

# Wilderness Temptation: If You Are...

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Good morning, Christ Church.

My name is Bill Barnes, and I am part of the Bavinkian community group. And I'm going to be reading this morning from Genesis, the book of Genesis, Genesis 3.1.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, Did God really say, you must not eat?

From any tree in the garden? The woman said to the serpent, We may eat fruit from trees in the garden, but God did say, You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] You will not certainly die, the serpent said to the woman, For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked.

So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

And they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, Where are you? He answered, I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked.

[ 2 : 3 0 ] So I hid. The grass withers, and the flowers fall. The word of our God stands forever. Our gospel lesson today is a reading from the gospel according to Matthew.

Matthew. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment, heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

And a voice from heaven said, This is my Son, whom I love. With Him, I'm well pleased. Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil.

After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

Jesus answered, It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him to the holy city, and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

[ 3 : 47 ] If you are the Son of God, he said, Throw yourself down, for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Jesus answered him, It is also written, Do not put the Lord your God to the test. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their splendor.

All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me. Jesus said to him, Away from me, Satan, for it is written, Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ. Well, thanks, Bill, for that scripture reading.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Christ Church. My name is Andrew, and I'm one of the pastors here. Will you pray with me as we open up God's word? Our Father, we pray that you would help us to believe, just as our Savior, Jesus, that we shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from your mouth.

[ 5 : 10 ] Thank you for being a God who speaks words to us. And in the preaching of your word, O God, we pray that you would help us to believe them, as our Savior did, that we might overcome the schemes of the devil, and the lies that he spits into our ears.

Help our unbelief, we pray. In the name of Jesus, amen. All right, so a few weeks ago, I got to meet a grad student from Cal, and this is one of the things I love about Christ Church.

We always have people coming through our doors, sitting in our pews, who are not Christians. I love that about our church. And so he came, and it was his first Sunday here, and he was really open with me right off the bat.

He said, you know, I used to be a Christian, but I'm not anymore. I can't believe anymore, and I'm not sure if I ever really did believe, but I'm willing to talk to people to try to figure things out.

I said, well, you're welcome here. We love that you're here. We're so excited about that. Let's talk. So a few days before Christmas, we got on the phone. I went out for a walk with my dog. Actually, that was irrelevant, but I did that on the phone with him.

[ 6 : 12 ] And we talked for about an hour and a half, and I got to hear some of his story. And, you know, basically, his big hang-up with Christianity was, you know, I can believe my science and history textbooks and the proven facts that are within them, but I have trouble believing the Bible and this unproven Christ.

And so, you know, I tried to share with him what I thought was strong evidence for, you know, the historicity of Jesus and the reliability of the Scriptures, but you know what we spent most of our time talking about that day?

What we spent most of our time talking about was not the evidences surrounding Jesus, but what we talked about was the nature of belief, the nature of faith itself, like how and why do we even believe the things that we believe, or what makes something truly believable as true and as trustworthy.

And I tried to show him that whether you're the most spiritual, pious, religious, holy man in the world, or you're the most secular, scientific, anti-supernatural, modern person in the world, at the very bottom, we all have to live by faith.

We all have to live by faith, whether faith in a personal God who makes the world revolve around the sun and maintains the laws of gravity, or faith in some impersonal force, or faith in chance, that by chance, somehow the sun will just rise tomorrow, and in the next second, we all won't start levitating from our pews, right?

[ 7 : 40 ] And so I challenged him to consider, like, sure, you can doubt Christianity, and I understand why you would doubt Christianity, but like, why, but like, what are the things that you don't doubt, and why not?

What are the ultimate things that you're most convinced of, the things that you can place your faith in, is what I asked him. And that's the question I want to ask all of us today. What are we placing our faith in?

What is the one thing we are most convinced of in all the world, so convinced we'd stake our whole lives upon it? What is the one thing that we believe about ourselves, and about the world, and about God, that if this one thing were not true, everything else would unravel for us?

You know, for the French philosopher, Rene Descartes, his one thing was what? I think, therefore I am. I doubt, therefore I am. His one thing was that, because at the very least, I know that I'm doubting with my mind, even that I'm doubting that I have a mind, if I'm doubting, I know that I have a mind.

That was his one thing, that he could doubt everything. And maybe that's where some of us are at today. This broken world has given us so many reasons to doubt. We've been let down repeatedly by all the people and all the institutions and all the systems that promised never to fail us, our parents, our politicians, our churches, our technologies.

[ 8 : 54 ] We feel like there is nothing and no one we can trust, not even ourselves. And so maybe we're like today, you know, okay, that's my one thing. The only thing I can be convinced of is that I cannot be convinced of anything.

The only thing I can trust is that I cannot trust anything or anyone. But you know, even the atheist British philosopher, Bertrand Russell, he said that while such skepticism is logically flawless, it is psychologically impossible.

It is unlivable. No one can truly live with such radical skepticism. So again, the honest truth is we all have to make calls about what we're gonna believe, what we're gonna place our faith in, what we're gonna commit our lives to.

And if that sounds scary to you, well, yeah, it is. It's incredibly scary, right? Because whatever we most fundamentally believe will affect our whole life. There is nothing more important than assessing what our deepest beliefs and commitments are, what we are placing our trust in with our whole lives.

And you could probably guess what I would tell you to trust and believe. I'm a pastor. I'm preaching the Bible. You know, you might expect me to say, believe in Jesus. believe the Bible is God's word. So I don't feel like I need to do that today, at least not explicitly.

[ 10 : 04 ] But what I wanna do for all of us today is I wanna look at what Jesus himself placed his ultimate trust in. I want us to consider what, according to the Christian tradition, this ideal human, God himself, in the flesh, what he committed and submitted himself to.

And I want us to consider whether following him, believing what he believed, trusting what he trusted, might actually be a good idea for all of us too. And maybe you're like, yo, what does any of this have to do with this temptation narrative that we just read about Jesus?

And my response to that is that we have to understand that temptation is not merely about behavior. Behavior flows from belief.

Behavior flows from faith, from our deepest, seated commitments. If you are tempted to, if you're tempted by and to succumb to pornography, you are not just tempted to some act with your eyes.

Deep down in your heart, you believe, you have faith that there is more pleasure, more fulfillment, more satisfaction in the objectification of other human beings than in living and loving God's way.

[ 11 : 11 ] If you are tempted by greed, you are not just tempted to the act of hoarding and withholding your money and your resources. Deep down, you believe that God won't provide for you and that you have to provide for yourself.

So if we want to address the wayward behaviors of our lives, if we want victory over temptation, we have to look at our hearts. We have to look at our faith commitments.

And that's why I wanted us to hear the original temptation account this morning from Genesis chapter 3. Because see, yes, Adam and Eve, they shouldn't have committed the action of eating the fruit.

But do you know what the real fatal sin was even before that? The sin that led them to eat the fruit? They stopped believing God's word. They doubted God's word. Instead of crushing the serpent, they entertained the question, did God really say?

They entertained the serpent's question and they subjected the creator's word to their own creaturely scrutiny and skepticism and analysis. Even doubting his character. Entertaining the thought that God was not truly for them.

[ 12 : 15 ] Entertaining the thought that God was not truly loving. That God was not truly good. That God was withholding something from them. The original sin wasn't merely the eating of some forbidden fruit.

But it was a lack of faith in God's true word and in God's good character. It wasn't merely a sin of the hands or the lips but a sin of the heart.

So again, we have to look at our hearts. We have to consider our deepest faith commitments. And this is also why we picked back up and read some of our passage from last week from Matthew chapter 3 verses 16 and 17.

I wanted to remind us of Jesus' baptism. Of Jesus' ultimate faith commitment. His faith and trust in the words his father spoke to him at his baptism from the heavens.

This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. See, this was Jesus' ultimate faith commitment. This is what he believed more than anything else in all the world.

[ 13 : 15 ] Right before entering the wilderness temptation, Jesus heard the word of God and he was anointed with the spirit of God crying, Abba, Father, within his heart. And this word and this spirit who confirmed to him that he was truly God's son, truly loved by his father and even truly liked and pleasing to his father, this was the word.

This was Jesus' one thing, the one thing he most believed, the one truth he was most committed to and convinced of. This word from his father about who he was. This was his ultimate truth against which every other truth was tested.

And that's what this wilderness temptation account is about. In the wilderness, Jesus' ultimate faith commitment is tested. That's what's happening here. This is not just a little nice story telling us how to overcome temptation.

This is a story about whether or not Jesus will be the son of God who saves the world. The stakes are high. Will the second Adam succeed? Where the first Adam failed? When the first Adam plunged creation into a state of hell, will the second Adam be able to bring us to new creation by withstanding the temptation of the devil?

Does that make sense? All right, now let's turn to this temptation account in Matthew chapter four. So again, this is the scene, this is the context. Jesus has just had the most defining moment of his life thus far, right?

[ 14 : 39 ] He is literally defined from the heavens by his Father in heaven as a pleasing and beloved Son of God. And we are told in verse one that the Spirit then leads him out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

And I want us to pay really, really close attention to what exactly the temptation was for Jesus here. All right, let's pay close attention. So in verse two, it says that he had been fasting for 40 days and 40 nights and that of course he was hungry.

Just imagine him, like, you know, unlike Adam and Eve in their lush garden able to eat from any tree they want around them except for just that one. Jesus here is all alone. He has no partner.

He's in a desert wilderness. He's starving and perhaps even threatened by wild animals, all right? 40 days is a long time. This is no joke. His body is probably shutting down. His muscles are probably atrophying.

He's probably just sitting there still trying to preserve energy, right? His vision is probably going blurry. He probably can't think as straight as he normally does and it is precisely at this point of weakness that the devil strikes, right?

[ 15 : 40 ] And again, try to pay close attention to what the actual temptation is here. Read with me, verse three. The tempter came to him and said, if you are the son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

Now, did you catch that? The temptation here is not just doing a magic trick in order to break one's fast and eat some bread. Jesus' sin here isn't breaking his keto diet and making some carbs for himself out of stones.

The devil was questioning his identity as the son of God. The devil was questioning God's words spoken from the heavens about Jesus at his baptism.

He was tempting Jesus to doubt his father's words by saying, if you are the son of God. The tempter was using the same method on Jesus, the second Adam, as he used on the first Adam.

You can't trust your father's words. You can't trust his declaration of your identity. You can't trust that he loves you. You need to confirm it with other outside proofs.

[ 16 : 42 ] And Jesus, the proof is the self-serving transformation of these rocks into bread. And you know, I think for some of us that Jesus is fully God.

You know, it makes it hard for us to sympathize with the reality of his temptation. But you know, Orthodox Christianity has always said that Jesus is not just fully God, but he is fully man and therefore fully tempted.

Like truly tempted in every way just like us. As the apostle writes in Hebrews chapter 4, we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet he did not sin.

So we have to understand how tempted Jesus actually was here. Imagine, just imagine, this is the Son of God, right? From all eternity, he has always been fulfilled in the presence of his Father.

And yet now he's become human and now he's hungry, lonely, feeling insecure, maybe even on the brink of death. And in one sense, the tempter was right, right? The Son of God is not supposed to be hungry.

[ 17 : 50 ] No child of God is supposed to be hungry, right? But if we follow this logic apart from the rest of what God says, you could start to wonder, well, am I actually a child of God?

Does he really love me? Or is my Father just not able to truly take care of me? This is what Satan was trying to introduce into the mind and the heart of Jesus.

You cannot trust the power and authority of your Father's Word at your baptism. You cannot trust his love and his care. You can only trust and believe in the power and authority of your own words.

So speak, Jesus. Speak, he says, and let's see if you really are the Son of God. Speak your own words. Exercise your own authority. Serve your own ends. Feed and provide for yourself if you are the Son of God.

I mean, surely the Son of God has authority to do so, right? And who's it gonna hurt? Doesn't your Father even want this for you? It's a pretty smart and subtle strategy, right? The same strategy used, again, on Adam and Eve and also on all of us.

[ 18 : 55 ] I mean, really, how many of us have entertained these similar thoughts? Tempted in times of need and desperation to question whether or not we are children of God loved by our Father.

Tempted to take our own lives into our own hands and to stop trusting God for our daily bread. Maybe we don't tell rocks to turn into bread, but we do have various tricks of our own, don't we?

Maybe we, instead of Sabbathing, we take that extra shift, pick up that extra side hustle. Maybe we withhold our generosity fib on our tax returns all to make that bread, right?

This was Jesus' temptation and it's a temptation common to all of us, the temptation to doubt that we are children of a good, loving, caring, and capable Father.

It's the same temptation as always, the temptation to distrust God, the temptation that fractured all of creation's relationship with its creator. But the good news about Jesus, the second Adam, is that unlike the first Adam, unlike all the rest of us, he didn't believe this lie about his own identity or about his father's love and care and capability.

[ 20 : 07 ] No, even when his circumstances made it seem like his father's words to him might possibly be untrue, he believed. He entrusted his whole life to his father's words.

Jesus had been soaking like a sponge in the scriptures and every time the devil poked, scripture dripped out. Reciting from the divinely inspired Hebrew scriptures, Deuteronomy chapter 8, Moses' words to Israel in the wilderness, verse 4, Jesus answered, it is written, man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Even after 40 days with no food, even on the brink of death, Jesus trusts that he is his father, he is his father in heaven's beloved and well-pleasing son.

He trusts that somehow his father will provide him with his daily bread and that ultimately his father's word will sustain him. But now the devil doesn't give up so easily, he launches into a second temptation basically saying, will you, Jesus?

Like, will you really live? Look at verse 5. Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. If you are the son of God, he said again, throw yourself down for it is written, he will command his angels concerning you and they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

[ 21 : 33 ] The devil sees Jesus' faith, his conviction that he will live by the word of God so he takes the words out of God's mouth and he uses scripture itself to tempt Jesus. Satan basically says, okay, you believe you'll live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, how about this word from Psalm chapter 91?

Let's test it. Let's be good empirical scientists, right? No offense to the scientists in this room. Don't you want to see if it's true is what he says to Jesus? Don't you want to see if it's true?

Now if you want to look at Psalm chapter 91, it's on page 480 in your pew Bibles, but you'll notice that it's a psalm, it's all about God's protection. Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

No harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent for he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

But very interestingly, the verse Satan omits, the verse right after this passage that he quotes is verse 13 if you want to take a look at that. It says, you will tread on the lion and the cobra.

[ 22 : 41 ] You will trample the great lion and the serpent. Now remember, ever since the fall, a war has been waged between the people of God and the serpent.

And what did God say as soon as they fell? He said, the offspring of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. So Satan is saying to Jesus, alright, let's do this. Throw yourself down. Let's see if God will protect these feet of yours that are supposed to crush my head, that are supposed to trample me.

Come on, Jesus. Let's go for it. Let's test it out right now. Let's test out God's word. Go for it. Let's do this. Let's make a show of it. Then you and me and everyone at the temple will really know whether God's word is true.

Whether you are God's beloved and well-pleasing son. Whether you are the son of God. Whether you actually live by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

But Jesus will not take the bait. Verse 7. This time citing Deuteronomy chapter 6, Jesus answered, it is also written, do not put the Lord your God to the test.

[ 23 : 43 ] Jesus says, I know what Psalm 91 says, man. And I already believe it. I don't need to test it. I don't need to manipulate God or to force his hand to assure myself of his loving care and his loving power.

Besides, who are we to demand proof from God that what he says is true? It's silly. And I mean, what would even constitute proof? How many loaves of bread would Jesus need to turn stones into?

Or how many loaves of bread would Jesus need to transform? Or how many times would he need to throw himself off the temple and be rescued by the angels for him to really, really be sure, right, that God's word was true?

How many times? You know, when I was talking to this grad student from Cal, I asked him, do you even know what it would take for you to believe these things that you say are hard for you to believe, just like you believe the things in your science books and your history textbooks?

I asked him, how do we even define what a fact is? How many scientific experiments does it take to make something a verified fact and get it into a scientific textbook?

[ 24 : 51 ] And is that scientific textbook then infallible? How many experiments? A thousand? A thousand one? A thousand two? A thousand three? Or how many eyewitness accounts? Or how much archaeological consensus does it take for something to be a verified fact within a history book, right?

At the end of the day, the highest standard of truth, it has to be something that's self-attesting by its very nature. And this is how Jesus saw the word of God. This is how Jesus saw the scriptures.

For Jesus, God's word wasn't a hypothesis to be tested, but the ultimate standard of truth. And God's word to him was that no matter what anyone else said, no matter what his circumstances seemed to be like, you are my beloved son and with you I am well pleased.

And Jesus took that to the bank and he lived by those words from his father. And you see, this is what got Jesus through all his temptations. He believed God's word. He was utterly convinced of who God said he was by faith.

And the question for us is, do we believe? Do we have faith in who God says we are? For those of us who are tired of falling into the same temptations again and again and again, maybe for you it has to do with your eating habits or maybe it's your sex life or maybe it's your laziness or maybe it's your overworking or your greed or maybe it just has to do with how you treat and view and think about others in your life.

[ 26 : 16 ] Maybe with disregard or malice, whatever it is that tempts you, the solution is not simply trying harder. It's not merely a matter of better technique or self-mastery.

The solution is coming to grips with who God says we are. You know, I might not look like it, but every week I go to this exercise class at 24 Hour Fitness and it's called Body Pump and I exercise with a bunch of middle-aged moms and senior citizens and I used to go to the class out in Oakland on High Street and the instructor was great.

He was really good at inspiring us and for some reason he used to call me Richard. I don't really get that. It's not relevant. But anyways, he was great at pushing us, inspiring us and he would often say this.

He would say, come on athletes, come on athletes and I'd be like, yeah, yeah, I'm an athlete. Extra burpee. Extra squat, right? And you know, like, I was able to overcome physical limits that I thought I had by believing who he said I was.

An athlete, right? Well, how much truer is what God says about who we are? When Jesus leaned into who exactly God told him he was, he overcame the most tempting of temptations.

[ 27 : 40 ] The only kinds of people who can overcome temptation is those who believe the word of God. It's those who believe what God says about who they are. Specifically, that they are children of God, loved, well-pleasing before their father in heaven.

A father so willing to declare that he rends the heavens and speaks it in front of everyone. But now I say this knowing full well that for some of us, this is precisely the problem.

This is a huge problem. I've sat with enough of you, tears running down your cheeks, desperation in your eyes, hopelessness there. I've sat with enough of you to know that even for those of you who want to believe, who want to believe in the God of the scriptures, who want to believe that there is a father in heaven who loves you more than you could ever imagine, I know that this can seem impossible for many of us to believe.

Like prodigal children who just can't seem to believe our father's words of welcome home, who can't seem to put that ring on or put that robe on that he so wants us to have, who can't seem to take a bite of the fattened calf, right, who can't seem to enjoy the party that our father wants for us to enjoy.

And while I continue to pray that the spirit comes upon you and cries, Abba, Father, in your hearts, just as he cried, Abba, Father, in Jesus' heart at his baptism when the spirit ascended on him like a dove, I just want to encourage you to continue leaning in.

[ 29 : 09 ] Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. This is a promise from God's word. It's a promise from God's word. And if I could just give you one more reason to lean in and draw near, could I just draw your attention to this final temptation of Jesus?

Look with me in verse 8. In verse 8, Jesus is taken to a high mountain and he's shown and offered all the kingdoms of the world in all their glory.

if he'll just bow down and worship the devil. And notice this time, Satan doesn't say, if you are the son of God. Because he probably knows that Jesus' faith is rock solid in his own God-given identity.

So Satan, who Jesus calls the ruler and God of this world, he tempts Jesus one last time saying, okay, fine. Okay, fine. You are the son of God and thus you will one day inherit all the kingdoms of the world.

This is all going to be yours at the end of the age, Jesus. But hey man, I've got a shortcut for you. I can give it to you right now if you'll bow down and worship me.

[ 30 : 17 ] And this must have been the most tempting temptation to Jesus because you know what this offer was? It was the offer of Jesus' final and rightful inheritance yet without suffering.



Yet without the cross. Satan offers to Jesus the crown without the crown of thorns. The mountaintop experience without having to go through the valley of the shadow of death. The kingdom without the cross.

And man, see the thing about temptation is that we aren't tempted to eat out of toilet bowls, right? We are tempted by good things, right? Bread is good. Security from angels is good.

All the kingdoms of the world and their glory, that's good. And not only that, but Jesus as the son of God, man, no one has more right to all of these things than Jesus, right?

And no one is less deserving of suffering than Jesus, right? But do you know what Satan was subtly offering to Jesus when he offered him the kingdom without the cross?

[ 31 : 17 ] He wasn't just offering Jesus the kingdom without the cross, he was also offering Jesus the kingdom without its citizens. The kingdom without us.

Satan said, take your inheritance now. Come into your own glory now. But if Jesus did so, how could he bring many sons and daughters into glory?

How could he make fellow brothers and sisters partakers in the kingdom of life? How could he pay for our sins and remove our curse without the cross?

And see, this is the gospel. That when Satan offered, fine, be the son of God, take your kingdom without your cross, all you have to do is bow.

Jesus said, no. Away from me, Satan, for it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

[ 32 : 22 ] And Jesus said, and I intend to do that. I intend to, even if it means hungering in the wilderness and dying upon a bloody cross. I choose to suffer and I choose to die not in spite of being my father's beloved and well-pleasing son, but precisely as the son of God, precisely as a child of God.

And verse 11 says, the angels, they came, they came to minister to him, not by his command, but by his father's. His father's word was true. And another day would come again in his life when he could have commanded legions of angels to deliver him from his Roman cross.

But no, even unto death on a cross, he continued to put his faith in the word of God, spoken from the heavens, declaring who he was, a well-pleasing and beloved son of God.

And rising again, he was vindicated, declared once and for all to be the son of God in power to all the world. And friends, this is the victorious story of the son of God, who against all odds trusted what his father said.

And this can be our story too. This can be our victory too, if we will just trust what this father in heaven says about who we are.

[ 33 : 57 ] You can be a child of God. Yet to all who received him and believed in his name, he has given them the right, it says, to be children of God. Let's come home.

Let's come home to him. Let's believe who we are in Christ. And then and only then will we conquer. Then and only then will we be delivered from the schemes of the devil.

Do you believe who God says you are? Do you believe? He wants you to know you can be my child, the one in whom I'm well pleased, the one who I love, the one who I give everything for.

And we know this here because of what Christ has done. Will you pray with me? God, would we be so convinced of what you say to us?

Would you make us a people of the word? Would you make this church a church that is committed to the word of God? Not as some intellectual exercise, but because we know that we cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from your mouth.

[ 35 : 15 ] Lord, show us how much we need your word. Show us how much we need to hear you say that you love us, that you care for us, that you are good.

God, make us a people of your word. Reading it daily, joining in our scripture reading plan, memorizing it together, meditating upon it day and night so that we might be like trees planted by streams of water which yield fruit in season and whose leaves do not wither.

Make us those kinds of people. Make us like your son. The eternal word become flesh, poured out for us, that we might know you and love you and serve this world with power and in faithfulness.

Do that, God, here we pray. In the name of Jesus, amen.