



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS



Happy are the Hungry

Tim Badal | October 13, 2013 | Matthew 5:6

The Upside-down Kingdom Series, Lessons Learned from the Sermon on the Mount, Part 4

If you haven't already, turn to [Matthew 5](#) in your Bible. We are continuing our series entitled "Upside Down Kingdom," a study surrounding Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We've broken this series into four aspects of what it means to live the upside down life—the Kingdom life agenda. In this first part of the series, we are focusing on what is called the Beatitudes—Kingdom attitudes we are called to have as followers of Jesus Christ. In our fourth week in this series, we're learning there's a logical progression in Jesus' preaching of these attitudes:

1. We need to be poor in spirit according to the first Beatitude. We need to realize that we have nothing within us that commends us to God. As Christians, we must affirm our spiritually bankrupt lives. As we begin to understand that, we graduate to the second Beatitude.
2. We are called to mourn. What are we to mourn? Jesus tells us we are to mourn our sin. As sinners and as people living in a sinful society, there is much for us to mourn over and to be sorrowful about regarding breaking fellowship with our God. That moves us to the third Beatitude.
3. We are to be meek. As we recognize that we are spiritually bankrupt people because of our sins, we know that we have failed God and failed others. Therefore when others fail us we are quick to forgive them. We do not seek revenge but are meek and mild to those around us.

This brings us to our current text where we will find what it means when Jesus essentially says, "Happy are the hungry." Let's look at God's Word [Matthew 5:1-6](#) and then I'll ask for God's blessing on our time together:

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

Let's pray.

God, as we open Your Word and hear Your Son teach, we are reminded once again that these aren't suggestions. They are commands—a calling for us as Your followers. You bring before us the prospect of being satisfied. I know my deepest desire in this life is to be satisfied. I know that my listeners also desire to be satisfied and yet we know there are many options for satisfaction. It is here that Jesus says the only way we will find true satisfaction is when we hunger and thirst for You and the things surrounding You—Your righteousness. I pray that You would open our hearts, show us where we are dabbling in areas that we shouldn't and that we would truly, intently and continually hunger and thirst after You and You alone. We pray Your blessing on this time. In Christ's name. Amen.

It has been said that we are what we eat. That may scare some of us because of what we have been putting into our bodies on a daily basis. The idea behind that statement or slogan is that we need to be careful about what we are consuming. While that is true for us physically, it is also true spiritually. Many of us would be utterly astonished at all the things we put into our bodies and—sadly—many of us don't have any idea what those things are.

I am going to help by giving you a snapshot of what the average American eats on a yearly basis. Let's get to the good stuff.

We eat 110 pounds of red meat per year. That's good stuff but it comes with all kinds of fats and oils. We are consuming about 85 pounds of fats and oils per year. When we start feeling bad about those things, we start pumping in the fruits. We eat 273 pounds of fruit and 415 pounds of vegetables per year. So we can all say we're somewhat vegan, right? We can all feel good about ourselves.

Think about it. We eat four pounds of vegetables for every one pound of red meat. That's my kind of vegan diet! As we get farther down the list, we see there are all kinds of calories, sweeteners, cereals and the like. This is an amazing thing—whether through cheese, the amount of milk we drink or other dairy products—600 pounds of our diet each year are dairy products.

Sinners, you eat 29 pounds of french-fries on a yearly basis and then you wash it down with 23 pounds of pizza. If that wasn't enough, you head over to the ice cream store in Hinckley and eat 24 pounds of ice cream. This message is going to hit right between your eyes—you're going to be convicted, you sick people. You drink 53 gallons of soda and eat 2.736 pounds—almost 3 pounds—of salt per year. That's why you need the soda, by the way. You have to wash down the salt. In the end, we consume an average of 2,700 calories a day.

That was a humorous way of looking at everything we consume on a yearly basis but we need to recognize if we want to live physically healthy lives, we have to know what we're eating. A lot of us—including yours truly—could do a far better job of this. I'm not pointing any fingers because, quite frankly, Amanda's been keeping track and this is me.

Even greater than the physical side of monitoring what we eat and drink is the spiritual side. Jesus shares words with us, not about physical hunger and thirst per se, but using a physical picture of a spiritual understanding that is foundational to our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. Christ wants us to live healthy lives. Yes, healthy lives physically; that's part of it. But the crux of the matter is the spiritual side of things. As followers of Jesus Christ we must be vigilant in our pursuit of spiritual health.

When Jesus says, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,"* God is reminding us of our need. Even Jesus had needs when He walked on this earth as the Son of God incarnate in flesh. One of the proofs we see repeatedly that Jesus was God and man was that He hungered and thirsted. To hunger and thirst is to be human.

There's no doubt that the audience for Jesus' sermon was human because He was talking to them about hungering and thirsting. Notice what they were to hunger and thirst for: righteousness. The reason is because in that righteousness they would be satisfied.

How many of you want to be satisfied in this life? If you aren't raising your hand, something's not right in your head. Nobody gets up and says, "I hope I live an unsatisfying day today." We all want satisfaction. We want our lives to mean something. We want our lives to have blessing in them. We want to know that our lives are making a difference and are filled with contentment and joy. Every human being longs for satisfaction.

Now the question is where are we going to find that satisfaction? Just like our food choices, we go to the grocery store of the world. In this grocery store, we have good foods and not-so-good foods. We have healthy choices that can bring great joy and fulfillment in our lives or we can choose from the junk-food section. For a moment—a season of time—these choices will satisfy our hunger. But like all junk food, these choices leave us hungering for more. It takes care of our need only for a short time.

Jesus wants us to know that the endless hunger and pursuit of more things in this world can be satisfied by a relationship with Him. Sadly our world seems to say no to that. Even those who have so much money and so much at their fingertips find themselves wasting it all to pursue the things of this world.

There's no greater picture of this than the life of Elvis Presley who was one of the greatest entertainers of all time—the King of Rock 'n' Roll. This man had everything. Even a generation ago he was raking in millions upon millions of dollars as a successful entertainer. His estate in Memphis—Graceland—was a palace fit for a king, no pun intended.

It was said that he had more gold in Graceland than there was gold in Ft. Knox. Everything he owned was gold-plated, even the small stuff. His toenail clippers, hair dryer and hair clippers were all gold-plated. He wanted to drive around in style so each of his cars—he had more than a dozen—was painted with crushed diamonds mixed in the paint so they would sparkle. He made sure even the small things showed that he had everything he ever wanted. It was said that if it was invented, Elvis had it.

All that wasn't enough. He had to go to the next level to raise his satisfaction. Possessions weren't enough, so he moved to drugs, booze and women. His sensuality was legendary. He had everything and was the envy of many people in the world during his day.

Yet here's what we know of Elvis from his closest family and friends—he was an absolutely miserable man. He was so miserable that he became what he ate and a tragic overdose took his life. He was a man who had everything; he should have been satisfied. But as we read about him and hear from his family and friends, we see that he was not satisfied at all. He died pursuing a greater high—a greater satisfaction—that he could not find.

So how do we get there? How do we become satisfied? We all want it. When I was a young boy, I would listen to my dad say, "Oh how I long for glory, for heaven." I remember one of my dad's favorite hymns was "When We All Get to Heaven."

When we all get to heaven,
what a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus,
we'll sing and shout the victory!

("When We All Get to Heaven" by Eliza E. Hewitt)

My dad has the absolute worst voice in the world but he would belt those words out like he meant them. I remember one day when I asked, "Dad, why in the world do you want to get to heaven so quickly? Is life here on earth that bad?"

He responded, "Son, the older I get, the more unsatisfied I become with the things of this world and the more I long for glory." My friends, every day as I get a little older—as I taste the things of this world and am unsatisfied—the more I long for glory. I long for the things of God.

How do we get there? How do we become satisfied? Experiencing true happiness involves three things:

- Living in Accordance with a Godly Requirement
- Relying on God's Righteousness
- Finding the Great Reward of Obedience'

1. Experiencing True Happiness Involves Living in Accordance with a Godly Requirement

The first point we want to address is, "How do we become satisfied? How do we get there, God?" He says, "You will be satisfied" and we need to understand that involves living in accordance with a godly requirement. God says, "Do you want satisfaction? I'm willing to give it to you but I'm going to require something of you." He's going to require us to hunger and thirst.

For many of us sitting in church, these words fall upon deaf ears because we are half-hearted in our worship and pursuit of God. We want to hunger and thirst after the things of God but we're too busy hungering and thirsting after the things of this

world that will make us feel good. This fourth Beatitude calls us to task because Jesus is reordering our private world and our priorities. So what does this Beatitude mean?

We Must Seek After God Alone

To fulfill this beatitude, we must seek after God alone and find our total satisfaction in all that He is. That's what it means to hunger and thirst for righteousness. God says, "I want you to hunger and thirst after Me." To hunger and thirst can be summarized by a song we sing occasionally, "You Are My All in All." Jesus is it. He's the totality of all we pursue and all we aspire to be. He is the great end of all we do.

That begs the question, "Will we pursue the things of God and make Him our all in all?" We have a choice before us. We can...

1. ...draw closer to God. We can say, "Hey, I can't do it on my own. Every time I try to find satisfaction on my own I fail, so I'm going to God because He's God." Or, we can...
2. ...be repulsed away from the things of God.

Right now, some of us are saying, "I am hungering and thirsting but God's the last place I'm going to get filled. I'm going to go after the things of this world and get them because I know myself better. I know what I need and what I want." Our neighborhoods, our workplaces and our schools are filled with these people. They are great and wonderful people but the problem is how they answer the question of where they're going to find their satisfaction. Instead of choosing God, they're choosing self and the things of this world. Sadly, some of us are doing the same thing. Though we say God is our all in all we are living and making decisions every day to pursue the things of this world.

Jesus says we have to hunger and thirst. So herein lies the issue: if we need to hunger and thirst, there's a need. To hunger and thirst means I desire something that I don't have. So when Jesus is addressing the people in the Sermon on the Mount, He's addressing a group of people who are needy. He's saying, "All right. If you're hungry and thirsty, that means you don't have something you need."

There are two elements to having spiritual hunger and thirst.

We Must Be Dissatisfied with Our Present Situation

To hunger and thirst means there is an inherent lack or need. To hunger and thirst for God is an acknowledgement that I need more in my present situation. The longer I go without that need, the hungrier I become and the greater my thirst becomes.

Right now, a lot of us are not hungering and thirsting because we are not dissatisfied with the present state of affairs in our lives. In other words, we have all that we can ever ask for—our credit cards take care of any need on demand. We've put our satisfaction in the things of this world—our house, cars, money and even the noble things of this world like our family, friends and status—and we feel completely content where we are.

Jesus says, "If you are going to truly be satisfied, then you need to be dissatisfied with the things of this world." The first step of hungering and thirsting is to do what Solomon did. He had a lot. At the end of his life he looked at all that he had—his accomplishments, his female companions, his riches, everything—and he said, "Meaningless, meaningless, utterly meaningless. It doesn't do anything to satisfy me. I need something more" ([Ecclesiastes 1](#)).

We need to understand that if we're going to hunger and thirst for God, we must look at this world and be dissatisfied with what we have. Being discontent with the things of this world will bring us the joy and contentment God wants to give.

We Must Be Desperate Because We Are Starving

Spiritual hunger and thirst also involves being desperate because we are starving. Here's the problem: when Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst," nothing in our experience today here in America will help us understand the force of His words. Jesus isn't saying, "Blessed are those whose stomachs are growling in between meals." Jesus isn't saying,

"Hey, I've been talking for a while. I know breakfast was a long time ago and lunch is still a couple hours away. Now you're feeling some rumbles in your belly and are hoping for a meal to come." That's not what He's saying.

We have to put ourselves in the ancient world because we don't get it. We have food on demand. We're never hungry. I mean, some of us can't even make it home from church—we stop at McDonald's just to hold us over on the commute. We're never hungry. We always have food at our disposal.

In the ancient world these people always understood the threat of hunger. They lived in a land with scorching heat, brutal season changes, sandstorms and windstorms—all while trying to farm and survive as part of an agrarian society. They did this without technology and not knowing what the weather was going to be like. They experienced famine upon famine. People understood what it meant to not live in excess, surviving with the bare minimum. People understood there was no guarantee of a meal tomorrow. That is why Jesus called them to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" ([Matthew 6:11](#)).

Do you remember the story of Elijah? [Elijah](#) has pronounced a famine and causes him to hurt as well. There's no rain in the land for three and a half years. He's out in the wilderness and he's hungry; he has nowhere to go. He looks for a place to stay and something to eat when he comes to a house where there's a widow and her son. She says, "Hey, we have nothing to offer you. We are about to eat our last meal and then die."

This is the type of society these people understood. When we hear hunger and thirst, we have to take ourselves out of the "go to the refrigerator or the cupboard to get a snack" mentality. We have to go to the mentality of these people who did not know if they would have another meal to eat tomorrow. When Jesus says hunger and thirst, He's talking about people who are starving for provision—people who aren't just hungry in a little way but in a massive way.

[Psalm 63:1](#) gives us picture of this, "*O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you...in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*" So it is with the life of a healthy believer in Christ. He or she never can get enough of God. We are perpetually starving, desiring more and more of Him.

Turn in your Bibles for a moment to Luke 15 where we will see the difference between hunger and what it means to starve. In [Luke 15:11-32](#) we see the story of the prodigal son. We get a picture of a man who is hungry and what his response is, compared to a man who is starving and what his response is. The prodigal son went to his father and said, "Hey, I know you're not dead but I want your inheritance."

I In both the Middle Eastern culture and the Western culture, you just don't do that. I'd love to be there when you go to your old man and say, "Hey, I know you're not dead yet but I want your money. Give me the inheritance as if you were dead so I can do what I want with it." It's not good. That's what this man did. He was so selfish that he went to his father and acted as if he was dead. "Give me my inheritance." Notice what it says in [verses 13-16](#):

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

The prodigal son was hungry—not starving, but hungry. When we are casual regarding our hunger, we will quickly try to find provision on our own. So be careful Christian who is not hungering and thirsting for God, because when you find yourself hungering you will inevitably try to find a solution to your hunger on your own.

What did the prodigal son do? He found himself in a pigpen and said, "Man, I never thought I would say this but some of this stuff that the pigs are eating sure looks good." When we enter into the world hungry and God is not satisfying to us, we will be amazed at what we will consume. Some of us might say, "Well, I would never do that evil or depraved thing and I would never break my vows to my family or my spouse."

Allow yourself to be hungry enough and you'll eat things you never would have thought possible. Look at the prodigal son. He had the finest fare when he was eating at his father's table but then on his own, he was hungry and couldn't be satisfied so he was willing to get down and dirty to eat in the mucky-mucky of the pigpen. He wanted to fix it on his own. If you find yourself hungry, many times you'll try to fix it on your own no matter how dirty you have to become to get it.

Notice that the text says his hunger continued. No one would give him anything. He was fighting over the pigs' food. Verses 17-20 say:

But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and came to his father.

Some of us are hungering right now and are taking our hunger into our own hands. When we hunger, we try to deal with it ourselves. When we are starving, we run to Jesus.

What did the prodigal son say when he was starving? He thought back to where he was before his estrangement. "Hey, before this issue I had with my father that I created, I had it really good. I used to live like a king. Even if I can't live like a king, I'll humble myself and become one of the servants because even the servants have bread. But I'm starving here and I need some food. The only place I can go to get food is my father's table."

When you starve spiritually it will lead you to God's arms. God is there. The story is beautiful because as the son was far off, the father came running. That's what God wants us to do. God wants us to see our place of starvation and be reminded of what things used to be like.

Remember the Book of Genesis. The reason we have Genesis 1, 2 and 3 is to remind us of what we could have had and to remind us that wherever we are now, it doesn't have to be that way. The reminder is, "Man, Adam and Eve sure had it good in the Garden of Eden. Long before they blew it and long before we blew it, we had it pretty good. I want to go back to that because that's where satisfaction is found." So the prodigal son ran back to his father and we need to run back to God. We need to starve for this righteousness.

2. Experiencing True Happiness Involves Relying on God's Righteousness

Notice that experiencing true happiness isn't that we just live in accordance with this requirement but God also has to do something. We have to rely on God's righteousness. To hunger and thirst means we have nothing.

The best way to illustrate this is to think of it as a dinner. Some of us think our spiritual lives are like a potluck. When we come to Jesus, we all come with our dish to pass. "Here's what I have to offer. I brought this wonderful casserole and it's really good." One person can't bring all the food but we can each bring part of it.

This is what the Apostle Paul says, "*I've got to get rid of a righteousness of my own.*" Our righteousness is not a potluck. We don't bring anything. We need to recognize that we don't come with what we have. We come empty-handed and starving. Paul says, "*I count everything as loss...as rubbish*" (Philippians 3:8). We're not bringing a beautiful casserole; we're bringing junk. It's full of all kinds of grotesque things. Everybody looks at it and says, "Hey, you brought nothing. That's sick. Get that out of here."

What God does is a beautiful picture. For us to get righteousness, God has to be the caterer. Did you get that? One of the great things about being the caterer is you control most events. If you don't show up, the event goes downhill quickly. That puts a lot of pressure on you! I catered an event last night at our church for Servantworks, a ministry we support that helps rescue ladies from the sex trade in Thailand. That banquet wouldn't have gone well from a food standpoint if I didn't show up. Why? Everybody came empty-handed to the dinner, fully recognizing that someone else was going to bring the food.

Let me tell you something: the only thing we bring to the table is hunger and thirst. God is the celestial caterer Who says, "I'm backing up the truck full of grace, mercy, love and righteousness. I'm going to set the table and all you need to do is bring your appetite. Stop bringing your garbage. Leave that at home because I have plenty of food to go around." You will walk away satisfied from the meal.

We need to recognize that we have to rely on God's righteousness. It's not a righteousness of our own that bring it to the table. Remember, we're spiritually poor. We are bankrupt.

This Involves Understanding a Spiritual Concept

What is this righteousness? Whom does it impact? Where do I go to experience it?

If we want to have this righteousness and be satisfied, it is imperative that we understand where some people say this blessing—this satisfaction—comes from.

1. Some of the more liberal scholars of Scripture would say that this righteousness is a social righteousness. In other words, we are to be righteous in our dealings with those who hunger and thirst. That means we can call ourselves righteous if we are meeting the needs of those who are hungry and thirsty in our society. Now let me tell you right away, that is not the intent of the passage. It is not a social gospel about reaching the lost.

Yes, we are called to reach those who are hungry and thirsty. The true believer will be the most generous person of all. When the true believer sees those who are hungry and thirsty, he or she is quick to address the physical needs such as giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name ([Matthew 10:42](#)). But that's not the intention of what Jesus is saying here. Social righteousness isn't His intent.

2. It's also not a righteousness that we get at salvation. Some would say that Jesus is telling a group of unbelievers, "You who hunger and thirst for righteousness, come and you will receive salvation. Satisfaction is found in salvation so those who hunger and thirst for salvation will get righteousness."

Scratch that one out. While I can see how you might get that from the passage, herein lies the problem: the Bible says repeatedly that the unspiritual man—the sinner—does not seek after God or the things of God. Scripture also tells us that the spiritual things of God are unlearned by them because they are not spiritually discerning.

So with this interpretation, we are saying, "Okay, come even though you don't want to come. Hunger and thirst even though Scripture says you don't hunger and thirst." For us to hunger and thirst for the things of God, God must put that hunger and thirst within us—He has to create the desire within us.

So what is this righteousness? Jesus is talking about a theological word some of you may not know. It's "sanctifying righteousness." Remember that Jesus has various audiences. He has those who really don't care about anything He's saying; they just don't like Him. Then there are those who are there because they're waiting for the "magic show" after He's done talking. They want to see all the signs and wonders—maybe he'll start healing people. Then there are those who are following Him because they are spiritually bankrupt; they hunger and thirst for the things of God.

There's one more audience. Remember, His disciples are also with Him. I believe that Jesus is not talking to anyone and everyone in these Beatitudes—He's talking to His disciples. "Do you want to follow after Me? This is what it means to follow Christ." So Jesus is saying, "Happy is the man who has tasted and seen that the Lord is good and has given all of his appetites and needs over to the care of God." We need to understand that as a follower of Jesus Christ, this means I don't hunger and thirst for God just once in my life. It means each day I am hungering and thirsting for God.

It's hard to unpack this in the original languages. If you want to have a conversation about the original languages, we can do that later. In the original Greek language—in which the New Testament is written—it is as if Jesus mixed up His sentence and put the words out of place. When that happens in the Greek language, it means the speaker is saying something with great effect behind it. Jesus is saying, "Don't just come to Me for a meal. Don't hunger and thirst for part of Me. Hunger and thirst for all of Me, for all that I have to offer."

Now let me explain what I mean by way of application. Some years ago Amanda and I went on a cruise. It was our first cruise and I had heard that you eat like a king on cruises. Let me tell you, you eat like a king. It's awesome. I remember the difference between sitting at the table the first night and the second night. The first night you just do what everybody else does because you don't have a clue what you're doing. The second night I got a little bolder in my responses and said, "Hey, this is my vacation. I want it my way so I'm going to ask some questions and see what happens."

As I read the menu, it all looked great. It was hard to decide what I wanted. I said to the waiter, "Man, it's really hard to decide. It's too bad you can't get one of each."

The waiter said, "Well sir, we can give you both of those entrées if you'd like."

I thought, "Ah! I would like both of those—very much so." Then the light bulb went on and I asked, "Hey, what if someone wanted the entire menu? Could you do that?"

The waiter turned around, looked at the kitchen and then indicated that yes, it was all available to me. I felt like I'd died and gone to heaven. Everything on the menu—every appetizer, soup, bread, entrée and dessert was set before your pastor's plate. Amanda was horrified but I ate like a king. I mean, wow, it was glorious!

That's what God wants to do in our lives. We look at the menu and it says at the top, "The Menu of God's Righteousness." We say, "Well, I'll have a little of this for an appetizer, a little of this for the entrée and just a little sweet righteousness at the end of my meal." God says, "That's not what I want you to hunger and thirst for—I want you to hunger and thirst for the whole menu."

Understand this, Christian: God wants to empty the kitchen of His righteousness for you. Do you get that? He wants to give all of Himself to you. That means you have to hunger and thirst for it. Some of us are watching our spiritual waistlines and saying, "Well, I'll just have a little of this and a little of that. Do you have a low-calorie version of holiness that I can have? In fact, put it on the side because I'll put it on as needed."

God is saying, "Hunger and thirst. I want to clean out the kitchen for you."

On that cruise, I became the central figure in that dining room. As the meal went on, I saw more and more waiters looking to the kitchen and making the same motion mine had made. Why? Because when we see someone fully satisfied, it's contagious. You will do well in the way of evangelism if you eat the things of God and come out with your bellies full of good things from God.

People are going to say, "Hey, wait a minute. Where did you get that? I want that." Two men at the table next to me said, "Hey, I want that! I want what that man's having. I don't know who he is or what he's all about but he sure looks happy and I want that."

When you and I are satisfied with the things of God, people will start to ask questions. The sad thing is we're trying to peddle a Jesus Who doesn't satisfy us. Why in the world do we think that would satisfy anyone else? We need to be satisfied in Him and hungering and thirsting for all of the righteousness of God. When you are, then you'll be amazed at how the floodgates will open up and people will say, "Hey, wait a minute! In a dry and weary land, I want what he's having. Give me that." Then we can say, "It's Jesus. He's the One Who satisfies."

This Involves the Myriad of Choices We Make

How do we know if we're there? How do you know if you're hungering and thirsting for righteousness? It is seen in the myriad of choices you make. Look back. What did you eat this week? Were you eating the things of God? Were you starving for the things of God? Or was it more about you and the pursuit of the things in this world?

Spiritual hunger will lead us to fulfill our needs. Here's the problem: we judge each other. We say, "Can you believe how much cake that person ate? I mean, did you see the meat and potatoes on Badal's plate? I don't struggle with that and I don't know why he struggles with it. Why can't he just watch what he's eating?"

In our sinful natures, each of us has a different appetite for different things so we fight each other about whose appetite is right and whose appetite is wrong. We're all wrong in our appetites apart from God and we really need God to restore right appetites in our lives.

So how do we do that? I'm going to get some help from a totally secular group—Weight Watchers. I'm going to apply Weight Watchers' physical principles to our spiritual needs.

1. Watch what you eat. Weight Watchers says if you want to be a physically healthy person with a physically healthy diet, you need to log everything you put into your mouth. Write it down. If you had a piece of bread, write "piece of bread." If you had a salad, write "salad." If you ate a whole apple pie at the party, write "whole apple pie." Why? So we

know what we're consuming. If we don't know what we're consuming, then we'll never be able to get rid of the things in our lives that aren't supposed to be there.

So the question is, "Are you watching—keeping track of—what you're eating spiritually?" Are you recognizing the things you're putting into your life? Do you acknowledge, "Well, I'm watching this television show and this is what the show is doing and saying, so I need to log that. Then here are the spiritual things I've done and the godly disciplines I've put into my life. I'm writing those down so I can have a record and can start building on something."

If you go to Weight Watchers and say, "Well, I gained three pounds," they'll ask how that happened. They don't want you to say, "Well, I don't know." Some of you are fighting sin and temptation and the pastor comes along and asks, "Why are you falling?" You need to watch what you eat.

2. Weigh your options. Weight Watchers has every kind of food entered into a point system. They say you can eat anything but it's going to cost you. So you have to ask the question, "Is my daily allotment of points worth that snack I'm craving? Is it really worth it?" Before you put something in your mouth, you have to think through the consequences of that choice.

Spiritually speaking, you need to look at the world and what it's offering. You need to stop and ask the question, "What is the consequence of consuming that sinful thing? What is going to happen as a result? Is it worth it?"

Some of us are willing to put all kinds of garbage into our lives spiritually because we aren't asking the question, "Is it worth it?" When our marriages break up, when we find our relationships all out of whack, when we find our fellowship with God is gone, we sit there and ask, "What happened?" It is because we were eating with reckless abandon, not thinking of the consequences. We weren't thinking that what we were taking in might cause a spiritual heart attack. We need to weigh our options.

3. Welcome the good stuff. In their program, Weight Watchers says there are certain types of food that you can have as much as you want. You can eat fruits, vegetables and some other healthy things to your heart's content.

Spiritually speaking, when we submerge ourselves in God's Word He doesn't say, "Hey, watch your portions." He says, "Eat up. Taste and see that I'm good. Eat up because this will bring you life. You don't have to have any guilt. You just keep eating and eating because this honors Me and this is good."

A perfect example is the issue of intimacy. The world says have intimacy because that's what your body craves. Go get it anywhere you can, with whomever you can, with no strings attached. But we know there are all kinds of strings attached to that. But when a man and woman come together within the bonds of marriage where they have committed to themselves and to God that they are going to stay monogamous and true to one another, God says of that intimacy, "Knock your socks off."

Now wait a minute. Over there God says, "Forbidden." Over here He says, "Have a ball." We need to understand that when we consume the good things of God—in His timing and His ways—He takes off all the limitations. He says, "Go for it. Have a blast."

Some of us need to reorder our Christian lives to understand that we need to watch what we're eating, weigh our options and welcome the good things of God.

3. Experiencing True Happiness Involves Finding the Great Reward of Obedience

Notice what happens when we welcome that good stuff. God says we will be satisfied. That is the great reward. God bookends it with "You'll be blessed" and "You'll be satisfied."

I love that my Savior spoke Aramaic in His earthly ministry and earthly days. Aramaic is the ancient Assyrian language. There are words that Jesus spoke and are recorded in Aramaic that are still true in my father's native tongue of Assyrian.

The word “blessed” is the word *brikha* in Aramaic. Brikha means blessed. You would use it when wishing for someone to have a blessed day—a brikha kind of day. Brikha literally means that every blessing you can think of is in a pool and when you tell someone brikha you literally are saying, “I want to submerge you into that pool of goodness.” So when Jesus says, “Blessed [*brikha*] are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied,” He is saying in His native tongue, “I want to submerge you in My blessings so when I pull you out you’re dripping wet with them.”

It is the same picture as the Greeks used for baptizō, meaning to plunge into and to pull out. It means that we are just full of the blessings of God. That’s what brikha means. When we are blessed, we will be satisfied.

So how does this satisfaction come? Notice a couple of things:

1. It is complete satisfaction. John 4:14 says, “But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 6:35 says, “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’” If that doesn’t convince you, look at what Psalms 107:9 says, “For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.” Brikha.
2. It is eternal. When is it going to happen? Is it just one time? No, it’s eternal. Luke 22:29-30, “And I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom...” There’s a day coming when we’ll sit around the table of God and enjoy the finest of fare.
3. It begins with an invitation. Isaiah 55:1-3 says this:

Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live.

God is inviting you to His table. He is saying to you, “Come. I want to give you the best of the best. I want to submerge you in My blessings. I want to give you the best food and drink.” But it means you and I must “seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.” When we do that, Scripture says, “*And all these other things will be added to you*” (Matthew 6:33).

So we are what we eat, my friends. The tragedy is that our world is starving for sex, wealth, violence and the excitement of worldly passions. Sadly many of us find ourselves nibbling on such things, making our diets as pathetic and empty as those of the world. But Jesus has provided the menu and righteousness is set before us. The method is our desperation and the result is satisfaction—now and forevermore.

Let’s pray.

Father God, we come before You thanking You for Your Word. I pray that we would take to heart what You have to say to us—that we would truly be hungry and thirsty for You. I pray that You would allow us in our desperation and by the Spirit’s help to see our need and that the answer is found in You. I pray as we go out into this world that we would truly watch what we’re eating spiritually, that we would weigh our options of temptation versus righteousness and that we would welcome the righteous and good things that You offer us. I pray that we would truly find the satisfaction that You have promised us—not only in this life, but in the one to come. Empower us by Your Spirit as we leave this place. I pray that we would truly seek after You, Your Kingdom and Your righteousness first, knowing that satisfaction will come as a result. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.