



Ten Habits That Make Your Life Better

Habit Eight

My first few years in seminary before I got married I was extremely poor. I was able to pay for my classes due to the generous giving of Southern Baptists, seminary tuition and housing costs were very low. However, there was no cafeteria service, and this was before microwaves. In addition, the dorms were not equipped with refrigerators so each of us single students had to figure out other ways to eat. I discovered Dinty Moore Stew. It came in cans that were about the right size to provide dinner for me. My ingenious cooking solution was to run hot water from the sink in the room over the can for nearly an hour and heat up the stew in the can to some degree and then voila, my little feast. Needless to say, I was very skinny during those years. Later, I worked in the seminary preschool and the director let me have a key and gave me access to the little kitchen, so I branched out to hot dogs, macaroni and cheese from the box and tuna fish sandwiches. I looked forward to those tuna fish sandwiches and hot dogs each and every day.

For some people, and you could be one of them, meals are their favorite times of day. You may be a breakfast lover and when you wake up, one of the top agenda items for you is getting a hearty breakfast. Perhaps it's dinner that you look forward to and you love the variety of dinner menus. Nutritionists say that a 200 pound man who sits around most of the day needs 2,530 calories to maintain his weight. Less and he will start to lose weight, more and he will begin to gain it. A 140 pound woman on the other hand requires 2,150 calories each day to maintain her weight. It has been said that "you are what you eat". It clearly matters what you ingest as not all foods are created equal. It is perhaps funny to you to say that habit eight of the ten habits that make your life better is "eat" but that is the case.

Of course your life is not very good if you don't eat and eating improves it radically, but I am not making a silly point here. The question is not whether you will eat but what you shall eat. Jesus made what was seen as a bizarre statement at the time. **I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.**" (John 6: 51 NIV) The Jews who were there responded as you might have if you were there. "What sort of meal is this? How is Jesus going to give His body parts to us to eat and why would anyone do that?" Jesus though doubled down. **Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.**" (John 6: 53 NIV) We all understand the importance of nutrition and the care we must take in what we eat but this is clearly at a different level of eating and life. Jesus is talking about supernatural life; about life you cannot attain by just reading books about becoming the best you. Pay careful attention to the statement Jesus made in this same mini sermon. **I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.** (John 6: 47-50 NIV) Doesn't this sound a lot like the most famous verse in the Bible? **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** (John 3: 16 NIV)

There are two points Jesus is making about eating and specifically eating His flesh. He clearly is using symbolic language to make them. 1. If you want eternal life, you get it only from Him. I know there is a billionaire trying to figure out a way to live forever but that is a waste of time and resources. If you want eternal life, it comes only through Jesus, and you must believe He is the one who provides it if you are to gain it. You cannot earn eternal life; you are unable to generate it yourself. Only by faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior can you have eternal life. The first point is clear and easy to grasp. It is a matter of faith whether or not you believe Jesus here about eternal life.

The second point is much more subtle and less discussed. 2. The sort of life you have is determined by whether or not you eat much of “the flesh” of Jesus. If you rely on something else, whether it is friendships, family relationships, professional or educational achievements, forms of entertainment or social media, you are going to be malnourished and much less than what you could be. The Psalmist, who had experience with God’s diet encourages you to try it. **Taste and see that the Lord is good;** (Psalm 34: 8a NIV) As Moses was giving his farewell address, knowing the Lord was going to soon take his life, he reminded the Hebrews of their history. Purposefully, the Lord had the people go through the desert where there was not enough food for them. As they began to fear starvation, the LORD sent them manna, the bread-like substance that came directly from Him. There was a point to God doing this. **He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.** (Deuteronomy 8 :3 NIV)

Jesus, as He was completing His forty days of fasting, quoted this statement of Moses when Satan tempted Him to turn stones on the ground into bread. **Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"** (Matthew 4: 4 NIV) Of course you have to eat food but if you just rely on what fills your belly, you will be nothing compared to what you could be if you take large, healthy servings of the word of God. That word of God comes to you two ways. It comes most directly and is most easily absorbed through the Bible. There you have the precise and clear word of God. The more you read the Bible, hear it, memorize it and think about it, the better you will be at home, at work, among friends and when you are by yourself. There is a supernatural transformation that occurs when you take in the Bible and that work grows in strength and value the more you apply it to everyday situations. You can accomplish what would never be possible otherwise if you are consuming the word of God. You will grow in maturity, emotional strength, and wisdom the more you absorb the Bible.

There is another way God nourishes you with His word and that is by speaking to you directly. It may come through a remembered Scripture but there are times, and for some it is frequent, that the Lord tells you something as you are considering a problem, while you are working on a project, as you are talking to someone or when you are lying in bed before you fall asleep. God speaks to His people just as He did during the old days when the Bible was coming together. The Lord can talk to you as easily as He did to Moses at the burning bush, to Abraham as his wife agonized over being childless, as he spoke to Job in his sufferings, to Joshua while preparing to lead Israel across the Jordan, in the same way He led Peter to begin sharing the Gospel with non-Jewish people and told Paul not to go in a particular region of the Roman world. So many great and wonderful deeds become possible when you eat the word of God!

We all marvel at David and His tremendous courage in taking on Goliath. Listen carefully to David when he justified to King Saul his determination to fight Goliath when not another single Hebrew was willing to defend the nation and battle the giant. **The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.**" (1 Samuel 17: 37 NIV) Did you notice? David declared he had been able to rescue his sheep from mighty lions and bears because the Lord delivered him. Others have had success in battle, in science, in medicine, in family problems but they do not know what David knew. He paid attention to God in everything he did and realized it was the LORD who enabled him to accomplish all the great things he had done up to that point in his life. Then, when a great challenge faced him, one bigger than any he had known before and something no one else dared undertake, David was ready, he was strong, he was full of insight because he had been taking in the word of God more than anyone else of his generation. There is a great verse that has a bit of a hidden meaning. As the LORD chastised His people for how little attention they paid to Him and how detrimental it was for them, He told them and us that when you are listening diligently for God to guide you, you will find in unexpected places the fuel you need just when you need it! **I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.** (Psalm 81:16 RSV)