

## **“NEW YEARS DIET: HIGH WORD, LOW WORLD.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

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**Scripture Texts: Ecclesiastes 12:9-14; Matthew 4:1-4**

### **Introduction.**

It's the new year, the time of year when we resolve to do things differently, to make resolutions and changes. This is the time for fresh starts. The gyms are full, lots of new memberships.

This is the time of year people start new diets. I can't believe how many there are, ones I have no clue what they are. Keto diet, DASH diet, Paleo diet, Whole30 diet, FODMAP diet.

I'm going to jump on the bandwagon and propose a new diet this morning. I think any diet worth its salt (pun intended) should involve marinating. Give me a big hunk of meat, let it soak about two days in some good marinade, now that's a diet I could keep.

One of my favorite restaurant meals was the Kensington Club steak at Steak and Ale. The reason it was great was because they marinated it for 72 hours. I called the manager of the restaurant one time and asked if he would tell me the recipe and to my shock he did.

So, if I am going to invent a diet and I get to pick what is in it, I am going to pick something marinated. Here is my diet proposal for all of us this morning. Beginning today we all get marinated in the Scriptures.

The more we become saturated with Scripture, the more it will get in us and permeate all the pores of our lives, our parenting, our grand parenting, our business dealings, our work ethic, our relationships, our choices and decisions, our communication, thoughts and desires, everything.

My diet proposal comes with a guarantee. If we follow this diet for 2019 we will be blessed and healthy beyond what we can imagine. And if we don't follow this diet we will be in danger of become seriously malnourished and sickly, more discouraged or depressed or directionless, caught up in sin.

Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4).

If you are only focused on your physical needs you are way too short-sighted. You are unhealthy in the way that matters most. Our greatest needs in this life are spiritual, not physical.

We cannot do life on bread alone, meaning our life doesn't consist just of eating physical food. There is more to life and sustaining that life than bread and meat and potatoes.

*A high world, low Word diet* will result in choking, gagging and becoming parched and dry and finally shriveling up like a piece of beef jerky only without the flavor. Jesus says so in the parable of the Sower and the Seed about how the world chokes out the Word.

*But a high Word, low world diet* will lead to untold blessings, like a tree by a river that yields much fruit.

Let me promote my diet plan by suggesting several of the benefits and blessings of why you should join me in following this diet.

### **Why soak in the Word of God?**

**Psalm 19:7-10** 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.

*It is better than money and riches.*

Psalm 19:10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold.

Proverbs 8:11 For wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.

We have in our possession a great treasure, don't be content with a little bit, search and know this treasure with the same diligence some people dig for gold and silver.

*For the sake of our own joy and delight.*

Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart.

Psalm 119:47 I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.

How can this not be true? Our loving God has our very best interests at heart in all His commands.

***For the sake of our Father's joy.***

2 John 1:4 I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.

How do we as parents feel when we see our children walking in the truth, in wisdom, in the right way, on the right path? It brings us joy, we delight to see our children do well and prosper. Our Father in heaven delights to see His children knowing and loving and following the truth. It leads to joy in heaven and on earth. Read for the joy of it.

When you love what the Father loves it will result in good things.

***For the sake of life***

Hebrews 1:3 He upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Everything in life exists and is sustained by the Word of God. Read like your life depends on it.

***For the sake of knowing what is true and finding direction in life.***

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

John 8:31-32 If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, [32] and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Some of you may remember The Polar Express, based on an award-winning children's book. After it came out there was tons of merchandise related stuff appearing in stores with the word "believe" in big letters. The film is a North Pole fantasy with the message that it doesn't matter where the train is going just believe and get on.

That reminds me of my years in seminary near Boston, when Phama and I had the opportunity to take in some of the cultural life of Boston. We saw Sandy Duncan in Peter Pan. Peter Pan is such a lively, engaging, entertaining show. I still remember sitting in the audience behind a family when Peter Pan was encouraging the children. Believe, do you believe, and this little boy in front of me, caught up in the moment, called out, I believe.

But here is where a little grammar lesson will help us avoid a theological train wreck. As a transitive verb believe needs an object. It raises the question, believe what. It does matter where the train is going, and it is a good idea to know where before you get on.

Blind faith and biblical belief are not the same thing. Biblical belief is very clear about the object of our faith, about what we are putting our faith in. It is important to know what we believe, and that comes from knowing what God says in His Word.

If parents, children and business people marinated in the Book of Proverbs they would avoid a world of trouble.

***For the sake of strong foundations and wisdom***

**Matthew 7:24-27** Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. [26] And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

**Ecclesiastes 12:9-14** Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. [10] The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. [11] The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. [12] My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

[13] The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. [14] For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

The writer of Ecclesiastes starts off saying all is vanity, everything is meaningless, foolishness. Nothing matters in life. But he ends affirming that absolutely everything matters, everything counts, everything.

This final word shatters complacency and apathy, it destroys the off-the-cuff “whatever” attitude toward life. Nothing goes unnoticed and unassessed and unevaluated. There is no matter under heaven too small or too insignificant. “An idle word, the death of a sparrow, a cup of cold water, the repentance of one sinner, the falling of one hair off one head.”

Here is the sum of all things, the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and follow His Word. He created us, He knows us, He knows what is best and right and perfect and good. He knows the true source of joy and peace and happiness and prosperity.

Ecclesiastes says of the making of many books there is no end, and of the reading of many books, and much study is weariness to the body. But there is one book which is not weariness.

I set before you today a new diet, a full course meal, real meat and drink, living bread and living water. I set before you the Word of God; it is the gift of God. Take and eat all of you, in this is your life.

I beg you, I plead with you, I exhort you. Please, don't let another day, let alone another year pass without a new steady diet of high Word and low world.

It is not enough to have a Bible, we must read it, and pray it. The only way to get this into our heads and hearts and homes and lives is by regular reading. The time and trouble we take to read God's Word will never be wasted or begrudged.

You can with a plan. So let me offer a simple plan. Simple is good. Simple is possible, doable.

**First, you need a Bible.** Get a good translation. The most faithful translations are New King James, New American Standard Bible and the English Standard Version. A study Bible may be a help to you, like Reformation or Geneva or ESV Study Bibles.

Make sure your spouse and children have good Bibles they can read. This is the most important investment you can make, and the most important book you will ever own.

**Second, you need a plan for reading your Bible.** There are lots of them and you can get many off the internet. I have made one available on the table in the narthex. I like this particular plan because it only schedules for 25 days a month. I like grace.

What is important is reading, starting and continuing to read. If you fall behind, don't give up, just check off the passages as you read and forget the dates. Just keep making forward progress.

Don't say you don't have time, if you are breathing you have time. Fifteen to twenty minutes a day cannot be better spent.

**Third, you need a pen or highlighter to underline or highlight passages** that speak to you. This will help you remember and pay attention and find it again. Get markers for your kids and then ask them later what they marked and see what they remember. Engage the passages by marking and writing in the margins. Talk about what you read, ask questions with your kids. Read the sermon text and talk about it and apply it. Bring the Bible into everyday life.

**Fourth, you need a prayer.** Before, during and after you read, pray Psalm 119:18, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." When you are done reading take one thing out of the passage, maybe something you underlined and **turn it into a prayer.**

This happened for me yesterday morning. I started in prayer acknowledging I was anxious and discouraged about a couple of things. Then I turned to Genesis 32 about Jacob returning to see Esau after 20 years away. Jacob was anxious and fearful of that meeting and he prayed. It was just the right Scripture at just the right time. God met me in His Word and He will you too.

**Fifth, and finally, you need a little memory.** Literally write God's Word on your heart. At least commit to memorizing the twelve verses that we give you each month. That's a great start. Then add to it verses you come across in your reading or something that applies to what is going on in your life. Tape Scripture to the bathroom mirror, on your computer screen, to the dashboard, inside schoolbooks. Download Scripture into your mental memory bank. Store it on the hard drive of your mind. Marinate, saturate, soak it up.

Wear your Bibles out. This week I saw the Bibles of Henrietta Noteboom and Hank Weg. They were completely worn out, bindings shot, pages loose. Hank's had been duct taped and the duct tape was worn out. Don't treat them as irreplaceable heirlooms. Use them to the point that you have to replace them every few years. Don't try to preserve it, try to wear it out.

We all have fallen short of the mark or missed the mark or never even tried to aim. Today is a new day and a new opportunity. Today is the day God has given us to seek and follow Him. Today is the day God is calling us to a real relationship with Him. He wants to personally meet each of us in His Word. This is His heart, this is the place He wants to meet us and nourish our spirits and deepen our relationship with Him and each other. This is where God wants to meet us to give us life.

Scripture says that "the Word of God is living and active" (Heb 4:12). When you hang around something that is living and active it impacts you. It makes a difference in your life, it leaves a mark. Let it begin to permeate as you saturate yourself with it, as you marinate in it.

**Prayer:** Our Holy Father in Heaven, we ask you this morning to bless our seeking of you. Bless us with a deep and lasting hunger and thirst for righteousness, fan the flame of our zeal for the truth of your word, and a great love for it. Grant in our brokenness and imperfection that we would desire the fullness of Christ. Help our unbelief, forgive our wandering affections. Deliver us from our small desires and our foolish pursuits. Help us parents and grandparents instill a love for your Word and a hunger for it in our kids hearts. I pray for your Fatherly blessing to be upon this flock. Make us faithful and fruitful for your glory, in Jesus name, Amen.