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Good morning Life Fellowship. I hope you all are doing well today. Please turn in your Bibles to Exodus Chapter 25 where we are going to be this morning talking about the Table of Shewbread. Doesn't the Table of Shewbread sound exciting? I don't know about you, but as we were dividing up the sermon responsibilities I was actually really excited about this. We have been taking you through the journey of the tabernacle. We began with an overview, and then we have been going article by article in the tabernacle. Pastor Dan hit the Altar of Sacrifice where the sacrifices were to take place. I did the Bronze Laver where the washing and cleansing happened. And now we are inside the tent area.

This is important because inside the tent is really all about communion with God. Inside the tent it was divided into two sections - the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. And in this Holy Place there were three articles of furniture. There was the Golden Lampstand which Dan did an amazing job teaching on last week about drawing near to the light.

Now we come to the Table of Shewbread and the Altar of Incense. Each of the articles deals with our relationship with God. It deals with our communion with Him. And I believe that is important. We sent our an email earlier this week, and we announced this morning about the call to prayer. And that is because what we want to do as we are journeying through the tabernacle is not to miss what God is really saying to us as a church.

Now this is the question I had when I was reading this passage - why did God choose to have a table of bread in a place of worship? Why was that? Moses had been up on the mountain communing with God about the design of the tabernacle. I understand the Altar of Sacrifice where the sacrifices were to take place. I understand the Bronze Laver where the cleansing was to take place. I understand the Golden Lampstand because there needed to be light. But why was there to be a table of bread?

I remember growing up in a Baptist Church where they always had this little table in front of the platform, and it said this on the table: *'In this do in remembrance of me.'* And that was where communion was set up. Did anyone grow up in a church like that? I see several hands, so you are familiar with that.

So some of us are maybe used to having a table for communion, but if you think about it, this is not a normal type of thing to think about putting in a place of worship, so why a table of bread? I can imagine Moses hearing about the Altar of Sacrifice and the Bronze Laver and thinking, *'Yeah, that makes sense.'* And he probably thought the Golden Lampstand made sense because he knew they would need light in the tabernacle. But then God told him He wanted a table of bread. And Moses probably thought, *'Why do we need a table of bread?'*

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And I believe God was saying something about this bread. And this is what I think He was saying - the Table of Shewbread was to represent the relationship that now could be enjoyed because of the sacrifice of sin. There was now a relationship with God that could be enjoyed. Once the forgiveness and cleansing are done, we now have the privilege to enjoy God. And I believe that word 'enjoy' is the word most of us would not use to describe our relationship with God, is it?

I mean we might use a lot of words to describe our relationship with God, but here is what I know, every single one of us has some kind of a relationship with God. Now you might even be presently rebelling against God, but all of us have some kind of relationship with Him. But what is the one word that you would use to describe what your relationship with God is like right now? What would that word be? Would it be exciting? Would it be stale? Would it be dry? Would it be absent? How many of us would use the word 'enjoy?'

And I believe that is what God is trying to explain to Moses and to teach us today. We are so used to hearing things that we should be doing for God, and many times we get in this rut or this idea that, '*Man, God wants me to do stuff for Him.*' So we try to do as much stuff for God as we can possibly do. And if we are not careful we will miss out on one of the major pieces of what it means to relate to God, and that is to enjoy Him for who He is.

There are some great confessions of faith historically for the Christian church for us to learn from. One of my favorite ones is the Westminster confession of faith. The Westminster confession of faith lists questions for parents to teach their kids what it means to believe and follow Jesus. The first question that they would ask in the catechism of the Westminster confession is this: "*What is the chief end of man?*" And this is the short answer: "*The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*" And that was written 500 years ago.

Another very famous preacher today, John Piper, said this: "*God is the most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in Him.*" You know we all talk about giving God glory, but most of the time when we talk about giving God glory it has to do with what we are doing for God. I am doing this because I want to give God glory. And really I believe what the Westminster confession and John Piper have in common is this: they realize that God is most glorified in us when we enjoy Him the most. You could actually say that the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever.

So this morning I want us to encounter God, and I want us to enjoy the encounter. Every single day we should wake up and think about how we can enjoy God today. That would be a great starting point for us. So we are going to look at enjoying the encounter. Let's look at Exodus Chapter 25 and examine this Table of Shewbread. I am going to

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read verses 23 through 30, so please follow along with me as I read. This is what it says, and it is God speaking to Moses. Remember this is God's design, and not Moses.'

“You shall make a table of acacia wood. Two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. You shall overlay it with pure gold and make a molding of gold around it. And you shall make a rim around it a handbreadth wide, and a molding of gold around the rim. And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and fasten the rings to the four corners at its four legs. Close to the frame the rings shall lie, as holders for the poles to carry the table. You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, and the table shall be carried with these. And you shall make its plates and dishes for incense, and its flagons and bowls with which to pour drink offerings; you shall make them of pure gold. And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me regularly.”

So this is the Table of Shewbread. It was a table with bread and there were some utensils around it.



And we read this note in the book of Hebrews that every single part of the tabernacle and the things inside of it were always a foreshadowing of Christ, a foreshadowing of the gospel. So how does this table represent or foreshadow the gospel?

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Well, there are two things I think we can learn from the table and two ways we can enjoy the encounter.

The first one is this - enjoying Christ's presence. This bread was about the presence of God. You know how I know that? It is because that is what it was called, the Bread of Presence. The bread was actually called the Bread of Presence, or literally it means 'bread of the face.' It meant that when the priests were to observe the table that they were to actually think about looking at the face of God, and of being in His presence.

The table was made of wood as it was said in Exodus Chapter 25. It was overlaid with gold, so it must have been really beautiful. And it had a little lip on it. And then remember they put rings on the edges of the table, so that rods could be put through the rings for when they moved the tabernacle. Also when they traveled from one place to another the bread was always on the table and the lip around the table would prevent the bread from falling off.

There were plates to hold the bread and there was a pitcher and bowls for frankincense. We learn later on that they sprinkled frankincense on the bread. There were twelve loaves of bread representing the twelve tribes of Israel. And here is what is so cool if you think about it. I always wondered why there was a pitcher for drink offerings. Here is what I found out this week that is so cool - the pitcher was filled with wine and used for drink offerings. So even in the tabernacle there was the table that had bread and wine on it foreshadowing the Last Supper. Isn't that amazing? God's ideas for worship and God's ideas of communing with Him have never changed. They are just manifested differently and really completely, ultimately through Jesus Christ.

So that is what the Table of Shewbread was. It always had twelve loaves of bread on it, representing the twelve tribes. Why was that so important? This is what God was saying - every single person of every single tribe has equal access to Him. His presence was able to be interacted with for any person and not just for the priests. Do you realize that this is unique to the Christian faith? In almost every other religion, every other faith system, there is a special group of people that go to God, or go to a god, and tell you how to relate to Him. But the Christian faith teaches there is access to God for all people. Every single person has equal access to Him through Christ. So these twelve loaves represented the presence of God was available to everyone equally.

So what does this have to do with us today? I believe many of us today miss the presence of God. We don't value the presence of God. And there are a number of reasons for that, but I believe we miss the face of God today. All of us have our smart phones, right? And as I was thinking about this today, I believe we are entering in the generation where more people give their face time to their smart phones than to human

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beings. We are becoming the first generation, the first people that will give more face time to a screen than to another human being. And I don't know what that does to our souls, but I know that it can't be good.

And I am just as guilty as anyone because I have my own smart phone and I use it for a lot of things. But here is what I know. We will miss God if we are not careful. We will miss His presence. We will miss His face. It always saddens me when I go to a restaurant and I see a family who have gone out to eat sitting at another table. And I watch this family because all they are doing is looking at their screens, and they are missing each other. They are missing communing with each other. They are missing all this family interaction. They are missing face time with each other.

And I know this, if we miss our face time with God, what are we missing? What are we missing from Him? So I was thinking about how we miss the face of God, and I thought about how the bread on the Table of Shewbread meant the face of His presence. God was saying that He wanted them to see Him and He wanted them to enjoy Him. He wanted them to enjoy what He had given to them. He wanted them to enjoy His love.

And I think there is a major reason why we miss the face of God today. I think we desire the hand of God more than we desire the face of God. For most of us, myself included, we busy ourselves in our interaction with God wanting to know what He can do for us, and also what we can do for Him. And that becomes our relationship.

Now let me just say this. Does God want to do things for us? Absolutely. God wants to pour out His blessings on us. God wants to use us, and He wants us to do things for His glory. I am not saying that the action and the behavior is not important to God, but here is what I know - if many times all we do is seek the hand of God we can miss the face of God. And we will not enjoy Him for who He is.

I have a daughter and I have a standing appointment every Monday through Friday after dinner to help her with her math homework. So my daughter, Halley, is in the eighth grade and she hates math. Now I love math, so we have a wonderful relationship let me just tell you. So I always help her with her 20 to 30 problems a night. Every single night she opens up her math book and does the work, and then I go back and check it. Sometimes I have to help her think through some things, but every single night, Monday through Friday Halley and I are spending at less 30 minutes together going over homework. And I enjoy doing that and helping my daughter with her math.

But you know what I enjoy even more? I enjoy going to Starbuck's with her and sharing a Latte. I enjoy that time with my daughter way more. My daughter and I have had our little date times for years. We will go out together, maybe get a little snack, and we will just talk about life. We call it 5-4-3-2-1. Sometimes she will start it and sometimes I will, but it can go something like this. She may ask: *'What are five desserts*

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you want to have right now?’ I will name five desserts and then I will ask: ‘If you could only sing four songs for the rest of your life at church, what would those four songs be?’ And then she will ask me a three question, and I ask her a two question. And I enjoy that time with my daughter. I get to tell her how awful boys are. I get to tell her to stay away from them for years and years and years. It is a wonderful time with my daughter.

And here is the thing. It is those moments with her that I can really connect to her heart. We have that soul to soul time. I can talk to her about boys during that time. If I bring up boys during math homework, what is she going to say? *‘Dad, come on. What are you doing?’* But when we have those times of connection and communing it means something.

And I have to believe that is what God wants with us. He wants those times where it is not transactional, it is not utilitarian; it is simply you enjoying Him. That is what God wants. I think so many of us are in danger of measuring our worth. We are in danger of measuring our worth by what we get done in life. Some of you are super high achievers. Some of you are type A, and you start every day at zero and think that you have to get your list completely done, or else it wasn’t a good day.

I think we all need to remember that God is reminding us of the value in knowing Him and the value of walking with Him. And the value of enjoying God is simply spending time with Him and enjoying Him for who He is. It is not about what you are getting done for God. And again I don’t want to imply that God doesn’t want to use us and He doesn’t want us to do things for Him, but ultimately what God wants is to have our hearts, and for us to seek His face and not just His hands. We have to confront the issue in our lives that we want God’s face more than we want His hands.

There is a passage of Scripture I want you to see in Numbers Chapter 6. This is the blessing God told Moses to give to Aaron for the people of the nation. And it is something they would read over and over again. . I want you to see what God’s blessing is related to. God does not give His blessing about all the abundant things He is going to give them. Listen while I read verses 24 through 26 which is the message God gives to His people.

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance (and that literally means His face; it is the same word found for Presence as in the Bread of Presence) ***upon you and give you peace.”*** What is the blessing of God in our lives? The blessing of God in our lives is not to give us all this stuff. The blessing of God is for Him to shine His face upon us and to give His favor, His grace and His peace to us. He was telling them that He was there and that He loved them. And if we have Him what else do we need?

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One of my favorite stories in the Old Testament is when Moses is on Mount Sinai the second time. It is right after the golden calf episode. And God tells Moses He is not sure He can go with him because the people were constantly rebelling against Him and they didn't seem to love Him. So God tells Moses He is going to give him an angel that will walk with him, will be with him, and he would drive out the nations for them. God told Moses they would still get the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey with the angel's help. And then God told Moses he was not going to go with him.

And you know what Moses said? He said, *'No way. God if you don't leave this mountain with us then we are not leaving the mountain.'* And here is what I wonder sometimes, I wonder what the Promised Land is for you. I know I have had a Promised Land, the things that I have wanted from God so much, the things I thought would satisfy me, the things I thought would bring joy to my life. But I think one of the most dangerous things that can happen to us is that many times we want the Promised Land without God. We ask for things from God and we don't care if He is there or not.

I think sometimes we just keep asking God for things, *'God, give me this. God, give me this. God, give me this.'* And many times God does not give it to us. Maybe He is not giving us what we think we need or want because He wants us to want Him first. He wants us to want Him more.

One of my favorite passages of Scripture is in Revelation Chapter 3 about the church of Laodicea . And there is a lot about the church of Laodicea that I think is applicable for us today. It was a church that was prosperous and wealthy, but tepid and lukewarm. They were self-reliant. And so Jesus had to confront this church and tell them their self-reliance was absent from Him. Listen to verse 19: ***"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."***

I think what Jesus wants is to have a meal with us. He wants some face time with us, because He wants us to begin to enjoy Him. And He is not doing it to check up on what we are doing in life so He can give us our grades. *'You got a B in prayer, a C in Bible reading, and an A in church attendance. So let's work on some things, okay?'* Is that how God works with us? No, it is not how He works with us at all. What God wants is for us to want Him, not for grades because that has already been graded at 100 percent through Christ our Savior. There is no grading with God. He is not grading us for our behavior, or for all the things that we are doing wrong. Instead He wants us to eat with Him and enjoy His presence. That is how we fix things in life and get healthy again.

I think it is interesting how the frankincense was put on the loaves of bread in the tabernacle. Frankincense was always something they put on bread and it was a healing

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agent. It was used for healing. And here is what I think God is saying. There are some things that cannot be healed in our lives apart from looking at Him. Many times we try to avoid that face time with God and I think there are reasons why we do that.

For me personally I have avoided face time with God because I knew when I faced Him there would be something that would happen, and that was that He would confront me. The idols I had, or the things I was doing wrong made me want to avoid face time with God. And I think many times we remove ourselves from face time with God because we are afraid of what He is going to tell us. But by doing that we are missing another thing that comes from our face time with God and that is comfort. And by removing ourselves because we don't want the confrontation, we are also missing out on the comfort that He wants to give to us.

God may be feeling distant from you this morning and it is probably because you are afraid of what He is going to say to you. But let me remind you that God confronts with gentleness and patience and He comforts with power. That is the God we serve. That is the God we worship. He is inviting us this morning to enjoy His presence.

There is a second way in which we can enjoy the encounter and that is enjoying Christ's provision. So we need to enjoy Christ's presence, and we also need to learn how to enjoy Christ's provision. Something that is interesting about the Shewbread is found in Leviticus Chapter 24 and verses 5 through 9, where it talks about how this bread was used:

“You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. And you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table of pure gold before the Lord. And you shall put pure frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion as a food offering to the Lord. Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the Lord regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion of the Lord's food offerings, a perpetual due.”

This bread was eaten every single Sabbath day by the priests in the Holy Place. Why was it eaten? It was eaten so that the priests could have something to eat. Isn't it interesting that even in God's grand design He provided a meal for the priests that were on duty. I love that. It is simple, yet so profound. God was telling them that He would give them provision. Even today in pagan temples of other world religions when you go to a temple there will be a food offering to their god. But no one will touch it. And what I love about this passage is the bread was made for God, but He gives the bread to the people that serve Him to eat. It is a perfect picture of His grace.

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Christ is the one who has earned it all. He earned for us salvation. He earned for us righteousness. He earned for us acceptance before God the Father. Yet He freely gives it to us without cost. And that is what this bread represents. Remember there is a table of bread, and also there is wine for the drink offering. And remember how Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper by saying, '*This is my body. This is my blood.*' The early church was made up of primarily Jewish people, and I think they were blown away when they realized this was a picture taken from the tabernacle and fulfilled through Jesus Christ. What in the tabernacle only priests could do now was available to them. I think that was significant, and I think that is why they probably enjoyed the communion table so much more because it was a sign and symbol of His provision for them in their salvation.

So we need to look at the Table of Shewbread and understand the bread was a symbol of God's provision. It is a picture of His grace. I want to share with you three ways in which we miss God's provision. First and foremost we miss God's provision because I think we believe something else will satisfy our souls. Right after Jesus had fed the 5,000 the crowds were following Him because they wanted to be fed again. And Jesus knew even if they ate more bread they would still be hungry again.

And Jesus says this in John Chapter 6 and verse 35: "***I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.***" And that is what Jesus is saying to us. There are so many types of bread that we seek, and when we try to fill our souls with anything else besides Jesus, it will leave us empty. We may seem satisfied for the moment, but then we will hunger again.

I was in the car this week with my kids and we were listening to the radio on the way to school. And we heard that some very famous person in the world, and if I said the name everyone would know it, was being treated for anxiety and depression. Now I don't know why that is happening, but here is what I know. Most people who hear about someone who is super famous being treated for anxiety and depression just don't get it, because they are wealthy, they are powerful, and they think they have everything the world says you need to be satisfied. But sometimes the most empty that we feel in life is when we get what we wanted the most. And what Jesus was saying was that He is the one who can give us the most provision. He is the one who can truly satisfy us. We are just going to be hungry again if all we want is another meal. It is the gospel that should satisfy our souls.

Another way we miss God's provision is by believing that we must work our way up to eat the bread. We have to prove to God that we are worthy to eat the bread. No, we are not worthy. No one is worthy to eat the bread. We have to constantly fight against thinking that God's provision for us must be proven by us.

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I discovered something this week in the Mishnah. And the Mishnah was a written collection of the Jewish oral traditions of the priests in the Old Testament and how they were to worship. And I learned that one of the things that they used to do, when the Jews would come to Jerusalem for the festivals, was the priests would take the shewbread out of the temple. And they would hold it before the people who came, and they would say, *'Behold, the love in which you are held by God.'*

Isn't that amazing that the bread is a symbol of the covenant of God's love. *'Behold, the love in which you are held by God.'* That is significant because most of us believe, no matter how long we have gone to church, no matter how long we have read our Bible, we believe it is up to us to hold on to God's love. That it is what we believe, that we have to perform, that we have to work, that we have to prove it in order to hold on to God's love for us.

And that is not it. It is God's love that holds on to us. And there is a difference between serving and loving and doing things because we believe we are held by love as opposed to doing things to try and be held by love. So we don't need to work our way to acceptance.

Finally, we miss God's provision by not partaking in the daily bread He has given to us. In Matthew we find where Jesus was going through temptation after His 40 days of not eating. And the devil confronts Him about turning stones into bread. Now I just have to say that if I had not eaten for 40 days and someone dangled Panera bread in front of me, I would have a hard time ignoring it, okay? That would be difficult for me, but Jesus says this in Matthew Chapter 4 and verse 4: ***"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."***

Jesus makes it clear that it is not the physical bread that sustains us; it is the daily bread from His word that we need. Listen, here is where I think we can get confused, because we have all heard those sermons that God wants us to be in His word, and He is not going to be happy with us if we are not in His word. And we need to change our mind set for how we approach Him. Remember, we don't read the Bible because we want God to like us; we engage with God's word because we want to meet with Him. We don't open this Bible because we need to know how to live our lives, though it does help us to know how to live our lives. We don't open this book to know what we need to know about theology, though it does teach us what we should believe. This book is about understanding God's revelation, understanding who He is. And based on who He is it informs us how to live.

Can I be honest with you? I have been a pastor for 18 years, and even as a pastor one of the hardest things I've had to do in life is having a daily regular time with God. It is hard for me. It has always been a struggle. Do you know why it has been a struggle?

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It is because I think one of the dangerous things we can do is as we engage with God's word we can know a lot about God, and a lot about the Bible, but we just don't know Him. And there is a difference between knowing a lot about the Bible and knowing Jesus is speaking the face of God.

It wasn't until a couple of years ago that I really started learning how to engage with the Bible in a way that was like a meal again. It wasn't a textbook, or an instruction manual, it became a meal again. And I think that is what we need; we need to understand that God wants us to live by the words that He has given to us.

I use a simple thing that is called 'SOAP.' I learned it from the book called, 'The Divine Mentor' by Wayne Cordeiro. And I read a chapter a day and pick out one verse that is my 'S' for scripture. The 'O' means I write down some observations of what the verse says. 'A' means application, which is what I should be doing in light of what this verse says. And the 'P' is for prayer. That is what I do. You don't have to use that; you can find other ways. There is another acronym that is called 'SMACK.'

I was studying in I Samuel this week, and I try to spend one day on a page. Then I will spend the next day on the next page. And that keeps me on track that way. And there was something that God used in my life this week, and it was when David had cut off a piece of King Saul's robe. I underlined this verse on that page: "***And afterward David's heart struck him, because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.***" And that verse stood out to me because it showed David's conscience was so sensitive to God.

And I have to be honest with you, I am 42 years old, I have been a Christian almost all of my life, I have grown up going to church, my dad was a pastor, so I have been around the faith of God so much. Yet there is something that can be so deadening to our conscience, even being around spiritual things, if we don't engage personally with the God of the universe. And God had to remind me through that verse that I needed to have a clean conscience so I could be sensitive to Him. It changed the way I prayed this week and I needed that. I need to hear from God every single day.

How will you eat with Him this week? I have a couple of application questions and then we are done. Number one - is your relationship with Jesus more about doing things for Him, or with Him? Are you seeking His hand more than His face, and if you are how are you going to switch that around? How are you going to seek His face more than His hand?

Number two - What are you turning to in order to satisfy your soul? Are you eating the bread of His face, or are you trying something else to satisfy yourself? Number three - How will you make your interaction with God's word this week more about face time with God than an instruction manual for life? How are you going to

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make this a meal? God wants you to engage with Him, not just with words, but with the Word.

If there is one thing that I hope you walk away with this morning it is that God wants you to enjoy Him. He really does. He doesn't want you walking in shame, or guilt, or fear; He wants you walking in grace, love, power and truth. And when we do that we enjoy the God who loves us so much. Let's pray.

Father, we ask that you shape us and mold us into your image. I pray that you confront us right now. We need to be confronted, God, but I know that you also comfort us too. Help us to respond to you the way that we need to this morning. We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.