## Russell Kelfer More Than My Necessary Food

#1318-B Series: What the Word Says About the Word



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## More Than My Necessary Food

You have probably seen this guy on television. He has a smile on his face that stretches across the entire universe. This guy isn't just happy; he is ecstatic. Of course, he is being paid to be ecstatic. He has just discovered the wonders of the variety and quality of the menu of a certain fast-food hamburger chain, and it's more than he can handle. He looks at the hamburger, he looks at the price, he looks at the camera, and he says, "I love this place!" Have you heard that one?

Now food is obviously important to this young man. It is to many of us. In fact, it is so important, that the thought of a burger, fries and a medium drink for \$2.99, is more than he can handle. He is in Ground Round Heaven. But it's not just about value, it is a revelation of what controls his thoughts. Wouldn't it be neat if we could hear people leaving here saying, "I love this place!" Or, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could hear people holding up the Bible and saying, "I love this Book!" Wouldn't it be neat?

The problem is, if the young man in that commercial was followed, and you were to find him sitting under the golden arches somewhere, eating a competitor's product, his testimony probably wouldn't carry much weight. His credibility of the company he represented would be in doubt.

I'm not sure how many of us can shout, "I love this Book," and get by with it. Because if anyone was to follow us on a day-to-day basis, and measure the time and the intensity of our commitment to it, and then compare that with the time we spend reading the newspaper, watching television, playing golf—you're getting sensitive, I can tell—even the time we spend eating, our credibility would be considerably lacking.

We who claim to so love this Book, no matter what we say, spend less time in an average day searching out its treasures than we do stuffing ourselves with delicacies from Hamburger Heaven, or someplace else. Not to mention, if we count the time we spend buying groceries, preparing meals, eating, and cleaning up afterwards, we probably spend five times as much feeding our bodies as we do feeding our souls. It's tremendously quiet in here.

The truth of the matter is, no matter what we say, physical food

and physical benefits are more important to most of us than their spiritual counterparts. And no matter what we say, if we have to choose, how many of us would miss time in the Word before we would miss a meal, or in some cases, a snack? And we wonder why our bodies keep growing but our old nature seems to struggle so?

Lest we forget, we are taking a look at what the Word says about the Word. We are working our way topically through Psalm 119. As an update, this is where we have been so far. We found that in Isaiah 66:2, God told us there are two things he is looking for in a man or woman: one who is a humble, poor, and of a contrite spirit; and one who literally trembles at His word. One who is so humble, that just being confronted by being spoken to by God, makes them tremble with excitement. "God is speaking to me!"

The fact that the God who framed the universe would take time to literally speak to me, ought to make me tremble. It ought to do the same for you. Then we took a God's-eye view at the psalmist's request.

> Open my eyes that I may see Wondrous things out of Your law. (Psalm 119:18 NKJV)

We tried to determine what it means to have our eyes opened, and what wondrous things are. We realized that God wants us to ask Him to give us spiritual vision to see His nature through every word in Scripture.

In our last lesson, we learned that the psalmist, over and over asked God, "O Lord, teach me." We looked at what the word, teach means, and we found out that God will do just that. When we ask God to teach us, we are asking for:

Revelation Explanation Illumination Simplification

We looked at how Jesus taught His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, as an illustration of how God will teach us if we let Him. Practically, simply and emphatically. We learned that what God is saying to us is so clear, that we ought not be complicating it so we can discuss it, but obeying it so we can be changed.

We will move on, assuming we are ready to tremble before God, asking Him to open our eyes to that which is supernatural, and teach us things that will make us supernaturally different. But even having assumed that mindset, the determining factor of whether or not this Book is going to make a difference in your life and my life, is how important it is to us. How much of a priority are we willing to place on putting the Book into our lives? It won't just happen, folks. It isn't going to just jump in.

Until you and I get to the place where people looking around us can literally say, "He loves that Book," or "She loves that Book," then we may not really ever gain out of the Scriptures what God intended. How important is the Word of God to you?

Psalm 119, our textbook for this study, gives us some guidelines. Let me read you just a few, and you judge for yourselves.

I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. (Psalm 119:14 NKJV)

I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word. (Psalm 119:16 NKJV)

My soul breaks with longing for Your judgments at all times. (Psalm 119:20 NKJV)

And I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love. (Psalm 119:47a NKJV)

The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver. (Psalm 119:72 NKJV)

How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103 NKJV)

Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold! (Psalm 119:127 NKJV)

I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for Your commandments. (Psalm 119:131 NKJV)

I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure.

(Psalm 119:162 NKJV)

Get the picture? We will take those verses individually and see what kinds of patterns emerge, but I wanted you to see them together; to see the cumulative intensity of what the psalmist was trying to say to us.

He has taken two major areas of life that take most of our time and energy, and he's used them as backdrops to describe how much more the Word of God ought to mean to us than those things. He compares our quest for spiritual understanding to gold, then fine gold, then all riches, and finally, great spoil. He compares our hunger for spiritual things to our hunger for food, even the delicacies of life. In every case, he is trying to compare what the Word has to offer us and say to us, "What else matters?"

Rejoice	Something worthy of stopping to give praise for
Delight	To find a source of great pleasure
Longing	To pine; to dream about
Love	To cherish; to hold dear
Pant	A desperate longing for

Look at the words he used and what they mean.

He is saying that the Word of God ought to be so vital to us, we ought to pine for it, we ought to dream about it, we ought to cherish it, we ought to be thankful for it, and we ought to long for it the way a dying man would long for a glass of water. Now tell me, does that describe your hunger and thirst for the Word of God? It ought to.

Let's look at those two illustrations and see what God is saying. Before we begin, let's stop and ask God to open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of His Law, and then let's ask Him to teach us. We want Him to reveal truth we have never seen before; that's revelation. We want Him to explain clearly what that truth means in practical terms; that's explanation. We want Him to illuminate the passage by comparing Scripture with Scripture, so we get the whole counsel of God on a given subject; that's illumination. And then we want to simplify the passage so it applies to each of us, where we are in our spiritual pilgrimage. Let's ask God to do that.

Heavenly Father,

We love You so, but we can't teach; only You can. And You long to. And You're waiting for us to ask, Father, that we would receive more than words; that we would receive spiritual truth. So, we pray, Father, that You would give us revelation, explanation, illumination and then simplification, so that those of us with simple minds can understand and obey what You have told us to do without making it more complicated.

So, we ask you to do that, Father. Open our eyes that we may behold the nature of our God in every word.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord,

Amen.

The first thing the Word of God is compared to is gold.

Psalm 119:127 says:

Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes,than fine gold.(Psalm 119:127 NKJV)

Fine gold is the top of the line. I hope this won't offend anyone, but this isn't the "K-Mart" special. It's gold that has been reserved for the queen's crown. It's gold that has been so purified, it has to be kept in a vault. It's gold that is to be cherished more than the finest of all the world's goods. That's the Word of God. More than a new Lexus. More than a Rolex. More than a Gucci handbag. More than a Rolls-Royce. More than a mansion in the most exclusive neighborhood in town. If you had your choice between any or all of those things, but in order to get them you would never again have access to this Book, what would your decision be?

Not only can the Word not be compared to the best of anything, it cannot be compared to the most of everything. Verse 72:

The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver. (Psalm 119:72 NKJV)

All the riches in the world, added together, can't compare to one verse of Scripture. That's what it says. If you had the choice of becoming the next billionaire, winning the lottery, or whatever it would take to get rich, but in order to do so, you would lose your relationship with the Word of God, which would you choose? The psalmist said, "No contest. I'll choose God's Word." Verse 14 really says that.

I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. (Psalm 119:14 NKJV)

All the riches in the world cannot bring you the same measure of joy as a few minutes in the Scriptures. In fact, verse 162 says:

> I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure [spoil]. (Psalm 119:162 NKJV)

I took that word, spoil, and tried to trace it through the Old Testament. It always means the same thing. It means the fruits of victory. It was what valiant men had at their disposal because they won the battle. Sometimes God told them to take it; sometimes He told them to leave it alone. But it was always the crown they would wear home from the trenches, proving they were victorious. Beloved, the spoils may be the fruits of your labor, it may be the fruits of your relationships. It could even be the fruits of your spiritual labor—your ministry, but even those rewards, physical or spiritual, are not to be the source of our adoration. The Word of God is to mean more to us than all of that. If we have to trade a pound of glory for an ounce of Scripture, it's a bargain. That's what he's saying.

So, our desire for the Word of God, to read it, to hear it, to memorize it, and to meditate on it, should be so intense, so beneficial, so dear to us, that no riches, and no accomplishments on earth could even begin to compare. Now think about that. If that's true, we ought never to be able to say, "I really would like to spend time in the Word of God, but I just...," hello? Whatever you would put after that doesn't make sense.

Then we come to verse 103, which compares our hunger for the Word of God to the finest of that which we would use to feed our bodies.

How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103 NKJV)

How sweet are the Words of God? Picture a buffet table filled with the most incredible assortment of caloric masterpieces known to man. Chocolate fudge poured over a composite of layers of strawberry and chocolate cake, topped with the creamiest ice cream. Or move a few inches and you have homemade cheesecake, topped with handpicked blueberries. Look to the other side and your eyes fall on the most inviting piece of apple pie you have ever laid eyes on. Freshly cut apples baked to perfection, layered with a butter-intensive crust so flaky, it literally melts in your mouth. Have I lost you?

Now suppose you face that table with all those goodies and they were free. But you had a choice; you only had fifteen minutes of free time in your day, and you hadn't spent any time in God's Word or in God's presence. If you stop to eat those desserts, you won't have enough time. But how often do I get an opportunity for desserts like that? I know what I'll do. I'll eat my pie ala mode first. I'll rush back to the office and hopefully, later, make time. No, you won't.

Maybe it isn't dessert. Maybe it's mealtime. Suppose you only have time to do one thing, eat lunch or meditate on the Word of God. I've never seen this class so quiet. Now suppose like me, starvation is not the issue for you. You can live off the fat of the land for quite some time. The issue is, that food satisfies a craving in our body. The Word satisfies a craving in our spirit. Which one we choose is called a *choice*.

Now granted, most of us can do both. We find time to eat plenty, and still spend time in the Word of God. But given a choice; given the creating of priorities based on the way you now live, what's most important to you? How many meals do you miss? How many times do you miss spending the *quantity* of time or the *quality* of time you want to spend or should spend in the Word of God, but still manage to eat three good meals a day, or more?

To the psalmist, the word was sweet. It was sweeter than the delicacy of honey. It was sweeter than the most desirable thing he could put in his stomach. The taste buds of his spirit longed for the Word of God the way you and I long for chocolate and ice cream. He literally panted for the Word of God. I looked up the word "panted" in a concordance and traced it. It's an interesting word. Job 5 says:

His harvest the hungry devour, And take it to a place of thorns; And the schemer is eager [pants] for their wealth. (Job 5:5 NASB)

He wants to get his hands on their money.

Isaiah 42 reads,

...like a woman in labor I will groan, I will both gasp and pant. (Isaiah 42:14b NASB)

## Jeremiah 14 says,

The wild donkeys stand on the bare heights; they pant for air like jackals, their eyes fail for there is no vegetation. [There is nothing to eat.] (Jeremiah 14:6 NASB)

Like a schemer pants for wealth, like a woman in labor pants, longing for relief from her pain, like the wild donkey pants for food in a barren place, we are supposed to pant for the Word of God. Now that hardly describes most of our longing for the Word of God. We do, however, pant for some other things—life's delicacies. Those chocolate-covered goodies. We pant for that Lexus, or that Cadillac, or that new sofa, or that new house, or that new computer. But seldom do we pant for the Word of God. Seldom do most of us see it as a matter of life or death. That's how the schemer looked at his wealth. That's how the woman in labor looked at her pain. That's how the donkey looked at that barren wasteland. Relief or die.

And that's how we ought to look at the Word of God. We ought to pant for it. We ought to long for it as we would for water if we had nothing to drink. In fact, perhaps the most descriptive verse in all of Scripture where the Word is concerned, is the one from which the title of today's lesson is taken found in Job 23.

> Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. (Job 23:12 KJV)

I took that verse one word at a time, and looked it up. The word "esteemed" means to treasure, or hide away something because it is so valuable, you have to put it some place where it won't get stolen. In fact, the New American Standard uses this phrase:

I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. (Job 23:12b NASB)

Psalm 83 uses the word this way.

They make shrewd plans against Your people, and conspire together against Your treasured ones. (Psalm 83:3 NASB)

It's used to describe those that God has in Himself.

Psalm 119:11,

Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I might not sin against You. (Psalm 119:11 NASB)

The King James version uses the word "hid/hidden." It's something that should be so priceless that you'll pine for it, and once you have it in your grasp, you'll do anything to keep from letting it slip away. That's the kind of treasure the Word of God is supposed to be. Proverbs 7 sums it up,

My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you. (Proverbs 7:1 NASB)

In the next few lessons, we are going to be looking at what it means to "keep" God's Word, and "treasure it in your heart." But for now, I want us to understand what the Word is saying. It's saying, this Word ought to be so valuable, that we would make it a treasure we would lock up in the confines our heart where it couldn't get away. Matthew 6 reminds us:

For where your treasure is, there you heart will be also.

(Matthew 6:21 NKJV)

The reverse is also true. Luke 6 says:

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45 NKJV) To "esteem" then, means to treasure God's Word, more than your necessary food. What does the word "more" mean? I think you all know that; it means not equal to, but in excess of. What does the word "necessary" mean? It's a Hebrew word "chôg," translated in most Old Testament passages as "statute" or "decree" or "ordinance." It's something you cannot ignore. It is used 93 times in the Old Testament as statute or ordinance, and only one time, in one passage, where it is translated necessary. It is something that transcends and is preeminent over feelings or circumstances. A law or statute is something you simply cannot ignore.

Used here it describes a kind of food you cannot live without. "Necessary food" is that, without which, you would perish. So, to treasure God's Word more than your necessary food means you would rather starve than do without the Word of God. Not only would you choose God's Word over chocolate cake, or even steak and potatoes, you would continually choose it over bread and water, or anything else necessary to keep you alive physically, because you know it is infinitely more important to be alive spiritually than physically.

Food in this passage stands for that which sustains life. So, given a choice, time in God's Book takes precedence over even the most basic things that are fundamental to life itself, because life is fleeting, and that which is spiritual lasts forever. That is why Jeremiah 15 proclaims:

Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts. (Jeremiah 15:16 NKJV)

The Word of God is food, too. It feeds that portion of the nature of man that edifies, sustains, and transforms. So given a choice, it's better to feast on the Word of God, even at the expense of your necessary food, and things you seem to have to have to stay alive. The Word of God should have a priority and a preeminence in our lives. We can complicate it and turn it into some kind of theological issue to discuss, or we can just obey. We can allow God to teach us; to personalize it so we can apply it to our lives, and to illuminate it by bringing into context, other verses of Scripture until it's locked into our consciousness. And from that point on, we just do it.

Psalm 19 is a good passage if you want to illuminate or compare it with others. It's familiar to many of you.

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the

testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward. (Psalm 19:7-11 NKJV)

The Word Is	The Word Does
complete	converts (transforms) the soul
sure	makes the simple wise
right	rejoices the heart
pure	enlightens the eyes
clean	endures forever
true	warns, rewards

Look at the words that describe the Scriptures.

Doesn't that illuminate the principle? And doesn't it verify the principle in verse ten? More to be desired are they than gold, yes, fine gold, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. It's the very same illustrations used in Psalm 119. God has made it simple for us again, hasn't He? He said, "This Word of Mine, will bring joy to your heart." Nothing else can. "It will enlighten your eyes." Nothing else will. It will warn you of your transgressions and help you avoid those things that would keep you from having rewards. It will endure forever. Nothing else will. The grass will wither the flower will fade, but not this Book.<sup>1</sup>

It will not change. It will not decay. It will not evaporate. It will not diminish in its power to convert, make wise, bring joy, enlighten, or warn. It will be the same forever because it is the reflection of a God whose nature cannot change. That's illumination. The principle has been repeated and enlarged upon. Now for the simple truth—let's ask God to simplify it. It isn't complicated. What is means is, we have a choice every moment of every day as to how we spend our time, don't we? We all have the same amount.

Our minds are the most complicated computers ever designed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Isaiah 40:8

I know what you're thinking. Some of us are 486/60's. Some of us are plain old AT's. Some of us are Radio Shack Model Ones, if that means anything to some of you. Some of us have 24 megabytes of RAM and others of us barely seem to have a megabyte, but we are all computerized. Our minds are databases which receive information from more than one processor. That information has been stored up in our hearts since we were born. And little by little it forms documents, which generate responses in every situation.

Now science thinks it's coming up with new things all the time, but it really isn't. The first integrated software package is in your head. What goes into the database—that's the information you feed into your brain—goes directly to the word processor, which is the tongue, and often the output resulting from the input is not what you wish it was. The graphics program you have been given our imagination—is tied to the database in the same way, so the pictures it forms have been scanned into the database by thought patterns. They take up valuable disk space leaving precious little room for new data.

Interactive software is the rage of the day, but that's not new either. It's what God has placed in your heart in eternity past, because how you respond to a given command determines which database the operating system will access and what choices will follow. So, the mind of man is the original computer. The Word of God is the information that's supposed to be stored there so that when decisions are made you will make the right one.

Let's say someone hurts you. I know nobody would do that intentionally, but let's suppose somebody accidentally hurts your feelings. And you type into the database: Response to Being Wronged. The computer of your heart is going to access one of two databases, and whichever one it does, will control your responses.

Let's say you have been a Christian for thirty years, and you have stored there, Satan's response most of the time. "What right does he have to do that to me? Why doesn't God do something?" And unless something is placed there to overcome that, you will automatically get a dialog box on the screen of your mind, that says: You have been wronged. Choose one of the following:

> Fight back:..... hit option 1 Internalize your anger:... hit option 2 Blame God:..... hit option 3

These will be natural responses. You won't have to work at it. You'll just have to choose which one. You say, "But I'm a Christian! Things ought to be different. I've read books on anger. I've read books on persecution. I've read books on being falsely accused, and I shouldn't respond that way." That's true. So, you feel guilty and you internalize the anger; you blame God. When the heat is on you still give in. You say, "Well, that's just the way I am. God understands."

Beloved, God does understand. But He also understands your response is sin. He understands He has given you "a way of escape that you may be able to bear it".<sup>2</sup> The way of escape is a programming function built into your operating system, and its sole function is to access the Word of God. Only the Word of God erases that which is on the disc of your mind, and replaces it. All other data crowds in and finds a place to stay, but it doesn't remove all the garbage you have put there all of your life. The Word of God erases and makes room for itself, and replaces it with a Word from the Living God.

So, if you want to be changed, you are going to have to ask God to teach you to open your eyes to wondrous truth. And then you're going to have to make time, minute by minute, to get this Book into your life. You say, "Well, how long will it take?" It will take the rest of your life. You say, "Well, I'm too old." You're never too old to start. And you tell your children, they are never too young to start. You say, "It will cost me something." It will cost you the most precious commodity you own—time. And that time may come from things you don't want to give up.

Until we count the Word of God as more precious than the finest gold ever mined; until we hunger for it with more "intensity" than the most delicious desserts ever made, we will never pay the price to put it into the computer of our minds, and we'll never begin to gain the revelation, the illumination, the explanation, and the simplification that will change our lives.

But we need to go one step beyond that. We need to want this Book more than our necessary food. That means, we would rather die of starvation, than starve our souls for one single second, when it could be exposed to the Word of God. And you're not going to do that unless you treasure it and count it so valuable, that you hide it in the only place the enemy can't steal it, which is in your heart.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> I Corinthians 10:13

The enemy is a "seed snatcher." That's what the Holy Spirit calls him.

The only way to hide something in your heart is to memorize it, and meditate on it day and night, until it becomes such a part of your nature, that your normal response would be to draw from it like "a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your pathway."<sup>3</sup> It takes commitment. It takes prioritizing your life all over again. It takes re-writing your objectives for living. It means making the reading, hearing, studying, memorizing, and meditating on the Word of God so important to you, that you would gladly forget supper than miss your time in the Word of God. You would naturally skip breakfast before you would skip your time in the Word of God. You would gladly miss an opportunity to make an extra dollar if the time it would take, would take time from God's precious love letter.

Now you think about it. If the person you claim to love the most, calls you on the phone and you say, "I don't have time to talk now, I'm eating," I don't think you really love them. If the person you claim to love writes you a detailed love letter and you would rather count your money, or balance your bank account than read that letter, your love is a lie.

Real love longs to be with the object of that love. You don't want to give up a single moment of being with the person you love, or reading something written at the hand of the person you love. And until we as Christians stop substituting activities, even religious activities, for the Word of God, we will never know the fullness of God's power. Until we stop substituting programs for the Word of God, we will never experience the transformation it can bring. Until we stop substituting experiences, even spiritual experiences, for the Word of God, these computers will never be reprogrammed in such a way, that they will automatically access the mind of God and respond to the ways of God.

It is not complicated. We make it that way. It is simple. It is so simple a child can understand it. If you tell your children that the Word of God is the most important thing to you, and they see you spending your time doing everything else, they are not going to believe you. The simple truth is, life is nothing more than a series of choices. And the most important choice you make every day, all day long, is how much time you are going to invest in the only thing that can change your life—the Word of God. It is more to be

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Psalm 119:105

desired than honey. It is more to be desired than pure gold. It is more to be desired than the food it takes to keep us alive. What would it profit us if we had all the food in the world and didn't have to power live in victory?

More than our necessary food? You bet! Are there no alternatives? None. You say, "How can I find the time?" My friend, if you treasure it enough, you'll find a way. If you treasure your children, you find time to be with them. If you treasure a book, you find time to read it. If you treasure an activity, isn't it funny how you somehow find time to do it?

The choice begins now. Not tomorrow. Not next week. Now. Each of us, individually, have to make a decision. We know what the Word of God will do. The question is, what will we do to get it into our lives? Say it with me: "I love this Book!" Now, go out and live like it.

Let's pray.

Our Father and our God,

We have no excuses. We talk about how important Your precious Word is to us, but most of us have precious little time it seems, to pour it into our lives, to memorize it, to meditate on it, and to allow it to transform us, cleanse us, and change the thought patterns that have been ours for years.

We live as hypocrites, pretending to be what we are not, because the power to be different is not in our hearts. By Your grace, Father, may we be determined that from this point forward, the Word of God will become more than our necessary food.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

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