

## Called To Eat Unleavened Bread

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We all know that Unleavened Bread is about the removal of leavening from our lives. On a physical level, we prepare for these days by getting rid of any leavening that we find in our houses. And instead of eating leavened breads, we are told that we are to eat unleavened bread for the entire seven-day period. These physical things that we do represent a process that God is working out in our lives, in the lives of His Church.

We are a part of God's Church. We are the called-out ones. We must eat unleavened bread. As we will see today, getting rid of the leavening is one thing, but eating of unleavened bread is a continual, life-long process and commitment.

The title of today's split-sermon is *Called to Eat Unleavened Bread*.

Let's begin today by turning over to **Exodus 12:15**. It says, **Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread; and the first day you shall put away leaven out of your houses. For whosoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.**

As we know, these days are about getting rid of sin. In addition to telling us that we need to get rid of the leavening and to eat unleavened bread, we are also given a stern warning here. Says, "For whosoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel."

So, sin cuts us off. That is why it must be out of the house. God won't allow it in His house. And even a little bit of sin is extremely dangerous. Sin can destroy.

That is something we have been warned about, especially this last year at the Feast of Tabernacles. If we allow that little bit of leavening into our houses, into our lives, then it can take us down the wrong path. Eventually, if not repented of, our minds can even become set against God's. And that is something that should really scare us.

Let's turn over to 1 Corinthians 5. And here we'll see Paul is rebuking, as it says, or criticizing the Corinthians. He is calling them out for allowing appalling behavior from within their group. Simply put, this group was tolerating sin.

So, we're in **1 Corinthians 5:2—And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you**. So, why didn't the congregation get rid of the one who was so openly sinning that even people outside of the city were hearing about it?

They were already puffed up. They thought that they knew better than to do the real right thing. And they were also puffed up with their own sin. By tolerating sin within the group, they were actually giving way for more sin to grow, just like leaven does.

Their actions could have very easily allowed for the whole group to begin letting down, especially when some sins like these are tolerated. Just imagine others in the congregation knowing that some are sinning out in the open like this and knowing that nothing is being done about it. How might that alter the way they think? Maybe they begin doing things that they shouldn't or let things slide in their own life because they think their sins are little compared to these other big ones that aren't getting dealt with. They think, well, what I did, it's not so bad compared to that other guy; you know, wow, he's real bad. I am doing ok over here with my little things. That's the way we think sometimes.

Anyway, it continues, **verse 5—Your glorying is not good. Know you not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** That's exactly what I was just stating. Just think, what is leavening? Well, it's yeast. And you just need a little bit of yeast, and it will continue to grow and spread. It's even in the air around us at all times.

In many ways, it's like Satan and his influence. He is the prince of the power of the air.

And so, if you think about a lump of dough, for example, that dough, if you leave it out long enough it will acquire yeast from the air around it. And in fact, if you leave it out long enough, you can actually be on your way to making sourdough bread!

So, what's the difference between a raw lump of dough that's on a counter, what's the difference between it being unleavened bread and a leavened lump, you know, like a sourdough bread? Well, the answer is time. If you want to make unleavened bread, you have to do it quickly. You don't let it sit outside and be infected with yeast spores.

We have the opportunity now to be continuously made into a new lump. We can repent and we can get rid of sin. We can get rid of the yeast. But imagine if we have sin or yeast that doesn't get removed. Well, you see where that goes. It just continues to grow and infect more and more of the dough, and more and more of your life.

That's why time is also important when it comes to our repentance. If you sin and don't repent you're letting yourself become more puffed up. But if we repent immediately we are making ourselves into a new lump. So, time is of the essence.

You know, sometimes we just like to think that, you know, we sin and we just made a mistake and it's kind of spontaneous. And that can happen. But so often it really isn't spontaneous, and that's because our thinking has already deteriorated to the point that sinning, well, it happened more easily. The more leavening you have in your dough, the more likely you are for it to have your lump grow.

So, maybe we notice a bigger sin that we've committed, and we think it was just a one-off. But maybe it wasn't. Maybe we have lots of little specks of leavening left in our lump that leads us to that bigger unfortunate choice that we made.

Let's continue on in **verses 7 and 8** here. It says, **Purge out therefore the old leavening, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ, our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.** We're told to get rid of the old leaven and replace it with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth that comes from Christ.

So, not only can our minds be set against God if we allow that old leaven to continue to grow and multiply, but we also have the potential to become something new where our minds begin to become aligned with God's.

So, let's concentrate a little bit on that later aspect of unleavened bread, the part where we are commanded to eat of the unleavened bread. It's not enough just to get rid of the leavening, we are commanded then to eat of the unleavened bread.

So, let's turn over to John 6. Here we're jumping into several miracles that Joshua has performed, one of them being the multiplying of the five loaves of bread and the fish so that he could feed the multitude that was following them. So, we'll jump in here where many of the followers were looking for Christ in Capernaum.

We'll jump into the verse 25. So, this is **John 6:25—And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when did you come here?**

**Verse 26—Joshua answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek me, not because you saw miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for the meat which endures into everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you. For him has God the Father sealed.**

So, he tells them not to work for the meat that doesn't last, but instead for meat that lives on into eternal life. Now, we understand that he is talking about a spiritual sustenance that comes from God. That is what matters, not the physical things that we can accumulate through work in our lifetime.

**Verse 28—Then they said unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God?**

So, their next question was like, "Ok, then how do we produce this meat that lives on into everlasting life?"

And so, the next verse **Joshua answered them and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom He has sent.** So, this is hard to grasp what he is saying here. Just believe on him? They had a hard time understanding that.

**Verse 30—They said therefore unto him, What sign show you then, that we may see and believe you? What do you work?** It's funny how the Jews were always seeking a sign. And Paul talked about that back in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians and he stated that the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. That's what those groups wanted in order to be convinced so that they could believe. And Christ was just telling them to believe.

Well, that takes faith. But it is not a blind faith. And by that, I mean that we have to prove it to ourselves. We have to decide based on the fruit of the work.

Continuing on in **verse 31—So they continued on with their response to Christ. Our fathers did eat manna in the desert. As it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Joshua said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life unto the world. Then they said unto him, Lord, evermore, give us this bread.**

So, they were like, "Yeah, sounds good. Give us that bread." They were liking that response. But in the next verse, well, that's where he kind of lost them.

**Verse 35—And Joshua said unto them, I am the bread of life.** That right there probably blew a lot of their minds. They were thinking in a physical manner like this physical manna that fell from the sky. So, when his answer was that he himself was the bread, well, that threw them for quite a loop because they didn't understand what Christ was going to fulfill. They didn't understand what God's plan was and that He was going to use Christ as a mediator so that we could all have a way to have God's spirit and eventually become a part of His family.

Anyway, it continues, **he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes on me shall never thirst.** So, he continues here in the following verses trying to explain that basically, he is of the same spirit of God the Father, and if you have seen him, Christ, you have seen the Father. He keeps restating it in different ways that he is the bread of life.

And then eventually down here in **verse 51** he says, **I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever. And the bread that I give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.**

Christ was fully unleavened, without sin. He sacrificed himself and made the way that we can follow and have access to God the Father. He became the High Priest and Mediator to God Almighty. He is the go-between if you will between God and mankind. So, that bread of life is available to mankind. The Days of Unleavened Bread picture our access to the Great God of the universe. And we are commanded to partake of the unleavened bread, the bread of life.

I think it would be good here to re-read Deuteronomy 16 where the Days of Unleavened Bread were commanded in the Old Testament and then we'll read how it changed in the New Testament. That's Deuteronomy 16:3.

So, here in the Old Testament Unleavened Bread was about remembering the day that they came out of Egypt. It's about the day they were freed from slavery and it pictures coming out of sin.

**Deuteronomy 16:3—You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction, for you came forth out of the land of Egypt in haste, that you may remember the day when you came forth out of the land of Egypt for all the days of your life.**

Now, let's contrast that with what the New Testament says. Let's go over real quick to 1 Corinthians 11:23. And here unleavened bread is about remembering Christ and what he did to allow us to make a full transition.

You know, for Passover we eat a small portion of unleavened bread as a remembrance to Christ, who lived a life without sin and who sacrificed himself in order to make a way to come into God's Family.

**1 Corinthians 11:23—For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Joshua the same night in which he was betrayed took bread. And when he gave thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat. This is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.**

Now we're being told to remember Christ when we take part in the Passover service. And yeah, of course, Christ is the most important part of Passover. God wants to give His spirit to mankind and offer us to have His mind, and the only way to do that is through Christ. And not only that but it took Christ living the life that he did, a life without sin, and then sacrificing himself in order to be able to make that way possible. So of course, we are told to remember his life and his sacrifice.

So, we can see how God's plan has been progressing. First, He took a physical people out of a physical captivity. Then He made a way for mankind to be freed from mental slavery and to be given true freedom by way of His mind living in us. That in turn gives us eternal life, freedom from death. There isn't anything greater.

Continuing on in **verse 25—After the same manner he also took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament of my blood. Do this you as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death until he comes. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat of this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.**

Notice this next verse, **verse 28—But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.** This word for "examine" has to do with "proving, testing, scrutinizing." It's about thinking about our actions and our thoughts. Are they aligned with God's? Are we proving His way of life to ourselves every day?

And say on one particular day we do things how we want to do things, after our own selfish desires; God is not in our forethought. Often these are reactionary things. Because, you know, someone does something to us and how do we react? So often we lash out with our carnal selves. But if we examine our actions, we should be able to see that we reacted poorly. And what was the outcome? How could we do better instead? How can we have more patience and react more slowly and have more control?

If we continue to examine ourselves then we can train ourselves to stay continuously on guard. We can have control over our own selfishness.

**Veres 31—For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.**

This is another verse to be thinking about, not just these days, but all the time. What's it saying here? Well, we know that God gives us time to change. Why? Because He has hope that we can work on ourselves and that He doesn't have to step in. He isn't trying to control us in that manner. But He will step in from time to time when we're being stubborn or thick-headed.

So, it's better that we judge ourselves, so He doesn't have to. We should be our own biggest critics. Not the biggest critics of others, because that's the way of the world, but instead of our own selves, of our own actions. And that doesn't mean we need to get down and say, "Oh, woe is me," when we fall on our faces. We shouldn't think, "Oh, I am such a horrible person, and I can't change," whenever we mess up. No, we just need to put on our big boy pants or big girl pants and take responsibility when we mess up, and then try to use that proof of failure to encourage us not to mess up again, to do better next time.

And this first word here for "judge" in verse 31 where it says, you know, we're told to judge ourselves, it has a prefix attached to it which means "to do it thoroughly from one side to another, back and forth even." It goes along with the part about examining ourselves. Looking at our actions and separating them.

You've got two basic groups. There are ones where fruit was produced and ones where harm was caused. It shouldn't be too hard to distinguish those two. And of course, we should always be looking to God for help and guidance. Ask God to know best and what's the best way that we should react in certain situations. And if you think, you know, you are just doing perfect and you have no issues, well, you can always ask your mate or those around you. I'm sure they can give you a nice list of things to work on. You just might be regretting that you asked!

You know, this reminds me a little bit of when I was in the university, and we would have design critics (critiques) as a class. And I think I mentioned this before, and if I have you're going to hear it again. But anyway, these critiques we would present our work to the class and go around and people would say, "Yeah, this is wrong and you should change this," or "It could be better this way," and they could get harsh. Sometimes tears would be shed. And oftentimes, unfortunately, people weren't very tactful in how they dished out their critiques.

But anyway, this really is one of the best ways of improving your work because so often you do something and it's not really that good. But you may not see it. You need help to see it. And it's only when you can see it that you can actually correct it. And that's a little bit like, you know, asking God for help to see ourselves. You can ask Him to show you what you need to work on and what you can improve on.

But it takes some detachment. And by that, I mean especially in reference to these design critiques, is that people would see their designs as an extension of themselves, so any criticism of their work was seen as an attack on their intelligence or worth, or whatever. It was personal. At least they felt it was.

So, I found that often with how people would take these critiques as well, that was actually the most important aspect, it was the mindset of the student or the designer. And the designer that would have the main goal of producing the best work that they possibly could, they didn't necessarily take those critiques so personal. Instead, they saw them as an opportunity to do better. I know some designers that would actually be kind of sad if no one gave them any input, any critiques, any way that they could make their work better because they wanted at least a little of something so that they could come back the next week and show that they had improved their work.

But that is the attitude that we should all have. We are our own biggest design projects, and what we present to the world of ourselves on a daily basis, it's really not our best form. And that's just a fact. So, instead of feeling bad and dwelling on mistakes that we make in the past, that we've made in the past, we should be able to judge those things and realize what we need to do next time. We should be excited about the fruit that we'll produce in the future and how much more we'll be able to grow.

I think this makes a good transition into these next scriptures here that I wanted to go into in Matthew 12. These talk about making the tree and its fruit good. Because as we read earlier where Christ multiplied the bread, the followers wanted a sign. But what Christ was explaining is that "the proof is in the pudding," so to say. Christ and God's ways are judged by the fruit. That, along with God's spirit, are the only ways of knowing.

So, let's turn to **Matthew 12:33**—**Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt, for the tree is known by its fruit.** Now, there is a lot to take in with this simple verse.

We just read about examining and judging ourselves. Well, how are we supposed to do that? It's pretty simple. It is by our fruit. That is how we are known, it's by our actions. And if we make the tree good then the fruit will be good. And that's echoed back a few chapters here even in Matthew. You can just write it down if you want for your notes; it's Matthew 7:15-20.

And these scriptures refer to false prophets that come in sheep's clothing. And the question is, well, how do you know? How do you know what is true? How do you know what is false? Well, it's in the fruit.

Why do you believe what you do? Why do you do the things that you do? Why are you here on the Sabbath or on the High Days? We should know it's because of the fruit. That is what gives conviction. That's basically what Christ has told us. Everyone was always wanting proof from him about who he said he was. They wanted signs. And he called them out on it, calling them "an evil generation that only seeked after a sign."

Let's continue here in **Matthew 12:36—But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.** So, "idle" here means "vain or empty." This word is even translated in another scripture as "barren." So, another way of stating this is "the words that you speak that are fruitless." The words that you speak that aren't in harmony or unity; those are the kinds of words that are empty.

There are two ways of life. There is the way that leads to a creation and abundance and the other way that leads to desolation and emptiness. And our words and our actions, they're a reflection of who we are.

**Verse 37—For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.** Like I just mentioned, there are two ways, and our words, our logos, that's what testifies to who we are. That's why it is so important that our minds are in unity and harmony with God's. It's our actions and choices in life that show which side of the aisle we're on.

So, we want to have fruit that is in unity with Christ and God the Father. That is why we are focusing on this today during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Because we are commanded to eat of unleavened bread, and that bread only comes from God via Christ.

Let's turn over to **John 15:5—I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit. For without me you can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.**

These verses are restating our need for Christ, our need to partake in that which comes from the vine, the unleavened bread. God has called us. That is essentially like our being taken out of Egypt. And we should remember our calling; remember what God has called us out of. We are to remember what God did for the Israelites when He brought them out of slavery, but we should also remember how we are being brought out of slavery.

For God's Church, it isn't enough to be called. That just means we have been given opportunity now. That's why we are also being told to not just remember coming out of slavery, but also to



eat of unleavened bread for all seven days. Christ is the vine, and God's spirit flows through him. He is the bread of life.

**Verse 8—Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.** So, when we bear fruit, as it states here, we are giving honor and esteeming God. We are essentially rendering God's work to be an excellent work.

God's whole plan is that mankind be able to be transformed by His spirit and that we become part of His Family. Fruit is the evidence of God's work.

And then continuing on in this verse it states, **...so shall you be my disciples.** Another way to state "disciple" would be "a student or a learner." So, if we are doing what we are told here and we have fruit, then that demonstrates that we are indeed learning.

You can be a student in any number of subjects. I took math classes in school for example. I was physically present, but I wouldn't call myself a student. I didn't really learn. I even retook a math class one year because I wanted to get a better grade. And I honestly did try harder, but I actually got the same grade that I did the year before. But still, was I really a math student? No, not really.

But that's how it can be for us in the Church as well. We can come to services, and we can be physically present, but what happens when we go back home to our lives during the rest of the week? Are we doing our homework, so to say? Are we putting into action what we are being told, being taught?

Well, if we are, then we will have fruit and something to show for our hard work. If we demonstrate that, then we will be Christ's disciples as it says. And isn't that what we want? To be true followers and students of Christ? We are told to eat of that unleavened bread. That bread of life that we can eat of and not die.

Do we see ourselves as disciples or followers of Christ? Do we ever stop to think about what it means to be a member of God's Church? Because if we do, we should grasp the magnitude of what that means. It comes with the responsibility for our actions.

We need to remind ourselves of those things. We need to see ourselves as that. Because if we can remember that that is exactly what we are, then we can make all of our decisions in life based on that.

It's easy to go back into the week after services though and be anonymous in the world around us. We don't wear religious clothes that identify us, for example, as being a member of God's Church. But of course, there are some in the world that do wear religious clothing and I am always struck when I see people wearing these identifiable religious clothing and they act badly.

I remember one time I was about to board a flight, and for whatever reason, probably half of the flight they were Orthodox Jews. Very easy to identify them with their clothing. And the way

they treated everyone around them, it was appalling. They had absolutely no care or concern for those around them. They allowed their kids to just sprawl across multiple seats, taking up other seats with backpacks and trash, and not making any kind of room for any other passengers around there. And people were forced to sit on the floor while all these people were all just spread out and not even sitting in half the seats, you know. They were clearly not thinking of anyone else on this flight except for themselves.

And they made such a mess. There was chips, there was food, trash littered all about the terminal. And once we were finally boarding, you know, they couldn't even be bothered to clean up the mess they made. They just left it all strewn about.

I mean, it's not nice when someone leaves a single cup or a bag here or there, but this was a whole other level. It looked like somebody had tipped over the trash can and they just spread it about, you know, just kicked it all around. And I remember thinking, "What idiots. Like, you're literally wearing your religion on your sleeve. You are a representative of your beliefs, and everyone around can see." And no one was impressed.

Now, I use this example and obviously, we don't wear clothes like this that can identify us. But if we did, would we be on better behavior maybe in our daily lives? I don't know. Maybe. It might not be a bad reminder for some of us.

But that's not my point anyway. My point is, we don't have to identify ourselves to people with religious clothing. Why? Because we should know who we are and what we represent, or better yet, who we represent. Our actions should identify us. Those around us might not know our religious beliefs, nor do they necessarily need to. But they should identify a spirit within us that is different from the world around us. Our actions and fruit should identify us.

With that, there is something to be said with how we identify ourselves. After all, our identity has to do with our beliefs. It gets to the core of who we are, and it drives our actions. If you were told to describe or identify yourself, how would you do it? Most people would probably start with their positions, whether it be in a family or profession. So, you're a mother, a father, a grandparent, or maybe then you're a plumber, an accountant, or whatever. And then after that, maybe you include one of your biggest hobbies. Maybe you like to run, ski, play some sport, or go to the gym.

All of these examples describe some of the most important aspects of our lives. And oftentimes, the order in which you would describe them is reflected in their importance in your life. Maybe being a parent is the most important, or maybe it is your profession. It's funny because those things even vary a lot just in between cultures. Probably the first question you ever get asked by a German is, "What do you do?" Maybe even before asking your name. For them, work really is a priority.

But then if you take a Spaniard, on the other hand, and well, you might know them for a really long time and you're never going to ask them, "What do you do?" It's not a pressing matter. You

can talk for hours and hours on a topic and it just won't come up. You might know somebody for years and not even know what line of work they are in.

And then, you could look at their productivity levels and you see Germans, they have a very high productivity level in the workplace. It's sky-high. And they even have some of the lowest annual working hours in the world to boot.

And the Spaniards. Well, they like to claim that statistically, they work more hours than most other European countries. They like to claim that statistic because it makes them look like they're hard workers. But when you look at their productivity that's another story!

Just out of curiosity I looked up and found that the Germans are fifty percent more productive than the Spaniards, all while working three hundred hours less per year. And if you do the math and you say that forty hours is a work week, that means the Germans are working seven and a half weeks fewer than the Spaniards, and at the same time they're still fifty percent more productive. So, that's staggering, and this example actually agrees with a study that I am going to present a little bit later here.

But I think you can already see how our own identity perspective, how it can influence our lives. And that's because it has much to do with where our focus is in life. Again, it's that belief of who we are that drives our actions.

So, what do you believe? What do you believe about yourself? How do you see yourself? What are the most important things that identify who you are? Are you a disciple of Christ? Are you an active learner or student of Christ as I mentioned earlier? Is that one of the most important parts of who you are? Or is something else more important to you? Do you ever stop to consider that we are members of the Church of God, and what that actually means?

Let's turn over real quick to Ephesians 1:17. And we're just going to jump into the middle of a prayer here from Paul. **Ephesians 1:17—That the God of our Lord Joshua Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling.**

Who's calling is it? It's God's calling. No one else is able to do the calling. Christ said no one can go before him unless his Father draws them. That means God has to invite each and every one of us in order for us to take part in the bread of life. He has chosen who He is working with at this moment. Do we grasp what opportunity we have been given? Do we understand that hope that is being spoken of here?

Let's skip down to **verse 22**. Speaking again here of Christ, it says, **And he has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.** So, Christ is the head of the Church, and also the body. He is the vine as we read earlier.

We know that the Church is not a building as so many in this world think. It's about God's people, His assembly. And the word for "Church" in the Greek literally means "the called-out ones." That's us! And if we actually believe it and stay true to what God has called us to be a part of, then as it says here, Christ fills that Body. It's just another way of stating that he is the bread of life and all of that nutrition flows out from the vines and into the individual branches.

So, I think it's good that we think about those points during these days because again, they aren't just about getting rid of sin, but they are also about filling our lives with a constant flow of unleavened bread. We are God's Church. We are the ones who have been called out for a specific purpose. Let's not forget that.

So, in closing here, I just wanted to go into a short study that was done on some students who were learning an instrument, because it illustrates what we're talking about here. This was a study that was done with the intention of finding out more or less what motivates people and what factors are most important if you're trying to create habits for change. And specifically in this case, it was to find out what factors were most important for young students so that they could become proficient in an instrument.

It's said that there are three levels at which change can occur, and you can imagine them like the layers of an onion. So, on the first layer on the outside, you have outcomes. For example, you want to run a marathon, you want to get straight A's, or whatever other goal so you do something in your life to have the desired outcome. That is what motivates the change.

So, for us in the Church, we live the life we do, in part, because of a desired outcome. But as we know, that's not enough to complete a change. It can be helpful for sure for us, yeah, but alone, that's probably not going to cut it.

So, going on to the next layer here, the second layer of this onion, a little bit deeper, this would be the process. Now, this layer is about changing habits so that you can achieve something. For example, you clean your desk so that you can have a better workflow or work environment or you implement a new routine at the gym, or maybe you put something bad-tasting on your fingers so you stop biting your nails.

So, for us there are endless habits that we could change that would help us out here. So, maybe something as simple as setting aside some time on Saturday to review your Sabbath service notes from the previous week. Obviously, there could be an endless number of examples that could fit into this process category.

But now the third level, which is in the very center of this onion, that is identity. Now, I know this sounds a little tricky considering how it is used in the world today. People identify as all kinds of strange things these days. But you can actually see in one respect how effective it really is, even when it's used in an improper way.

How you see yourself has a huge reflection on how you think. But this third level is concerned with your beliefs, your judgments, your views of the world, and of others.

So, with that, let me read to you a little bit about this study of the music students. And as we will see from the study, the third level of identity has a large impact on the students.

So, this study was done with just over one hundred fifty children, starting before they had chosen an instrument and following them up through high school graduation. They did biometric testing, they videotaped their practice sessions, and they interviewed them in depth.

So, just from the start here, what do you think was the most important factor for the students to become proficient in their instruments? Well, I figured that the most important thing would have been how much time they spent practicing their instruments. I mean, that makes sense, right, how much time you put into it. The more you put into it, the better the results, right? Well, that was partially correct, but it was by far not the most important factor.

One of the first questions the kids were asked when starting out was “How long do you plan on playing the instrument?” They were given different possibilities such as through the year, through primary school, through high school, or for life. And they discovered that based on how the kids answered that question that actually had the greatest impact on their proficiency.

What they found out was that even for kids that practiced for an equal amount of time, the ones that had the longer commitment did better and became much more proficient than the ones that had a lesser commitment. In fact, among the category of kids that practiced the most, the ones with the life-time commitment outperformed the short-term by over four hundred percent!

So, get that. These kids, they practiced the exact same amount of time, but the one group that had a long-time commitment outperformed the short-term commitment by four times!

Even the long-term commitment group that only practiced for twenty minutes per week, they progressed faster than the short-term group that practiced for ninety minutes a week. So, even with less time spent practicing, the long-term group outperformed the short-term group that practiced more than quadruple the time.

I think this example is actually very similar to the one I was just mentioning earlier about the German's and Spaniard's working habits. You can put in the time, but that's not the deciding factor.

That makes me think of people though that I've known that thought they were doing real great in the Church because of the amount of time that they would study and read the Bible each week, as if that was the only factor. Some of them were quite proud of the fact that they studied too much even. They knew so much. And you know, some of those aren't around any longer. What does that tell you?

The study went on to state here... Here is a quote, "In other words, when long-term commitment was coupled with high levels of practice, the children's development went through the roof."

So, I am sure you can already see where I am going with this. How can we apply this to our spiritual lives? It seems like the amount of change that we want to see in our own lives directly correlates to what our level of commitment is.

So, what is your level of commitment? Is living this way something you have chosen to do for life? I know many that joined the Church around 2008, and how many of those left? I know there are a lot, but there are plenty of people that have come and gone from that time period. And I know many of them, they were just in it because they thought that we only had a few years left. They didn't have real resolution to continue in this way of life. And for them, it wasn't about the way of life.

In fact, I know several whose motivation was only driven by that first layer of the onion, the outcome. I can think of one in particular and he was convinced that the ocean levels were rising so fast that in just a few years parts of Europe were going to be underwater. So, he didn't see this so much as a way of life but more of a way to save his own behind. So, he didn't last too long. So, if you are only driven by the outcome, how resolute are you really?

Here is a quote from the professor who ran the study. He said, "We instinctively thought of each student as a blank slate, but the ideas that they brought to that first lesson were probably far more important than anything a teacher could have done, or any amount of practice. At some point very early on they had a crystallizing experience that brought on the idea to the fore and said, 'I am a musician'. That idea was like a snowball rolling downhill."

You know, think of an athlete. How on earth do they beat their bodies up every day, put themselves through the ringer day in and day out? How are they able to sustain that? Well, it's because it's a part of their belief. They say, "I am an athlete" and they believe it, and so their actions follow suit. You do it because you have to, because that's what a professional athlete must do. And you know if you don't do what you have to do, then maybe you won't be a professional athlete any longer. Maybe they will send you back down to the minor leagues!

And this is basically what these long-term commitment students did. They believed that they were going to play their instruments for the rest of their lives and that they themselves were musicians. It became part of their identity, and as a result of it, it almost became second nature for them then.

So, do you believe that you are going to be a member of God's Church forever? Are you resolute in that belief? Do you see yourself as one of Christ's disciples? Is that part of your identity? Is that who you are?

If we can answer “Yes” to those questions, then we will indeed be eating of the unleavened bread as we are commanded to do.

We know that sin can destroy and these days picture the removal of it from our lives. So, let’s make sure we are examining ourselves and judging our actions, ever correcting them so that we can have fruit.

Christ made it possible, through his sacrifice to be able to go before him and receive the bread of life from God the Father. God has purposed that each one of us be called so that we can partake in that unleavened bread. So, let’s take that to heart and reaffirm our commitment to this way of life by becoming true disciples of Christ.