

The circular folds of the intestine called pleats are covered with thousands of tiny figures like membranes called villous. Through the villous the nutrients are absorbed from the time through the walls of the intestine into the bloodstream. It is here in the small intestine that the liver comes into play.

Now, this remarkable organ weighs about three pounds, it's beneath the ribcage and is often referred to as the largest gland in the body. Each day the liver produces about a pint of bile, which is the substance necessary for the breakdown of fats. The bile is stored in the gallbladder, which releases it when fat is brought into the body.

It is stimulated by a hormone causing it to contract and secrete its content into the duodenum, the first section of the small intestine. When leaving the small intestine the chyme passes through another sphincter into the large intestine or colon. It's another name for it. The large intestine is about five feet long and forms the last part of the digestive tract. It's contents are referred to as fecal matter. In the large intestine materials that escape digestion in the small intestine are acted upon by bacteria and additional nutrients may be released from the fiber and a sword.

The pancreas produces pancreatic juice, one of the most important digestive juices. It is necessary to the breakdown of foods from large material into nutrients that can be absorbed by the body. It contains trypsin, amylase, protease, lipase and other enzymes that help break down the food so that it can be finely absorbed into the body.

Now I'm not a doctor or a nurse but looking at a diagram of the anatomy of the digestive tract, *God's hand can be seen in all of this with all the complex parts!*

When you look at one of these, it's hard to understand how so many people in high professional positions believe that such a masterpiece is all the

result of the slime or lovesick amoeba of evolution except for the fact that Satan has deceived them. But now I want to focus on the spiritual aspect of digestion.

Having explained something about the physical aspect of the digestive system and how intricate it is, how much more importance should be placed on digesting spiritual food from the Word of God. How often in the past in previous congregations or fellowships have we heard such comments as:

‘I heard a great sermon today it’s good. That it’s great.’ What was it about? ‘Oh, I can’t remember. But it was a great sermon’

Now to what extent do you think this sermon was digested into this person’s mind? I would like to go to an example in John 6 on the subject of food. I will be covering much of this chapter. We begin in:

John 6:2: “And a great multitude followed Him, because they had seen the miracles that He worked upon those who were sick.”

Jesus had a reputation that He could make an impact on people that didn’t have any influence from the mainstream society.

Verse 5: “And when Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and saw a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘How shall we buy enough loaves to feed *all* these?’” *So, they’d been there all day to feed all these!*

Verse 6: “But He said this to test him, because He knew what He was about to do. Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred silver coins would not be sufficient to buy enough loaves for each of them to receive a little’” (vs 6-7). *This amounted to about six months wages!*

Verse 8: “*Then* one of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to Him, ‘Here is a little boy who has five barley loaves and two small fish.’”

What are these for so many people? So, Andrew saw what was available in that situation, saw the physical circumstances, and he asked to see what could be done.

Verse 10: “Then Jesus said, ‘Have the men sit down.’ Now there was much grass in the place; therefore, the men sat down, about five thousand in number.” *So, there’s a lot of people!*

Verse 11: “And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed *them* to the disciples, and the disciples to those who were sitting; and in like manner the small fish, as much as

they desired. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, ‘Gather together the fragments that are left over, so that nothing may be lost’” (vs 11-12).

So, the miracle, this miracle was well organized and nothing was wasted. God is not the author of confusion as it says (1-Cor. 14:33).

Verse 13: “Then they gathered *them* together, filling twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten.”

What do you think the reaction was to this miracle? *Well we find out in:*

Verse 14: “Now, when the men saw the miracle that Jesus had done, they said, ‘Of a truth, this is the Prophet Who was to come into the world.’” *This is referring to **That Prophet*** (Deut. 18:15).

Jesus saw the reaction and was able to withdraw from them, and He realized that this was not the time to head a movement to solve physical needs. Anyway, the multitude found Him on the other side of the sea the next day. And we pick it up in:

Verse 26: “Jesus answered them and said, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, you do not seek Me because you saw *the* miracles, but because you ate the bread and were satisfied. Do not labor *for* the food that perishes, but *for* the food that endures unto eternal life, **which the Son of man shall give to you; for Him has God the Father sealed**’” (vs 26-27).

They wanted the physical benefits. That’s all the carnal mind can do. That’s how we think—*carnally!* Those who have the mind of Christ will not be the people who are satisfied with the temple, the fish, and the loaves.

But spiritually filled people, people who are eating of the Word of God and are totally satisfied! Through eating of the Word of God, a change is taking place in their lives, and we are to change; *thereby His people are filled!*

Verse 27: “Do not labor *for* the food that perishes, but *for* the food that endures unto eternal life, **which the Son of man shall give to you; for Him has God the Father sealed.**”

Verse 28: “Therefore, they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, in order that we ourselves may do the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘**This is the work of God: that you believe in Him Whom He has sent**’” (vs 28-29)—*believe everything that He stands for, representing God the Father!*

Verse 30. “Therefore, they said to Him, ‘What sign will You perform, that we may see *it* and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written: “He gave them bread to eat *that came down* from heaven”” (vs 30-31). *They were still looking for physical food as their solution in life!*

Verse 32: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven... [God actually supplied it anyway] ...but My Father gives you the true Bread from heaven. For the Bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (vs 32-33).

Verse 34: “Therefore, they said to Him, ‘Lord, give this bread to us always.’.... [referring to the Passover; Jesus said]: ...But *as* I said to you, you also have seen Me, yet, you do not believe. All whom the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I did not come down from heaven to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me. And this is the will of the Father Who sent Me: that *of all* whom He has given Me, I should not lose any, but should raise them up in the last day. And this is the will of Him Who sent Me: **that everyone who sees the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day**” (vs 34-40).

And the last day here is referring to the first resurrection at Pentecost, because Jesus made the condition of believing in Him and doing all that He says in this life.

Verse 44: “No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore, everyone who has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes to Me” (vs 44-45).

I understand that there are about at least 356 prophecies about Jesus Christ referenced in the Old Testament and we know that everything in the Word of God comes from God.

Verse 46: “No one has seen the Father except He Who is from God; He has seen the Father. Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me has eternal life. **I AM the Bread of Life**” (vs 46-48).

Now *believe* is more than a casual word, which is the way the world looks at it. They might say in the world, ‘I believe in God,’ but it has no effect on their lifestyle or what they do, their way of life. **Believe** means:

- to hear
- to answer

- to respond
- to repent
- to be baptized
- to have hands laid on
- to receive the Holy Spirit
- to change
- to walk in the Truth

This is part of digesting the Word of God!

Verse 49: “Your fathers ate manna in the desert, but they died. This is the Bread, which comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die. I AM the living Bread, which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this Bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is even My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” Your fathers ate manna in the desert, but they died” (vs 49-51).

That was far beyond the physical understanding of His audience and He was taking them from a temporal thing to a spiritual one.

Verse 53: “Therefore, Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day; for My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink” (vs 53-55).

Jesus was talking about *spiritual nourishment* here. **IF** we don’t eat *spiritual* food, **we will eventually starve to death!** **IF** we don’t continue to the take in of *spiritual* nourishment, **we will eventually die spiritually!**

Verse 56: “The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood is dwelling in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father; so also the one who eats Me shall live by Me” (vs 56-57)—*or because of Me!*

Verse 60: “Therefore, after hearing *these words*, many of His disciples said, ‘This is a hard saying. Who is able to hear *it*?’ But Jesus, knowing that His disciples were complaining about this, said to them, ‘Does this offend you?’” (vs 60-61).

Why is that? Because it eats to the heart and looks at the sin within. Too much for the average person. We need to apply what we have learned about physical digestion and assimilating to partaking of Christ.

Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes part of our being.

- we are what we eat
- we are what we digest
- we are what we assimilate

In the same way, Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as our personal Savior. Theoretical knowledge by itself won't do us any good.

We must feed upon Him, taking His Word from the heart so that His life becomes our life, our very being where we internalize God's thought and mind.

Verse 61: "But Jesus, knowing that His disciples were complaining about this, said to them, 'Does this offend you? What if you shall see the Son of man ascending up where He was before? It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, *they* are Spirit and *they* are Life" (vs 61-63).

All of the physical trials and circumstances we go through are for nothing *unless it is with God's Spirit!* That's why prayer and study are so important, *which is part of digesting the Word of God!*

Verse 66: "From that *time*, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him."

Peter understood the meaning of this message leading to eternal life. As the nutrients in physical food give us life, *so does the Word of God give us spiritual life!* It gives us strength and helps us to grow.

Jeremiah 15:16: "Your words were found, and I ate them; and Your Word was to me the joy and gladness of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts." *God's Word is Life and health to us!*

Proverbs 4:22: "**For they are life** to those who find them, and health to all their flesh."

We must feed on it to establish or to develop in our spiritual understanding from when we were first called. It's all about spiritual growth. We can't just stay still, stay stagnant from the time that we receive God's Word and are baptized.

Hebrews 5:12: "For truly, by this time you ought to be teachers, *but instead* you need to have *someone* teach you again what *are* the beginning principles of the oracles of God, and have become those in need of milk, and not of solid food.... [we ought to be growing]For everyone who is partaking of milk *is* unskilled in *the* Word of Righteousness because he is an infant. But solid food is for those who are fully grown, who through repeated practice have had their senses trained to discern between good and evil" (vs 12-14).

That's wisdom! We know that Christian development takes time. Years of our lives from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity, *ultimately to perfection at the first resurrection!* It requires an

appetite for growth and the willingness to digest the spiritual food we receive from God's Word.

What is the vital ingredient for digesting the Word of God? *The Bible speaks often about meditation!* What the world sees as meditation is totally emptying our mind with all thought. Totally emptying it!

But meditation is filling our mind with God's Truth and receiving the benefit by taking the time and the effort to apply it to ourselves! From there we can be an example to others, either directly in the Body of Christ or indirectly with people sowing seeds for a future time like the second resurrection.

Meditation or *meditate* is mentioned 23 times in Scripture, 19 times alone in the book of Psalms; but I'd like to go first to the book of Joshua. This is when God spoke to Joshua shortly after the death of Moses.

Joshua 1:7: "Only be strong and very courageous so that you may observe to do according to all the Law, which My servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth, **but you shall meditate therein day and night**, so that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it, **for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success**" (vs 7-8).

That's a promise by God to Joshua! This book of the Law—in fact the whole of God's Word—should be in our mind and in our heart as a full-time occupation. *Verse 8 could be a mission statement for our lives!*

Let's turn to a Psalm that has *meditate* or *meditation* mentioned seven times in this Psalm alone.

Psalm 119:15: "I will **meditate** upon Your precepts and have respect to Your ways." *When we do that, were thinking about God's great attributes:*

- His plan
- His purpose
- His goodness
- His love for us

Verse 23: "Even though princes sat and spoke against me, Your servant did **meditate** on Your statutes."

We are to digest the Word of God against all trials and persecution!

Verse 27: “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts, and so shall I speak of Your wonderful works.”

The *New King James Version* has it: “So shall I meditate on your wonderful works.”

Verse 48: “And I will lift up my hands unto Your commandments, which I have loved, and I will meditate on Your statutes.”

To be able to effectively digest the Word of God, ***we have to love His commandments!***

Verse 52: “I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself.”

Well another translation, the *Bible Hub* translation has it: “I meditate on your age-old regulations, O Lord, they comfort me.”

It’s a promise that when we meditate on God’s Word, it gives us comfort and is good for our spiritual health.

Verse 78: “Let the proud be ashamed, for with guile they have wronged me; but I will meditate on Your precepts.”

And no matter what the circumstances or whatever happens, ***meditating on God’s Word will encourage us, that is the promise!***

Verse 97: “O how love I Your Law! It is my meditation all the day.” ***Where would that lead us?***

Verse 98: “Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients because I keep Your precepts” (vs 98-100).

Verse 148: “My eyes go before the night watches, so that I might meditate on Your Word.”

We can go outside on a clear night and look at all the stars, as well as the moon and some of the planets that are visible to the naked eye. We can reflect on Gods Plan for us as spirit beings, which goes far beyond planet earth, into the new heavens and the new earth.

It’s amazing and I think many of us have seen pictures from the James Webb telescope; what’s out there is far beyond that.

Another word that helps in digesting the Word of God is ‘Selah,’ which is mentioned 71 times in the Psalms. Why is it mentioned so often? It means to:

- pause and reflect
- stop and think

- meditate
- let it all sink into our thoughts

We know that not only does food need to be digested and assimilated for our health, it has to be the right food. If we live off a diet of crustacean, pigs, calamari, snake—or whatever else is ***not designed*** for human consumption—it would not be beneficial to our physical health. We would die sooner or later!

The same would apply *spiritually*. If we don’t apply the Word of God in our lives, our spiritual digestion would suffer.

Matthew 7:15: “But **beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, for within they are ravening wolves.**”

They might have an agenda of a better way, ***but they are violating the Word of God!***

Verse 16: “You shall know them by their fruits. They do not gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, nor can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree **that is not producing good fruit is cut down and is cast into the fire**” (vs 16-19).

So, there is an end result to evil! That’s why we should meditate on God’s Word and His Plan of salvation, not only for us, but for all mankind.

Verse 20: “Therefore, you shall assuredly know them by their fruits.”

The Apostle Peter also warns us about people who do not feed us correctly with the Word of God and have their own agenda.

2-Peter 2:1: “But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, who will stealthily introduce destructive heresies, personally denying the Lord who bought them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves.” *So, they were denying the sacrifice of Christ!*

Verse 2: “And many people will follow *as authoritative* their destructive ways; *and* because of them, the way of the Truth will be blasphemed.”

How could the Truth be blasphemed? *A false prophet could say things like, ‘It doesn’t really mean this, it’s only an allegory.’ or ‘That was for those days back then, things are different now, we live in modern times.’*

Verse 3: “Also, through insatiable greed they will with enticing messages exploit you for

gain; for whom the judgment of old is in *full* force, and their destruction is *ever* watching.”

Well, their motive would be, ‘What’s in it for us?’ Who is responsible for corrupt spiritual food with the intention to spiritually kill us?

2-Corinthians 11:3: “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ.”

Satan always has means to let us know that he has a better way than God.

Verse 4: “For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel, which you did not accept, you put up with it as *something* good.”

Some of the things that have happened, like changing the nature of God, false ministers who bring a different spirit.

Verse 13: “For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers who are transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And *it is* no marvel, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, *it is* no great thing if his servants also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness—whose end shall be according to their works” (vs 13-15). *So there is an end result!*

They want to go about promoting corrupt spiritual food. So, the summary of this section here is this:

Satan wants to destroy us all by whatever means is available to him, ***by deceit from false prophets with corrupt spiritual food, which is not good for spiritual digestion and/or assimilation! IF*** he succeeds in causing people to leave the Body of Christ, ***they will become spiritually dead!***

To be able to digest the Word of God, ***we must focus on the mind of Christ!*** There are three areas of meditation I could give you here:

1. the understanding of God’s plan
2. the will or desire to incrementally learn more of God’s Word
 - set our heart on it
 - desire it
3. practical living

When Jesus said, ‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,’ (John 14:6), ***it is a lifestyle based on the love of God and the mind of Christ!***

We have indeed been blessed in the Church of the Firstborn. Many of us have had years of

partaking of spiritual food from the Word of God. It is God’s will that we digest and assimilate this food:

- for the benefit of our spiritual health
- for our growth and development to becoming perfect spirit beings

We have a great opportunity to provide spiritual food in the Millennium and beyond.

Isaiah 58:8: “Then shall your light break out as the dawn, and your health shall spring out quickly; and your righteousness shall go before you; **the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.**”

Very encouraging! ***The Word of God is our spiritual food to be offered to anyone who desires it!***

Hebrews 12:22: “But you have come to Mount Zion, and to *the* city of *the* living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels.”

This is well and truly into the spiritual realm here. Nothing physical about this.

Verse 23: “*To the* joyous festival gathering; and to *the Church* of the Firstborn, registered in *the Book of Life* in heaven; and to God, *the* Judge of all, and to *the* spirits of the just who have been perfected.”

The perfect spirit beings here, having over time digested and assimilated the Word of God and applying it during our physical life.

Verse 24: “And to Jesus, *the* Mediator of *the* New Covenant; and to sprinkling of *the* blood of *ratification*, proclaiming superior things than *that of* Abel.”

These are spiritual things! Spiritual food is forever! Physical food is only temporary. In the Church, in the Body of Christ, ***we have to hunger and thirst after righteousness*** (Matt. 5 6)!

For the promise is that ***we shall be filled!*** ***This is a spiritual food from the Word of God that we must pursue with all that we have, with all that God has given us!***

This is our calling. This is our future! We will be digesting all that we have learned from God’s Truth. ***And of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end!*** (Isa. 9:7).

Scriptural References:

- 1) Psalm 139:14
- 2) John 6:2, 5-8,10-14, 26-34, 36-40, 44-48, 49-51, 53-57, 60-63, 66
- 3) Jeremiah 15:16

- 4) Proverbs 4:22
- 5) Hebrews 5:12-14
- 6) Joshua 1:7-8
- 7) Psalm 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 52, 78, 97-100, 148
- 8) Matthew 7:15-20
- 9) 2 Peter 2:1-3
- 10) 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15
- 11) Isaiah 58:8
- 12) Hebrews 12:22-24

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1 Corinthians 14:33
- Deuteronomy 18:15
- John 14:6
- Matthew 5:6
- Isaiah 9:7

LS:bo/po
Transcribed: 11/26/23

Copyright 2023—All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means without the written permission of the copyright owner. This includes electronic and mechanical photocopying or recording, as well as the use of information storage and retrieval systems.