

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
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**A Healthy Church = A Healthy Diet: You  
Are What You Eat**

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All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Today, we continue looking at the characteristics of “A Healthy Church” and our examination changes location. Congregational health is determined not just by the worship and fellowship that we do here in this building, but by the daily diet that feeds each of our lives. There are no breaks from nutrition; there are no shortcuts to health. So here is the important health question we need to answer today, “What do we need to do daily to maintain a healthy diet?”

“You are what you eat.” Every one of us knows the reality of that statement. We know that if we pump ourselves with a daily diet of processed food filled with trans fats and drinks loaded with sugar, sooner or later, we are going to pay the price. We also know that a healthy diet can help us lose weight, increase our energy, help us ward off illness, and reduce all kinds of health risks. We know that it is important to read the labels, and it is better to eat more fruits and veggies than meats and breads.

But unfortunately, what we know just doesn’t line up with what we do. The typical adult in the United States exceeds the recommended intake of the bad; and falls way short in the consumption of the good. And our visits to the doctor often uncover the truths of those unhealthy diets. If the percentages hold true among our group, at least half of us are battling things like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes.

“You are what you eat.” Isn’t that statement also true about our spiritual lives? If we are often surrounded by people in our lives who question or mock the Bible, will that not influence our thinking about God’s Word? If we are fed by magazines, websites,

and TV that diminish God’s gift of sex, will that not warp our own views on sex and marriage? If our kids are fed by a diet of violent video games and movies, will that not affect their thoughts, words, and attitudes? How will absorbing song after song filled with the values of this decaying world affect us?

However, if we are fed by the Word of God, David says in Psalm 19 that we have something that is sweeter than honey. If we consume the Scriptures; we have the Word that sustains the weary (Isaiah 50:4). If we find our portion in God’s Word, we have strength that lasts forever (Psalm 73:26). The Bible is the power of God for salvation. It is spirit and life!

We clearly know the dangers of being fed by the world; we know the positives if we are fed by the Word. So now, it is time to assess. In all honesty, what are you eating? What are you feeding to your children? How often do you feed on the Word of God compared to how often you take in what the world has to offer? Is it one hour of one day that you sit with your family being fed by God’s Word and Sacrament? Is it five minutes each day where you quickly force down a portion of God’s Word? Is it even less than that?

I can’t follow you into your houses; I don’t track your daily routines, but I certainly wonder based on what I see here. If, on any given Sunday, half of our membership skips out on the feeding that is offered here in church, how many are skimping on their daily diet of God’s Word? If 200 of those 300 that are here are bold enough to walk out the door saying that they don’t have the time or the need for Bible study on Sunday morning, what are the chances they have it during the week? If there are people who refuse to open their Bibles when invited to do so by their pastor during church, is it a stretch to have doubts about what they are doing when no one is watching or inviting?

As we assess the diets that feed us, and trust me when I say that doing that with my own diet was a painful endeavor, the results shouldn’t surprise. Impatience, contempt, grumbling, worry, pessimism, hostility, selfishness; those are the results of a poor diet, and those are results that we so often see in our lives. We can talk about financial problems and stewardship issues; we can complain about a lack of energy and friendliness; we can point to a lack of plans and vision; but isn’t this where unhealthiness starts; with a lack of feeding on God’s Word? And for that despising of God’s Word, and for that neglect of our spiritual health, we can only ask for forgiveness.

For people who fall way short in their consumption of God’s Word, God sent a Savior, a Savior who maintained a perfect diet. As God calls people to listen and consume his Word, Jesus did. From the

time he was a boy, Jesus knew that the Word was his source of spiritual health. It is why we saw him leave his father and mother, and remain in the Jerusalem temple when he was a 12 year old boy. He was consuming the Word, he was receiving the sustenance and strength that he would need to carry out his work.

And that diet that Jesus followed produced results. Think about Jesus' life; when he was tempted, when he was tired, when he was suffering and dying, Jesus always relied on God's Word to give him what he needed. And the Word never failed him. Through that work sustained by the Word, we have forgiveness.

As his forgiven children, God wants us to come to his Word and to be fed and nourished and strengthened just as his Son Jesus was. God has given us this Book of Life, so that it might be our daily source of sustenance. It was that daily feeding that God had in mind when he gave these words of encouragement in Joshua 1:8, **“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night.”**

Meditate on it; meditate is a tame translation of that word. That Hebrew word for “meditate” describes what a lion does over the prey that it has caught. Or maybe you can think about what a dog can be like with a bone in its mouth. They protect it; they continue to gnaw and chew and enjoy, saying “I’m gonna savor this until it is gone.” God calls us to treat his Word the same way. Do not let it depart from your mouth, mediate on it, chew on it day and night. Let nothing take it away from you...savor every last bit of it. This is how we use God's word rightly; this is how we use God's Word daily!

As we learn to consume and savor God's Word, we can be confident that health and blessings will follow. God promises that those who are fed by God's Word will be like “trees planted by streams of water, which yield its fruit in season” (Psalm 1). Those who are fed by the Word will have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control flowing from their lives. Those who have the Word will have joy on their lips. They will be fueled to serve and to give. And for those who are fed by God's Word, they will be healthy to sustain whatever Satan throws their way.

You probably know Christians who have experienced so many setbacks and reversals in life that you shake your head in wonder as you consider how they can keep functioning.

But when you talk to them, you get the answer. You realize that over the years, a steady diet of God's Word has given them the confidence that Jesus means it when he says that he is with them and that God really will work things out for their good. There are times when you go and visit Christians who are dying. They know death is near, and yet they are

cheerful. Their faith is shining as a powerful witness to all around them that they have a Savior who has conquered death.

That kind of faith doesn't come with a desperate diet of God's Word after the doctor announces that death is near. It doesn't come from an intake of God's Word here or there, when it is convenient. That kind of faith comes from a life lived on a healthy, daily diet of God's Word.

Isn't that the kind of faith you want for yourself, and your loved ones? Remember that is the kind of faith that God has promised to those who go to the banquet of his Word day after day. Those are the blessings that God gives to those who consistently feed on his Word. Let us close with a prayer, “Heavenly Father thank you for giving us the Bible. Thank you for all the blessings that you bring us through your word. Forgive us for the times we neglect it. By the power of the Holy Spirit change us. Help us follow a healthy diet by feeding on your word faithfully. In Jesus' name, Amen.”