

A Balanced Diet

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Preacher: Gary Bedderson

[0 : 00] I thought I'd give you a bit of a nutrition lesson this morning, unless you're on a diet of some sort like, I don't know, Atkins, Paleo, Banting, Caveman, or whatever the latest fad is, I don't know.

Now, I never used to be a great vegetable eater, although I really do like food. My wife, Valma, has tried to teach me and the children that it is very important to eat a balanced diet and get exercise. The question is, what does it look like? Well, I'm told that the basic food groups are your carbs, yes, carbs, your vitamins, proteins, calciums, and of course your other energy sources.

And from what I read, what your plate should look like, according to a dietician, is roughly a third should have your vegetables. A third. Every meal, vegetables.

Roughly a third will be your bread or your pasta or your carbs, whatever you want to put in that third. And the other third, well, that's your meat, your fish, proteins, dairy, you know, your calcium and your fats and your sugars.

[1 : 05] That's the other third. So you can have some energy. These foods, I'm told, eaten in the right proportions will result in, well, in healthy body and possibly longer life.

I said that's your nutrition lesson this morning. Unfortunately, however, when it comes to being religious, this is how many of us think about religion.

A little bit of this mixed with a little bit of that. That makes a good diet, right? So there are many in the world who will not categorically say that there's only one way to heaven or one way to eternity. They would say a little bit of this and a little bit of that. You see, all roads lead to the same place. They will experiment with different kinds of religions and take what they like from each different religion and make up their own religion that suits them.

What's convenient for them to do. They might take, well, the morality of the Bible, mix that with a bit of meditation from the Eastern religions, couple that with maybe some good works ideas from other religions, and then keep to that.

[2 : 11] Or should I say keep to that as long as it is convenient. But for the most part, people don't stick to one religious idea and fall hopelessly short in the practice of whatever religion they decide to make up.

So this idea of mixing, while it is around in Christian, can I say we are not exempt from it. We might think that while the story of the cross is good, we also need a little bit of this and a little bit of that.

So when we listen to preaching on a Sunday, we wish that the preacher would just tell us something new. And not the same old, same old, right? Just something new.

We want the preacher to challenge us and show us amazing things in the scriptures that we've never seen before. We say we want something more meaty. But if truth be told, we just want something different.

See, while the scriptures are good, we also want maybe a little bit of experience or a little bit of vision or maybe some extra special words from God just for us.

[3 : 15] That's not in the scriptures. We want to feel God's presence. And when we don't feel his presence, we start to wonder, well, is he really here?

Is he really with us? Does he really care? So we take the scriptures, which we think are good, and we add our feelings to it. We add what others say about the scriptures to the scriptures and treat them as the scriptures.

We add our own ideas of what we think God is saying through the scriptures because we might, well, there's that word again, feel led in a certain direction. Many times, we treat the scriptures as a launching pad, as a morality textbook.

But we really treat the scriptures as the authoritative word of God and sufficient for all of life. So as we come to the scriptures this morning, we will see that our diet, so to speak, should not be a mix and match of different kinds of ideas.

Because for the Christian, believe it or not, there's only one thing on the menu. You would have guessed it by now, right? It is the scriptures. That's what's on the menu. And those scriptures, well, they are sufficient for all of life, for every area.

[4 : 36] Firstly, the scriptures point us to Jesus as the way of life or the way to life. The scriptures point us to Jesus. Now, most of us drive or use public transport, and we see all kinds of road signs every day, don't we?

We look at them and then interpret them and then act on what we think those signs mean. So when we see a big red sign with the word stop on it, we slow down.

Well, unless you live in Plumstead. You're supposed to slow down, okay, and expecting that you are going to stop very soon. If we just ignore the sign, we might end up in a serious accident.

We might bring disaster on ourselves and disaster on others. Have a look again at verse 14 and 15, 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 14.

See, the scriptures, says the apostle Paul to Timothy, are able to make us wise for salvation.

[5 : 54] And the way the scriptures make you wise for salvation, did you see it is? Through faith in Christ Jesus. The scriptures serve as a signpost. That's what they do.

The scriptures, when you read it, point to Jesus. They point to a man hanging on a cross in Palestine almost 2,000 years ago. And the scriptures tell us that if we want life, if we want eternal life, if we want to know God, well, then there are certain things that we need to believe about this man, Jesus.

We must believe that he is God in the flesh. We must believe that he was perfect and holy and righteous.

We must believe that his death was not just another arbitrary death, but a death that would save humanity from God's wrath, from his punishment, from his judgment. Because in the scriptures, we learn that God is angry with us.

You will remember the story in Genesis, where we read that God, awesome as he is, created a wonderful world. The Garden of Eden.

[7 : 03] It was good. Actually, the scriptures tell us in Genesis it was very good. He put Adam and Eve in the garden and gave them free reign, but it was still God's creation.

And while they could enjoy all that he created, there was just one rule. Do you remember that rule? No, it wasn't don't eat the apple. Because that's not in the Bible.

Okay, we need to pay attention to the scriptures. It was do not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. It might have been an apple tree, but we don't know. But that was the rule. You can do everything else, just not that tree.

That one's out of bounds. And what did they do? Like all naughty children. They do the exact opposite, don't they? They eat from the tree. And as a result, they die. They had openly rebelled against God, what he had commanded, and decided to run life their own way.

They wanted to do what they thought was right. And can I say that attitude is still very much alive in our world today. I think it is epitomized by that very famous song.

[8 : 07] You know which one I'm talking about. The one by Old Blue Eyes. Frank Sinatra. Remember the song? The lyrics go like this. I promise I'm not going to sing because I can't hold a note.

So I'll just read it. Okay. He sings, I've lived a life that's full. I've traveled each and every highway. And more, much more than this, I did it my way.

Next paragraph. And that's what Adam and Eve did, isn't it?

They decided to do it their way. Not God's way. Not like the one who kneels. And the result? Well, the messed up world we live in.

But the result, to quote Sinatra, more, much more than this. It's not only is the world messed up, but God is angry and judgment is to follow.

[9 : 15] And we are told that the punishment and judgment is death. Physical death and spiritual death. We now stand condemned. But amazingly enough, the scriptures also give us hope.

Scriptures are awesome. The scriptures point to Jesus as the way to satisfy God's anger. As a way to escape the judgment. All this, believe it or not, guys, we are told here in the scriptures.

And if we believe it, we are made wise for salvation. Through faith in Jesus Christ. We will be saved from God's wrath, his punishment and condemnation.

Which leads to hell. And we'll be given eternity. Life with him as a reward. And can I say that if you ignore the sign, you do so at your own risk.

If you ignore the sign, friends, you will bring disaster upon yourself. You will invite God's wrath onto you. These confirmers, well, I think they've seen the sign.

[10 : 23] And they've understood the sign. And they have trusted in Jesus to save them from God's wrath and hell which follows. This confirmation service is them telling us that they stand with Jesus.

That they have put their faith in Jesus Christ who saves them from the coming wrath. Now maybe not everyone here has done that yet. Today would be a good day, wouldn't it?

Almost your confirmation. If you would just choose to trust in Christ Jesus. Because many today think that there are many different ways to the same God. They will point you to other religions like Buddhism, Islam, Judaism.

Maybe even the religion of good works like going to church or keeping the Ten Commandments. But friends, the scriptures don't point to those things as to give you life, do they?

The scriptures point to Jesus. The scriptures point to a man hanging on a cross in Palestine almost 2,000 years ago. The scriptures are sufficient. Through faith in Jesus Christ, you will be saved.

[11 : 36] Friends, you don't need anything else. Secondly, the apostle Paul tells us that the scriptures are useful for preparing God's people for living life.

Have a look at verse 16. He goes on to say, All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Did you notice that the scriptures are not just useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training. For the sake of teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training. Look again at verse 17.

It is useful for all those things so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In other words, the scriptures prepare us for living a life now that pleases God.

Everything we need to know on how to please God is found in the scriptures. Do you believe that, friends? Let me say that again. Everything. No, not most things.

[12 : 40] Everything we need to know about knowing God and how to live a life that pleases Him is found in the scriptures. Do you believe it?

See, we don't have to have, we don't need to have any special experiences to live a life that pleases God. We don't need to have any other extra biblical special knowledge to live a life that pleases Him.

We don't need to have any extra church traditions, strangely enough. We just did a church tradition today. Did you know that? It's called confirmation. It's called confirmation. We don't need it in order to please God.

We need to be clear on these things, friends. We need nothing else but the scriptures. It is as we read the scriptures, as we study the scriptures, as we understand the scriptures, and as we put those words into practice and apply the scriptures, scriptures, that we know God, that we live a life that pleases God.

If you don't believe that all you need are the scriptures, then firstly, can I suggest that you might not know the scriptures as well as you think you know the scriptures?

[13 : 53] God is clear that the scriptures will give you everything you need for every good work. He did not say most good works.

Not most of life, but for all of life. And for every good work. And the way they do this, verse 16, is by teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

In other words, training us, well, to live in a way that is right, to live in a way that pleases God. See, in the scriptures, friends, we are taught by God. In the scriptures, we are rebuked by God.

In the scriptures, we are corrected by God. And in the scriptures, we are trained by God in the ways of righteousness. Now, that's a great mentor to have, isn't it? The God of the universe.

Therefore, the scriptures have a say in every area of life. So, I'm going to look at one area, just one this morning, to give you an example of what that might look like.

[14 : 58] And I'd like to think about the area of materialism or material wealth. I know it affects my congregation, and I'm sure it affects every congregation. See, if we have wealth, we are told in the scriptures that it is given to us by God.

It is God who has given us everything we have. It is God who has given us the ability to earn what we have. What that means is everything we own belongs ultimately to God.

We are stewards of God's resources. Something we need to get our mind around. So, let me say this straight off the bat. There is nothing wrong with having wealth.

Okay? So, you must hear me say that. Nothing wrong with having wealth. It's what you do with it that counts. So, for example, the bags went around earlier, didn't they? When it comes to giving, how are you doing?

Change I had to make in my thinking. See, do you ask yourself, how much money am I going to give to the church? Or do you ask yourself, how much of God's money am I keeping for myself? Suddenly, it's a different question, isn't it?

[16:12] Still deciding on the amount, but the approach is different. See, God says we are to be a generous people. But God's good gifts are also meant to be enjoyed. We are told that, believe it or not, in the scriptures.

Did you know that? God says, wealth has been given for enjoyment. Fantastic. So, if you have wealth, enjoy it. Enjoy what God has given you. But the flip side is, be generous towards others. See it? Both work. And can I say that generosity doesn't have a price tag? How much is generous? Oh, well, you need to work that one out, don't you?

In this way, friends, the scriptures teach us about wealth, don't they? How we should view wealth. See, if we think that all of our stuff is ours, then the scriptures rebuke us and say, actually, it's not. It's God's. The scriptures correct us and then train us in the way of righteousness. It helps us to change our thinking as we apply those biblical principles to live in a way that pleases God.

[17:15] And, friends, that's just one example. Because the scriptures tell us a whole lot of other things, like how to raise our children. Again, our children aren't ours. They belong to God.

We are stewards of them. How to be God. How for us, how can we be godly children if our parents are still alive? How to love our spouses.

How to think about suffering and illness. How to view death. How to view singleness. Or marriage. Or relationships. And so on. The scriptures teach us on all those things.

Because the scriptures speak to every area of life. So as I close this morning, my question to you is, how are you going to respond? What exactly will you do? Will you firstly pay attention to the sign that the scriptures point to?

That's my first thing I want to encourage you to do this morning. Will you believe the scriptures? When the scriptures say that there's only one way to salvation. And that is through faith in Jesus Christ.

[18:17] And will you also believe that the scriptures are also sufficient for living a life that pleases God? Will you rely, depend totally on the scriptures to tell you everything you need to know?

And if you do believe in the scriptures, and you love the scriptures, and you believe that the scriptures are sufficient for every area of life, then the following should, I think, be true of you.

So I've got just five things to mention. Just when you thought it was the end. Five things about the scriptures. Firstly, if the scriptures are sufficient, then we will love the scriptures.

We will love the scriptures. Listen to the psalmist in Psalm 119. He writes, Oh, how I love your law. I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies.

How sweet are your words to the taste. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Your statutes are my heritage forever. Your statutes are wonderful.

[19:23] And you won't only find that in Psalm 119, which speaks a lot about God's word and the scriptures, but you'll find that throughout the Psalms. Friends, if we love someone, well, I can tell you we don't ignore them.

Do we? If we love them, truly love them, we try and make them feel special. We spend time with them. We phone them. We talk to them. We tell them how much we love them.

We prioritize them in our lives because we care for them. Imagine a husband who never tells his wife that he loves her. Imagine a wife who never displays any affection toward a husband.

Or a husband who never spends any time with his wife. I mean, that relationship is doomed, isn't it? And you wouldn't really call that a relationship. Friends, do we love God's word?

Do we love the scriptures? Do we recognize that these are God's words to us? Do we understand that all that we need for life is right here?

[20 : 27] It's right here in this book. Secondly, if the scriptures are sufficient, we will be reading them. We will spend time in the scriptures, getting to know God better as we read about him in the scriptures, and learning more about what he expects of us.

Because that's found in the scriptures. We'll be getting more familiar with the scriptures. And I know that many of us read books all the time. And we go through them quite easily, don't we? I am not a great reader.

Just like I wasn't a great vegetable eater. I'm not a great reader. However, when the Harry Potter books came out, I must confess, I read them all. Even those really, really thick ones.

All of them. And the last one, I think, took me four days. Yes, I also worked. I don't know how I found time to read it in four days. Yet, friends, I battle to sit and read the scriptures.

That can't be right, can it? Finding it hard to sit and read God's word? And yet, this book is far more important than what J.K. Rowling has to say. Why don't we do it?

[21 : 37] Could it be that because when I open the scriptures, when I open the Bible, I am challenged by God? He points me to my sin. He demands a changed life.

Much easier. Less exhausting. To read fantasy. Let's be honest. But friends, will you commit to reading the scriptures?

Read it. Thirdly, if the scriptures are sufficient, we'll be studying them. So besides reading, we will study, trying harder to understand what it is that God is saying.

So studying is taking a deeper look, a more meaningful look. And there are many ways you could do that. You could join a Bible study group. I noticed you have at least four where you sit with other Christians and study the scriptures together.

You could get Bible study notes, which I'm sure Nick will have many in his office, or he will write some for you. Yes, he will. Or you could buy one at CBD.

[22 : 41] You know, they explore Bible study notes. There are many study aids you could get, and we don't do that. We complain, don't we, that study aids, they're so expensive. They're like 50 bucks.

That's how much they are, really, that's how much they are. And they last three months. But we find it much easier spending 200 rand on movies, which last two hours, and has not as much value as studying the Bible.

Because we don't value God's Word as highly as we value other things, do we? We really don't. We would rather use God's resources for our own happiness than to glorify Him.

As far as getting together with others to study, well, that seems not to be a priority. I know that's a problem at my church. We make all sorts of excuses. I'm too busy.

I'm too tired. I have too much work on my plate this week, maybe next week. And the next week comes, oh, I'm just too busy. Yet for other things that we really want to do, well, we make a plan so that we can attend this function or go to that event.

[23 : 48] Can I encourage you to have a serious look at what you do? By your actions, what are you telling the world about your attitude towards God's Word and how you feel about it?

Fourthly, if the Scriptures are sufficient, we will be praying about them. Now, in the Scriptures, we have God speaking to us and through prayer, we speak to Him. As we read the Scriptures, as we study and understand, we're going to be praying and asking God to help us understand even more. We'll be praying and thanking God for His Word. We'll be praying that others would know His Word, that they would also love His Word. The Scriptures should set the agenda for our prayers.

We must be praying what God thinks is important and not always come to God with our shopping list and what we think is important. We need to take our eyes off ourselves and prioritize what the Scriptures prioritize.

Fifthly and finally, if the Scriptures are sufficient, we will be talking about them. If we believe that the Scriptures point to Jesus, friends, we will tell others, won't we?

[24 : 57] We will be using these Scriptures to show others the signpost to life. We'll use the same Scriptures to encourage one another, to spur us on to greater godliness.

So when we see our fellow brothers and sisters going the wrong way, we call them back to the Scriptures and point them in the right way. There's accountability. I know none of us like to be corrected, taught, or rebuked.

But friends, that's part of the job of the Scriptures. That's what they're there for. That's what they do. And if we are letting the Scriptures mold us and shape us, we will be prepared for every good work.

Then we will become more like Jesus, just more like that man hanging on the cross almost 2,000 years ago so that we could have life. Friends, let the Scriptures be a priority in our lives. Will you pray with me? Father, we thank you for the Scriptures. Thank you that through the Scriptures we get to know the way of salvation. Thank you that through the Scriptures we are drawn into a relationship with you because of the cross.

[26 : 05] Would you please help us value the Scriptures? Thank you that you have given them to us to prepare us for every good work. Help us to build our lives around your Word.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.