Hi,

Today’s updates:

* My 11am Sunday class will be week 4 of the series, *The New Testament in Seven Sentences*. We will be talking about grace. The class will meet on [my personal Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/scottengle).
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://scottengle.org/scotts-weekly-classes/). All the postings are up-to-date.
* I’ve been told that my YouTube page/channel can be hard to find. A simple solution would be to [go to the link (here)](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChtwqaUcpZbwyTWnkp6INwQ?view_as=subscriber) and then bookmark the page or subscribe to my channel.

Do you ever feel pulled in several directions at the same time? Your job wants you. Your family wants you. Your friends want you. God wants you. Do you ever feel that your life is layers of secrets, as you strive to maintain neat compartments, chopping your mind and attention into multiple slices?

The answer, of course, is that we all feel that way from time to time and, too often, much of the time. The conflicting demands on our priorities can be overwhelming, so much so that we end up with no priorities at all. Our loyalties are divided. Our hearts and minds are divided. We end up stressed out, anxious, ill, and generally miserable. Sure, you might be enjoying a bit of respite during this lockdown, but you know what is coming. What do we do?

**Matthew 6:25,33 (NRSV)**

**“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? . . . But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”**

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 (The Message)**

**Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God’s way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.**

**Revelation 10:8-9 (NRSV)**

**Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, “Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.” So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, “Take it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth.”**

*One thing*

In his wonderful book, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*, John Ortberg talks honestly about his own experience of a divided life and the difficulty of, as Jesus says, striving “first for the kingdom of God.” Even Jack Palance, in the movie *City Slickers*, understands that the secret to life is “one thing.” When Jesus admonishes Martha for getting upset that her sister, Mary, isn’t helping in the kitchen, Jesus reminds her that “there is need of only one thing” (Luke 10:38-42).

Sometimes circumstances help us to focus on “one thing” and grasp its power, such as when we are involved in good work and lose track of time. Now, we can all lose track of time in a variety of experiences, but losing yourself in Scripture is hard to describe. It is holy and it is powerful. For in that time, your heart and mind is focused like a laser on God and the things of God. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if that sort of experience, whether born in Scripture or in worship or in service, that focus on the “one thing,” characterized our entire life, not just all too brief portions of it. Our priorities would be clearer and our loyalties undivided.

*Finding focus*

Getting rid of what James calls our “double-mindedness,” requires our transformation, the “renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). That is we’ve been talking about this week, with the help of John Ortberg: developing practices that will help to transform us. Ortberg writes, “An indispensable practice is to have our minds re-formed by immersing them in Scripture . . . So how do we read the Bible in a way that will purify our hearts and help us to live as Jesus would in our place?” Scripture, illumined by the Holy Spirit, helps us to clear away all the debris from our minds and hearts, so that we can focus on Jesus’ “one thing.”

The striking image from today’s Revelation passage helps us to grasp that we must take Scripture inside us. We are to chew over it and consume it, so that it can nourish our growth. Three times in the Bible an angel hands a scroll to a prophet and tells him to eat it. The prophets are not just to read or hear God’s Word, or just understand it, or even just apply it. These people are to eat Scripture, to take it inside themselves so it gets into every part of their person and being.

All this became clearer for Eugene Peterson when he saw his dog working over a bone, slowly chewing and growling. Not long after, he was reading Isaiah 31:4, where a lion “growls” over his prey. It was one of those *aha!* moments. The Hebrew word translated “growl” is usually translated “meditate” in the Old Testament. So there’s the question for us: How often do we take the time to “growl” over Scripture? To chew on it, to take it inside ourselves, to eat it, so that we are transformed, not merely informed.

*“Take it, and eat”*

How do we “growl” over Scripture? How do we read for transformation, not just information? Ortberg offers some suggestions:

1. “Ask God to meet you in Scripture”
2. “Read the Bible in a repentant spirit”
3. “Meditate on a fairly brief passage or narrative”
4. “Take one thought or verse with you through the day”
5. “Allow this thought to become part of your memory”

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott