

WATCH VIDEO 1: *Members drawn away because of sin*



REFLECTION: How do we reawaken appetite for Word and sacrament?

If a loved one had no appetite, you'd be concerned about the reason for the loss of appetite. Cancer is very different from grief, and yet both can cause loss of appetite. When a member no longer feels the need to attend church, it is important to understand the reason that the Christian no longer hungers for gospel assurances. Is it a guilty conscience? Is it the lure of sin? Often the appetite returns by exposure to the Word, but sometimes "surgery" is necessary before the appetite returns. As we look at the Scripture, let's reflect on how the appetite for the Word was lost and how to reawaken it.

Psalm 34:8

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

- How does the Lord encourage us to try his Word?
- How might we pass on that encouragement to others?

Psalm 42:1-2


As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

- How does the psalmist feel about time spent with God?
- Why do you think he yearns and thirsts for time to meet with God?

- What could we tell returning members, to encourage them to thirst for time with God?

Psalm 119:9-11 How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

- How does a person hide God's Word in his heart?
- Why does the psalmist seek the Lord with all his heart?
- What could we tell returning members, to show the need we all have for God's Word?

 **REFLECTION: Isn't there a danger that if we invite a member who is living in sin to church, or welcome such a person at church that we are giving them the impression that their sin is acceptable?**

It is true that our sinful human nature looks for reasons to think that sin is not deadly. This danger also exists among Christians who attend church weekly. This problem is not solved by refusing to invite sinners to church or welcome them. Our sinful and our God-pleasing motives will be addressed in sermons, Bible class, counseling, and conversation. Our persistent sins will be addressed by our Shepherd. What better place for sinners to be, than to be in the place where the Spirit can change our hearts?

Luke 19:2-10 [Zacchaeus] was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

- What behavior of Zacchaeus shows his interest in what Jesus might do for him?

- How does Jesus show grace to Zacchaeus, before he showed signs of repentance?
- How might members who fell away but now show up in church be like Zacchaeus?

1 Peter 2:1-3 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

- How is God's Word a spiritual equivalent of milk?
- What role can God's Word have in the battle against sin?

2 Corinthians 2:6-11 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

- Why might a returning member who sinned be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow unless members reaffirm their love?
- Satan has schemes to outwit our efforts to win back the straying. In view of what you've learned in this lesson, what can we do to defeat Satan's schemes?