

**Victory Lutheran Church- Jacksonville, FL**

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**Worship Series: A God-Lived Life (Month 1)**

**Service Theme: A Life of a Disciple**

**Sermon Theme: Childlike? Or Childish? (February 6, 2022)**

**1 Peter 1:22-2:3**

32,340. As of last August, that's how many McDonald's Big Macs Don Gorske of Fond du Lac, WI has consumed. Unsurprisingly, he's the Guinness World Record holder for most Big Macs eaten in a lifetime. You might wonder, how is that even possible? For nearly 50 years, Don Gorske has eaten on average 2 Big Macs per day, every day. But maybe the more pertinent question than how, is why he's eaten over 32,000 Big Macs.

Well, from the mouth of the Big Mac King himself, ***"I love hamburgers like no other food. [The Big Mac] is the best sandwich in the world! When I like something, I stick with it all the time. The stuff that I like, that's what I do every day. It's just part of the way I am."***

Don hasn't eaten all those Big Macs to become famous. He ate them because he loves Big Macs! Because he craves the taste of those 2 all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun. And to keep the burgers he loves as a primary part of his life, he's built a routine around them. Each day, eating 2 Big Macs; each day, skipping the fries; meticulously saving and cataloging each burger carton and McDonald's receipt. Each day, walking about 6 miles so he can consume all those calories while still maintaining exceptional health. Don's world record is built around a craving for the burgers he loves, and regular habits to satisfy that craving.

While the thought of eating that much McDonald's might make you lose your appetite, we need to compare our appetites to Don's. Not your appetite for fast food, but your appetite for God's Word. As we explore what it means to live ***A life of a disciple*** this morning and this month, we have to honestly examine our spiritual appetites. Like Don's Big Mac record, our spiritual appetites require two things: Craving, and Habit.

In our sermon text, the Apostle Peter uses a vivid picture to describe the craving. He writes, ***"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk."*** As a father of 3, this resonates with me—and gives me a little PTSD. When babies are hungry for milk, they scream and cry until they get it! A baby's craving for that milk is so insatiable that they'll wake up out of a dead sleep 2-3 times a night to get it, even when all mom and dad want to do is sleep. Babies are eager and demanding for milk, and won't be distracted until they get it!

Or, if you prefer, Peter's telling us to be "hangry" for God's Word! Hangry is when you're so hungry, you get kinda grumpy until you get some food in your stomach. Now, Peter's not saying to be miserable to be around until we satisfy our need for God's Word, but he wants us to have that same kind of ravenous desire and need to read and hear God's Word that won't be satisfied until we've had it!

And Peter tells us why we need to crave God's Word like that. ***"So that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."*** God wired babies to crave that milk, because through its nutrients they can continue to grow and develop. Likewise, we need to crave the milk of God's Word, because through it, the Holy Spirit works to grow our faith.

And as our faith grows, so does our ability to better live a "God-lived Life." As Peter writes, ***"This is the word that was preached to you. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind."***

Now, Peter isn't saying that when your faith grows, you get more saved. Even faith in Jesus as Savior that's as small as a mustard seed saves. But the more we grow in our faith, the better we're able to live in and cling to the salvation that we have through faith in Christ! You don't become "more human" as you grow physically, but as you grow from infant to adult, you grow stronger and more equipped to do more with your life. So, we need to crave God's Word, because it helps us grow spiritually!

But although we need to grow, Jesus still praises "childlike faith." As Jesus says, with his lap full of little children, ***"Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*** What exactly does it mean to have a "childlike faith"?

Like the little girl who laughs when her dad tosses her high into the air, catches her, and repeats. Like the little boy, grinning as he jumps from the edge of the pool into his mom's waiting arms. A childlike faith trusts implicitly, without fear. Trusts that even when seemingly hundreds of things could go wrong, our heavenly Father has his arms outstretched to catch us.

At the same time, a childlike faith also understands our complete dependency on God. Most children won't make that jump if mom's not there to catch him. Although my kids have grown increasingly independent, I still usually hear, "Daddy, will you help me..." A childlike faith acknowledges our complete dependence on God for salvation, and everything we need. Like the tax collector in Jesus' parable, a childlike faith repentantly bows its head and says, **"God, have mercy on me, a sinner."**

But here's where Satan gets tricky. He convinces people that a "childlike" faith is the same as a "childish" faith. Do you get what I mean? A childlike faith is simple in its implicit trust. In that sense, a childlike faith is a very mature faith. Actually, the more you grow in spiritual maturity, the more childlike your faith becomes. But Satan wants us to think that childlike is the same as childish.

If someone calls you, or your behavior childish, that's not a compliment. Childish means something immature, irresponsible, lazy, and often lacking the desire to grow or mature. And sadly, childish is often a more fitting descriptor for people's spiritual lives than childlike.

And the numbers back that up. A recent study reported that under 1/3 of Protestants who regularly attend church personally read their Bibles during the week. And the numbers here at Victory are no different, if not worse. On average, under 50% of our 315ish members are in worship on Sundays in-person or online. And on average, under 15% of our members attend one of our weekly adult Bible study options, or our Youth Sunday School.

Now, admittedly, I don't know what percentage of you spends personal or family time in God's Word at home during the week, but evidence and experience suggest that if people don't prioritize corporate Bible study, they usually don't prioritize personal or family Bible study either.

Friends, I say this as a sinner who has, and still does struggle to always prioritize devotional time in God's Word. So I say it not out of judgment, but

out of loving concern. Those numbers are childish, not childlike. Those numbers reflect not a spirit that craves God's Word and spiritual growth, but a spiritual immaturity only wants to do the bare minimum and is satisfied with maintaining the spiritual status quo. It's good to know "Jesus Loves Me" and to have John 3:16 memorized. But at some point, we have to grow! To not is childish. And what's more, it's dangerous.

Look what happened to Jerusalem in our first reading. Only 40 years had passed from godly King Hezekiah's rule to when Josiah began to rule. But in that time, God's people had grown so disconnected from God's Word, that the priests in the Temple STUMBLED UPON the book of God's Law, and didn't know what it was! In our increasingly secular culture where the rates of Biblical illiteracy are skyrocketing, and many are leaving the church, is it that far-fetched that in 2062, some pastor stumbles across some book called the Bible, and isn't sure exactly what it is?

If we're not craving for and feasting on the pure milk of God's Word, we're not growing. And much like your body wastes away if you're not feeding it enough, or your muscles atrophy if you're not exercising them, our faith can also atrophy and fade away if we're not feeding or strengthening it with Word and Sacrament!

So how do we get that craving? Like Don Gorske and his Big Macs, the more we prioritize feasting on God's Word, the more we'll crave it! To be reminded how good God's Word tastes, we have to keep tasting it. As Peter writes, ***"Crave spiritual milk...now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."***

The more God's Word reminds us how perfectly God loves us; the more God's Word reminds us what our identity is in Christ; the more we let God's Word remind us of the complete, purifying transformation the Spirit's power has brought about in us by faith; the more God's Word reminds us of its permanency and enduring nature contrasted with the fragility and transiency of this world; the more we make God's Word the solid foundation upon which we stand; the more God's Word reminds us how Jesus has forgiven our sins, even our childish attitude towards his Word—the more we taste how good it is, the more we'll crave it.

And the more we crave it, the more consistently we'll feast upon its nourishing, strengthening nutrients, and as the Psalmist writes, ***"Taste and see that the LORD is good."***

And as Don Gorske teaches us, the more we build a habit, the better we'll satisfy our craving. That's the purpose of this **[A Life of a Disciple](#)** focus for the next month--to help us grow in faith, and to help build and maintain strong habits and routines with Bible study, at-home devotional time, and prayer. Because the more prioritize building those things into your weekly habits, the more consistently you'll taste and see that the Lord is good! And the more we do that, the more we'll grow spiritually—the more childlike, not childish-- our faith will become.

So, challenge yourself! Like in exercise, the only way to grow is to challenge yourself to do something more challenging than your normal routine! I'll talk more about this month's challenge card you'll fill out shortly. But I want to encourage you to think about some ways you can challenge yourself to grow spiritually!

To help you establish a routine of getting into God's Word daily—personally, as a couple, as a family, or all of the above-- I've created a Bible reading plan to read through the Gospel of Mark during February. You'll read just one

chapter per weekday, think or talk through a couple discussion questions, and a closing prayer. Use February as a jumping-off point for a new devotional routine, even if it's just a chapter a day!

Challenge yourself to change yours or your family's Sunday morning routine to get up a little earlier so you can come to Bible Study at 9:15 and bring your kids to Sunday School. We're starting a new series next Sunday! Or, if Sunday morning doesn't work, start coming on Thursday mornings, or Thursday evenings. All Bible studies are available both in-person, or on Zoom! While you're working, you can even throw on some headphones and listen through our sermon archives on YouTube. You can download sermon audio off our website, listen to it like a podcast, and discuss it with family or friends!

The options are endless! But find a way to challenge yourself to habitually interact with God's Word throughout the week. If you do, you'll crave it more. And most importantly, you'll grow spiritually! Crave the food that doesn't just taste good but is good for your soul too! Like hungry newborn babies, crave the pure spiritual milk of the living and enduring word of God.