

# Engage

"Seasoning the Spirit" Series, August 9 & 10, 2025 | 2 Kings 22:8-11 [22:1-23:27]

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Does "seasoning the spirit" sound unexpected to you?

**This month let's think of our spirits as dishes that need to be prepared.**

Don't worry about the distinction between spirit, soul, and body. Our spirit is the breath of God inside of us and our capacity to relate to Him.

Before we meet Jesus, we might think of our spirits as being like raw ingredients.

Some raw ingredients are amazing, while others may be less appetizing.

Theologically speaking, apart from Christ, none of us has spirits that are appetizing. Or nutritional. Or safe. Apart from Christ, we are toxic. Like poorly prepared raw puffer fish.

But preparation by someone who knows what they're doing makes all the difference.

**Let's think of God as being like a Master Chef, persistently developing flavors in us.**

God takes our spirits and puts seasoning on them. Seasoning includes the Holy Spirit, truth, light, conviction, and allies who help us. He puts us on the heat of life experiences.

And as the ingredients, the heat, and seasoning come together in the masterful hands of God, something truly beautiful happens. The flavors of heaven start to come out in us.

**Coby, the Cajun cook from "The Great American Recipe," reminds us that we develop the best flavors when we bring our "whole self" to our cooking.**

"The Great American Recipe" features home cooks from different regions and cultures competing to see who the best home cook is, and they're sharing their recipes in the process.

Coby is from Louisiana. He's a fireman who cooks Cajun food for his firemen.

It's early in the season, but you can tell Coby is going far.

Some cooks on the show come with interesting back stories and neat recipes. But going far on that show takes more—it takes cooking with your whole self.

Coby has a big personality, and he brings that big personality to his cooking. He brings big flavors, crawfish, sausage, years of experience, and huge passion for the people he feeds.

Coby has what it takes to make amazing food. (If you know how the season ends, don't spoil it!)

**We want to be like Chef Coby and ENGAGE with our Master Chef with our whole selves.**

God is inviting us into His kitchen. He's got everything laid out to turn us into a dish exuding the flavors of heaven.

We want to come into that kitchen. Willingly. Eagerly. With our whole selves.

God is going to do most of the work Himself. But He invites us to ENGAGE in certain practices, to do our part in our own spiritual formation. That partnership makes a profound difference.

## King Josiah marinated in the Word of God.

### **God surrounded young King Josiah with allies like Hilkiah who loved the Word of God.**

Despite years of rule by kings who suppressed the worship of God and encouraged the worship of idols, there were people all around who quietly served the Lord.

Like Hilkiah, the High Priest. Imagine what Hilkiah's life had been like! He was the high priest of the Lord in the Temple in Jerusalem. Previous kings had taken the funds that had been designated for Temple upkeep and spent them elsewhere. Other kings had installed pagan idols in the Temple—altars to Baal, an Asherah pole, symbols of the sun and starry hosts. Can you imagine yourself as the High Priest making your way through all that mess and distraction? Can you imagine putting up with those abominations all around you at the order of the king?

When Josiah gave the order to renovate the Temple, the funds were available. Hilkiah had built a network of reliable craftsmen who could do the work. He was ready.

### **Work began before Josiah fully understood what he was doing.**

Josiah was only eight years old when he became king.

He started renovating the Temple when he was eighteen.

He was really only doing what had to be done. It was the king's job to keep the place of worship in Jerusalem in working order. That was all he set out to do at first.

### **Then Josiah had a life-altering encounter with the Word of God.**

As renovations began, Hilkiah discovered a scroll that contained the Law. It was likely a section of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. Probably from the fifth book, Deuteronomy.

A royal official brought it to Josiah and read it to him.

What would Josiah do? How would he react?

Josiah paid careful attention to what was being read to him. He absorbed every word. Deuteronomy is full of blessings and curses. Blessings are promised if God's people remain faithful to their covenant with Him. But curses are promised if they turn away.

**Deuteronomy 28:25** gives an example of what will happen:

***"The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. ..."***

Josiah made the connection. Judah had turned away from God, disobeyed Him, and turned to idols. The nation would be under curse, and disastrous judgment would be coming.

He tore his robe as a sign of his distress and the beginning of repentance.

Clearly, Josiah was engaging with the Word of God and the voice of God the Holy Spirit.

### **What happened was like meat marinating before it cooks.**

If you're going to grill meat, you can throw it straight on a hot grill.

But if you want that meat to be tender, juicy, and tasty, then marinating it frequently helps.

You put meat—like steak or chicken—in marinades with acids, oils, and spices. The acids break down the proteins to make them tender. The oils fill the meat with goodness. The spices work their way into the meat's juices.

That's what was happening with Josiah. The Word of God was getting into his spirit, working on him, and adding flavor to his spirit.

**This is what genuine engagement with the Word of God does to us.**

It's not a promise that if we read the Word of God, something magical happens.

But it is a promise that if we come to the Word of God with open hearts, minds, and spirits, then the voice of God speaks to us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Word of God makes its way into our hearts, minds, and spirits, infusing us.

And we come away changed. Better. Tastier.

The same is true when we engage with almost any spiritual practices. Engagement makes a tremendous difference. We see it in Josiah, and we see the opposite in the people of Judah.

**The people of Judah were more like a Teflon-coated pan in God's hands.**

**Josiah wanted to confirm what he suspected—that Judah had sinned grievously and would be judged.**

He sent messengers to a prophetess named Huldah to ask what God thought.

Huldah gave a word from God that Judah had indeed sinned and would be judged. His wrath had been kindled like a fire against Judah and would not be quenched.

However, Huldah added that God had noticed the king's changed heart. God had seen him weeping and noticed that he tore his clothing. He had engaged with God with his whole self.

Therefore, Huldah said, Josiah would not live to see Judah judged.

It was like a new lease on life for Josiah and the nation.

**Then Josiah engaged in a massive effort to sweep the land clean.**

Josiah gathered the people and renewed the covenant between king and people and God.

He cleansed the Temple in Jerusalem of its idols.

He closed the high places around Judah where inappropriate worship and idolatry had crept in.

He destroyed the place where people sacrificed their children to the god Molech.

He swept into Samaria, the former northern kingdom, and cleansed them of idols.

There was breaking, burning, grinding things to dust, and scattering of ashes. Pagan priests were executed. It was a violent cleansing of a faithless past.

Then Josiah led Judah to observe the critical festival of Passover for the first time in centuries.

**Surprisingly, though, judgment was still God's persistent word to Judah. Why?**

Josiah's reforms reached all the way into people's homes. He had them get rid of the little idols many of them had in their homes. He closed the shops of mediums who would consult the spirits when people had questions. He stopped the work of shamans who offered things like curses, blessings, cures, and potions to everyday people.

Josiah got rid of the trappings of paganism. And the people went along. At least in public.

Why, then, did God's wrath not go away? Why did God not relent of His coming judgment?

**It's because the people were like a Teflon-coated pan—nothing was sticking.**

Privately, their hearts didn't change. Privately, they didn't engage with God. Privately, their hearts still belonged to the idols and the magic and everything they had come to hold dear.

What God wanted was their hearts. He didn't get them.

All of this reform was led by Josiah. It was all on the outside. Nothing was sticking.

The people were like a Teflon-coated pan in the hands of the king and God.

As soon as Josiah was gone, they went back to their old ways.

So, God wisely said that judgment was still coming.

**Going through motions has never been what God wants from us.**

God wants a heart change.

He wants a heart-level relationship with us. God wants our hearts to belong to Him.

Nothing less will satisfy Him because nothing less matters.

**The Master Chef invites us into His kitchen.**

**Spiritual practices don't work like the steps on a recipe card.**

We like recipe cards with ingredients and steps that we can follow easily.

We like the sense of predictability. And control.

"Study Bible for five minutes a day, five days a week, add five minutes of prayer, stir, cover, and let chill." That's works righteousness, that's not how spiritual practices work, and that is definitely not the work of the Master Chef.

**Instead, they're invitations to relate to God**

Bible study is an invitation to hear the Word of God speaking to you today.

Prayer is an invitation to come into the presence of your Heavenly Father.

Worship is an invitation to be blown away by the glory of God and to have just enough breath left if your lungs after the experience to utter his praise.

Community is an invitation to connect with other followers of Jesus with God Himself being the fat that makes the lump of dough hold together.

Service is an invitation to use the gifts God Himself gave us and to serve Jesus by serving someone who bears His image.

It's all a relationship, not a recipe.

**The Gospel is the relational Good News that we are sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.**

God, our Heavenly Father, created us in the first place.

When we sinned and rebelled against Him, He did not cast us aside. Instead, in His steadfast love, He chose to save us when we could not save ourselves.

God the Father sent God the Son into the world to become human, reassure us that He is with us, take the punishment for our sin on the cross, and rise again, opening up forgiveness and eternal life for us.

God the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, convicts us of sin, and invites us to accept God's grace and forgiveness. When we do, we are not only reconciled with God, but we are adopted. Now we are not just God's creations; we are His children. Sons and daughters of God.

And we will spend eternity with Him. With Him! Can you imagine!

The Gospel is relational from beginning to end and beyond.

### **Sanctification, the work that God does inside of us, is like cooking ribs.**

Ribs are tough and loaded with fats.

You can't cook them quickly and get them to taste good.

You've got to keep the heat low and steady for a long time to break down the tough parts and render the fat to get a really good taste out of them.

And God's work inside of us is like that.

God pours His Holy Spirit into us, and then the Holy Spirit begins patiently, persistently applying heat and seasoning to our lives to break down our tough parts and add the flavors to our lives that make us taste like God.

On our own, we're tough meat that's not very tasty. But after God is done with us, we are a mouthwatering masterpiece.

### **John Donne acknowledged God's role in his famous sonnet, "Batter my heart, three-person'd God".**

Donne has become one of the most famous poets of the English Renaissance.

At different times in life, Donne was fascinated by romantic love, death, and God.

As his youthful interest in romantic love was tempered by loss and death, he found a deepening faith and a fascination with God, which he expressed in some shocking images that have the power to challenge us and open our eyes to truth four centuries later.<sup>1</sup>

In Holy Sonnet XIV, he describes himself as a town that is occupied by a hostile, enemy force, and he says that God will have to use "... force to break, blow, burn, and make me new."

Donne knows that he can't give his undivided loyalty to God on his own. If God doesn't do it, it won't be done, and the work isn't going to be easy. He writes,

"Take me to you, imprison me, for I,

Except you enthrall me, never shall be free..."

Donne understood what I said about ribs—genuine spiritual transformation requires God's patient, persistent work to make us new.

God is the Master Chef, and He has to do the cooking, so He invites us into His kitchen.

### **God adds the flavors of heaven to us as we ENGAGE.**

#### **If there are things only GOD can do, then there are things only WE can do.**

God is always the Master Chef. There are things only He can do.

You might think of us as being like sous-chefs. Sous-chefs work under the Master Chef.

They delegate tasks and keep the kitchen running.

They taste dishes that are coming out of the kitchen to make sure they match the Master Chef's recipe and are done right. They implement the Master Chef's instructions.

We are like sous-chefs in the process of our own spiritual formation. We have work to do to know the Master Chef's mind and implement the Master Chef's instructions.

And we ENGAGE in the tasks of the Master's kitchen with our whole selves.

**There are several absolutely essential ways you can ENGAGE tomorrow:**

You could **Study the Bible**, expecting to hear the voice of God and to obey what God says. Start if you have never done it before or come to it with a new attitude.

You could **Pray**, looking at it as a conversation with your Heavenly Father who loves you. Again, start if you have never done it before or come to it in a new relationship.

You could **Worship**, right now or wherever you are tomorrow, publicly or privately, looking for the shape of the Gospel to become the shape of your life and for the glory of God to blow you away. Make praise and thanksgiving the foundation of your worship.

You could **Connect** with other Christians in a group of some kind, expecting that you will find the face of God in the face of your brothers and sisters in Christ. And expect to grow!

You could **Serve**, using the gifts God Himself has given you to advance the Gospel of Jesus.

You could ENGAGE tomorrow or even today. You don't need special training. You don't need to worry about getting it wrong. You have everything you need and don't need to wait.

**The difference between King Josiah and the people of Judah was his resolve to ENGAGE.**

He marinated in the Word of God, letting it penetrate his very being, letting it change him and draw him into a new relationship with God, which changed the way he thought and lived.

That's what God wants from us.

The people of Judah did not engage. They were like Teflon-coated pans. The Word of God and, more importantly, the heart of God and a relationship with God slipped away from them.

The difference is engaging.

**ENGAGING with your whole self is like walking into God's kitchen and letting Him season your spirit.**

And that is my prayer for you and for me.

More than any spiritual discipline or practice you have heard me mention today, I am hoping and praying that you will ENGAGE with your whole self in practices that God uses to season your spirit. Then the Master Chef will turn you into His masterpiece.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://poets.org/poet/john-donne?page=1#tabbed-content>