



As we enter into our second week in our series on a theology of food and feasting, I want to give a couple of qualifiers before we get into today's topic. First, if you weren't here last week, I'd highly encourage you to listen to that message. It provides an overview for this entire series. Second, I did want to say I had one elder comment on how I might need to change my slides because they make him hungry! I'm sorry about that, but I did say to him that he has no idea the slides I decided *not* to use. There were certain slides with pastas that drew me in, but I refrained. So, while this may make you hungry, be thankful for the other slides I didn't choose!

Now, today's sermon title is "The Nature of Food: Nourishment, Fellowship, Enjoyment." I commented last Sunday that these phrases are probably going to be brought up throughout future weeks, and today I want to highlight these points even more. If you recall the beginning of the sermon, I actually showed how in the creation narrative with Adam, we see these three realities about food. Then I went to the narrative of Adam and Eve's sin, and we discovered that Satan and sin brings the opposite: **Death, Shame, Confusion**. When I was talking about these basic components that go along with food, I stated that you don't always have to eat what is most nourishing. Nor do you always have to eat with someone. Nor do you always have to eat what you always enjoy. However, these seem to be basic principles throughout the Scriptures that should serve as a pattern in our lives. And, if we neglect or downgrade any of these items, we're missing out on the glory of God. I would add that if we elevate any one or two of these things, we will also miss out on the glory of God because we're abusing the gift of food and feasting that God has given to us. So, the main idea of today's sermon is this: **God intends for us to enjoy the physical and spiritual realities of nourishment, fellowship, and enjoyment that food points to and brings into our lives. In rejecting or over-emphasizing any one of these, we legalistically allow experiences of death, shame, and confusion creep in.**

How are we going to discover these realities today? Well, what I'm going to do is first start off by going to various places in the Scripture where we see either one area highlighted or negated. And we're going to see how death, shame, and confusion creep in. Then we will end the sermon by going to one specific story in the Old Testament to see how God intends to remove death, shame, and confusion and bring in nourishment/life, fellowship and enjoyment!

- 1. In rejecting or highlighting any one of these, we legalistically allow experiences of death, shame, and confusion to creep in.**

Why do I have the word "legalistic" in this sentence? Well, if you remember the story of Adam and Eve's sin that we spoke of last week, you'll remember that Satan essentially tempted Adam and Eve through legalism. He wanted them to not focus on *all* that God had given. He wanted them to focus on *one* tree. Satan always limits and/or distorts. And that's what he did there.

With God's gifts, we often limit and/or distort. Hence, the word "legalistically." But let me just define legalism here for a moment. I'm giving you my basic definition: **To focus on rules more than the Ruler. To focus on the Law more than love. To emphasize regulations more than relationship.** This is precisely how many Pharisees and Sadducees lived in Jesus' day. By the way, this isn't to say that rules don't matter. The Law is good! But Jesus points out that the entire intention of the Law is to lead us to *love God* and *love others*. If we know the law and the rules, but use them as a club to shatter people, we've missed the entire point.

This can happen with food. We can become legalists with food. When we have our man-made regulations and rules, we miss how the gift of food is to point us to loving God and loving others. We limit the gift and then miss the Giver. Let's see how this happens at various points in the Scripture. First, let's look at Noah:

The example of Noah. In Genesis 6:21, when God tells Noah to bring animals on the ark, he also says in 6:21, **"²¹ Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them."** ²² **Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.** ¹ It's intriguing to me that the phrase "command" is listed here regarding food. Remember God commanding Adam to eat from all the food from the trees? It's like Noah is a "new" Adam and will be tested in a type of new creation. And, I think this is what we're to think about this. After the flood, in Genesis 9:1, God speaks similar words to Noah and his family as he spoke to Adam and Eve: And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."² Then, in 9:3, God says, **"³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything."**³ God says that he gave the plants for food to humanity, but now he gives animals! God moves on in speaking a covenant to Noah, in similar ways as he spoke a covenant with Adam. But this covenant is a promise to not flood the earth anymore. But, God's not going to flood the earth *not* because Noah and his family are morally perfect. They're not. Immediately after the covenant, we read of Noah's failure. Just like it seems Adam's failure came after God's covenant with Adam. But Noah's failure is seen not in his relationship to fruit, but to drink: ²⁰ **Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.** ²¹ **He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.**⁴ What was intended to speak to nourishment, fellowship and enjoyment; Noah abused by emphasizing (over and above nourishment and fellowship) enjoyment. And what we see after this covenant is shame, confusion and death result.

The example of Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 11, we have an example of the Christians in the city of Corinth gathering together for communion. They come together in a large home to eat over a full meal where the bread and wine take center stage. But let me read to you Paul's words about what takes place: **when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.** ¹⁸ **For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part,** ¹⁹ **for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.** ²⁰ **When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.** ²¹ **For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk.** ²² **What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.** ⁵ What's happening here?

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 6:21–22.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:1.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:3.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 9:20–21.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 11:17–22.

Some people are getting their full, and even getting drunk, while others are walking away hungry. What do you think the Corinthians are elevating here in this scenario: nourishment, enjoyment or fellowship? I, at first, thought enjoyment. And, while that's definitely high on the list, I actually think there's another answer, too. This is somewhat of a trick. Based on the context of Corinth and what's taking place here, I think what they emphasized was a worldly view of fellowship. In that context, for Corinthian's celebratory feasts, the wealthy sat at tables and the poor were off to the side. These feasts in the ancient culture were a way to show who was who. So, they used and abused food for the purpose to elevate self. That misconstrues fellowship, doesn't it? We don't get together in order to brag about ourselves, do we? Well, at least we shouldn't!

So, what's Paul's words to them? He not only does not commend them, but he says, **“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.”**⁶ What we see here is that some believers have died. We also have a healthy shame, where Paul is wanting them to be convicted of their sin. And, Paul reveals their utter confusion. This confusion about their relationship with each other reveals their confusion about Christ. If you and I have trusted in Christ, we are united together. It doesn't matter if we're rich or poor. It doesn't matter any worldly standard. We have full and complete fellowship together.

The example of False Teachers. Let's read 1 Timothy 4:1-4 together: **Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. . . .⁷** If I were to ask you what you thought the teachings of demons sounds like, what would you say? If I were to ask you what someone with a seared conscience would teach, what you say that teaching would be? If I didn't know this text, I would say that the teaching would be to maybe hate your enemies or murder people or be contentious or reject your parents or be licentious in all sorts of ways – whether sexually or with alcohol or with greed. I would not say that the teachings of demons from a seared conscience is this: Don't get married and don't eat certain foods!

That sounds like self-control, doesn't it? But Paul says that anything that forbids what God commands to be received with Thanksgiving, is sinful. By the way, this passage isn't saying you can't diet. It's also not saying that if you have a peanut allergy, you have to eat peanuts because God created them to be received with thanksgiving. The idea is that the teachers are forbidding all people from these things as though in refraining from these things make you better or more valuable. This is pure legalism. View food as a means to elevate yourself by showing how you can control the gift. But what's happening is that they're removing enjoyment. They may even be removing fellowship here, too, because of the rigid constraints. As a result, what are the implications? From a spiritual perspective, they're embracing death, shame, and confusion. The doctrine of demons has lies as the center because the devil has been a liar from the beginning. This can bring false shame because people can feel guilty for things that aren't really against God. And, of course this can lead to death because they're emphasizing things that God

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 11:27–30.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 4:1–4.

doesn't. They should find life and thanksgiving, but they can't because they're more focused on the rule than on the Ruler.

So, we see just by these three examples how the Scriptures reveal to us how we can think about food with merely worldly standards – highlighting certain things to the exclusion or diminishing of others. We miss out when we do this. We end up revealing our sinful hearts when we do this. But I also want us to see God's glorious desire to reverse the curse on food and bring restoration with food. I want us to see that **God intends for us to enjoy the physical and spiritual realities of nourishment, fellowship, and enjoyment that food points to and brings into our lives.** Now, we're going to move into the Old Testament with a narrative from the prophet Elisha's ministry. In this scenario, we actually see the affects of the curse on food, and then the reversal of the curse on food!

2. **God intends for us to enjoy the physical and spiritual realities of nourishment, fellowship, and enjoyment that food points to and brings into our lives.**

Let's read 2 Kings 4:38-44 together: ³⁸ And Elisha came again to Gilgal when there was a famine in the land. And as the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, "Set on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets." ³⁹ One of them went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and cut them up into the pot of stew, not knowing what they were. ⁴⁰ And they poured out some for the men to eat. But while they were eating of the stew, they cried out, "O man of God, there is death in the pot!" And they could not eat it. ⁴¹ He said, "Then bring flour." And he threw it into the pot and said, "Pour some out for the men, that they may eat." And there was no harm in the pot. ⁴² A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And Elisha said, "Give to the men, that they may eat." ⁴³ But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred men?" So he repeated, "Give them to the men, that they may eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left.' " ⁴⁴ So he set it before them. And they ate and had some left, according to the word of the Lord. ⁸

This miracle may come off as a little too "low" for Elisha to be concerned about. But it fits with the context of Elisha performing many miracles about food. We have the oil, provisions of food for people who are poor. Provisions of food for people who are in caves. Then, we have here provisions of food for prophets who are hungry. Food. Food. And, more food! This is extremely intriguing to me because when miracles take place in the Bible, the purpose is to show what the reversal of the curse brings about. So, when Jesus heals, he shows that he will heal someday and there will be no more pain or sickness. The same reality here with Elisha. Every miracle shows what the reversal of the curse looks like – and it sure seems that in Elisha's ministry, God desires to reveal to us that the curse over food will be done away with.

This should bring encouragement. God cares about the most basic of needs for humanity! God is *that* concerned about providing food? Remember Jesus' model prayer for the disciples? Give us this day our daily bread. But you may think, "Why is God so concerned about food?" I think even in asking that question, we reveal what type of society we live in. As I mentioned last week, I think in our society, most of us tend to presume on the fact that we'll eat however much we want to every day. And, if we really don't have any money, that's what Visa is for, right? But all of this reveals the immense generosity of God to us!

⁸ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Ki 4:38–44.

Now, I want you to think for a moment the type of culture that Elisha lives in. It's an agrarian culture in which one commentator writes, "It is difficult for modern Western readers to understand what life in an agrarian society at basically subsistence levels meant for the average individual in ancient Israel. Starvation and hard times were never far away. Disruption of the annual rainy season, molds and funguses from too much or too little rain, locust outbreaks, or raiders who confiscated the harvest for their own use or burned the fields in order to force the population to surrender could rapidly reduce an already hard life to a borderline existence. . . . In modern Western countries, food is a far smaller part of a household budget than it has ever been; the time invested in gathering it is ordinarily limited to how long one spends in a supermarket or convenience store and perhaps a small family garden. Life was very different in ancient Israel. . . . [Providing] daily bread may represent the largest expenditure one makes and may also consume almost every waking moment." – Dillard ⁹

At this point in time in Elisha's ministry, the prophets are living in a time of famine. This famine is affecting everyone, but God proves that He desires to care for the prophets when we hear Elisha say, "Set on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets."¹⁰ They don't even have food on the table, but God reveals his desire to provide for them. After Elisha calls for people to start preparing food, you read that a certain man goes out to get ingredients for their stew. As he is out there getting the food, you read that he found some wild gourds. The fact that there were so many of them lying around should have been a clue that this probably isn't a good idea to pick them, but he picked them nonetheless. The term for wild gourds here probably refers to gourds that were very bad tasting and, more than likely, referred to a type of a small yellow melon that acted as a strong laxative (see Davis, pp. 71-72). Eating too much of it could be fatal. Right here, we see the effects of the curse, don't we? There is no sin involved in this prophet cutting this up, but the curse brings all sorts of pain. We have poisonous foods that can cause immense problems. Does God care about that? Well, let's see.

This prophet brings the gourds back to the house and cuts them into the stew, and we have this phrase in the ESV that says, "not knowing what they were." We're not exactly sure what the translation is, but this could also be understood as, "they did not know what they were." In other words, the other prophets were unaware what this other prophet did! Whatever the case may be, Elisha redeems the food. By the way, this is a miracle. Flour can't rid things of poison. This is a visible sign to reveal God's miraculous, curse-reversing power. So, what is it God does? God removes the poison from the stew, and also removes the disgusting flavor. That would be a welcomed surprise, right?

But, do we really need to rejoice that God healed the stew? Couldn't he have just healed the prophets and cleansed their palates so they didn't have the disgusting flavor any more? What does it speak about God that the stew was healed? Well, again, let me emphasize the point of miracles. According to the Scriptures, a miracle is meant to display a reversal of the curse and they are always intended to point us forward to a day when God's Kingdom arrives and reveals complete perfection. In Isaiah 65:22, we read of that future day, **"²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.**"
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⁹ Dillard, Raymond B (1999). *Faith in the Face of Apostasy: The Gospel According to Elijah & Elisha*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, p. 106.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Ki 4:38.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Is 65:21–22.

These verses state that in a future day, those who trust the Lord will eat the fruit of their work joyfully. There will be no pain in work, and there will be pleasure in reaping all the benefits. Doesn't that sound like how it was in the Garden of Eden? No sweat. No earth making things difficult. Let's now go back to this narrative with Elisha. What if this *only* talking about God healing a soup that was unbearably disgusting? Should we minimize the miracle? Absolutely not. I actually think that it should greatly encourage us! God not only will raise people from the dead. But, He will raise them from the dead and also give them lives of joy, where all food will never bring any curse, but will only ever point to and provide nourishment, fellowship, and enjoyment!

And that's what I think even the remainder of this story continues to remind us of. We have a man come to offer a firstfruit offering of bread. It's not enough to feed everyone, and then Elisha performs another miracle of provision. He tells his servant to pass out the barley loaves to everyone. The servant is confused because how is he supposed to distribute 1/5 of a loaf to 100 people. That's not going to fill them up, is it? Yet, Elisha insists. He does this and God expands the food. It's of such great provision that we're told 100 people are able to not simply eat, but to feast!

Put these miracles together, and remember the point of miracles. To reveal the reversal of the curse and displays of the future Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is a wondrous Kingdom with no pain or sorrow or death. There is no disgust. And, good, uncursed food, matters! Some may say to this, "Who cares what kind of food we'll have in Heaven? We have God. Be content." Who cares about food in Heaven? Clearly God does. Why so many miracles from Elisha with provision and food? God cares. We know that even food is meant to lead us to glory in God. And, in the New Heaven and New Earth there is going to be perfect food (it won't be disgusting and there will be no poison); therefore, with perfect hearts we will then perfectly rejoice in God. That's what I think this miracle speaks (at least in part). There will be a day when God's elect shall *long enjoy* the work of their hands! We will feast in the house of Zion. We will sit at God's table that he has set before us. Instead of being in a sin-cursed world of death, shame, and confusion. We will be in a New Heaven and New Earth where there will be life, fellowship, and enjoyment!

Now, I could stop here, but if I do, we miss the ultimate point of seeing Jesus. So, we can't stop here because we must see how our Savior fulfills all of this! So, how do these stories specifically point us to the Savior? Well, think about bread and God's provision through a prophet. Of course, one of the first prophets whom God used to provide bread for people was Moses. It was through Moses that God spoke to Israel that He would provide manna on a daily basis to reveal to Israel that He is their God who rescued them. In Deuteronomy, we read Moses prophesying about a greater prophet to come, saying, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen. . . ." ¹² After Moses came many prophets – two of whom were Elijah and then Elisha. Were they the ones that Moses was looking forward to? Elijah did do some spectacular miracles and fed a widow. But, of course, he was taken up. What about Elisha? Elisha has surely done a greater miracle than Elijah. He feeds 100 people with this food. But, as we will see later, Elisha dies and the Israelites are left without his presence.

Of course, we know the prophet Moses is talking about. Of Jesus we read more extravagant miracles. And, we even read of a greater episode with barley loaves, don't we? We are told that Jesus feeds 5,000 with only five loaves and two fish. Then we are later told that he feeds 4,000 with seven loaves and a

¹² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Dt 18:15). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

few fish. In the first story, we also have Andrew speaking to Jesus like Elisha's servant spoke to Elisha, saying in John 6:9, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"¹³ Yet, that doesn't stop Jesus from blessing and breaking the bread and granting miraculous provision. Then, after all have food, we are also told in both scenarios that there were leftovers. Don't even begin to tell me that there aren't obvious connections with the story of Elisha. And, I think it's legitimate to imagine that other people who knew their Old Testament began to see the similarities between the prophets of old with Jesus in this glorious provision. Jesus is the long-prophesied Savior who has come to reverse the Curse.

As a result, Jesus is said to be the bread that satisfies our souls. Do you recognize the weakness of your soul, not just your stomach? Do you recognize the affects of the curse in your life? Do you know the sin inside of you? It is because of Jesus that we can come with our weaknesses and sins and present ourselves at His feet for forgiveness and hope. As the satisfying Savior, he took the curse on himself, when on the cross, and he satisfied God's justice in the place of sinners. Now, if you would turn to Jesus and Jesus alone for your forgiveness and rescue, you'll be forgiven! And God promises that you'll be a part of the eternal reversal of the curse. You'll know God and love him and be with him forever in a place of no death, shame, and confusion! You'll experience fullness of joy, life, and fellowship with God and others. Jesus rose again so that we could also rise up and experience an overflow of blessing!

I pray that if you don't know Christ that you would turn to him today. If you have questions, that you'll ask someone. I also pray that as you view food in your daily lives, you'll see that **God intends for us to enjoy the physical and spiritual realities of nourishment, fellowship, and enjoyment that food points to and brings into our lives. In rejecting or highlighting any one of these, we legalistically allow experiences of death, shame, and confusion creep in.** If you're a Christian, the reversal of the curse should excite you! God's care for your daily bread should lead you to thank him and rejoice in him and to anticipate a day when we will feast not just with 100 people or 5,000 people, but with all the hosts of heaven and all those throughout the ages who have trusted Jesus.

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 6:9.