

BEVERAGES AND BIBLES

“Food is a reminder of our humanity, our fragility, our createdness. Try to think your way through starvation. Try to command yourself not to be hungry, using sheer will. It will work for a while, maybe, but at some point you’ll find yourself - no matter how high minded or iron-willed - face-to-face with your own hunger, and with that hunger, your own humanity.”

Shauna Niequist

Introduction Question - What is your favorite thing to eat on Thanksgiving?

Question: How often are you thankful for what you eat?

- “Knowing you should feel gratitude feels awful. It made you feel rotten. Guilty. Like dirt...All of life is a resounding call to gratitude, and until we honestly feel the joy of gratitude, giving will be difficult for us. Gratitude is the best feeling you will ever have. But you can’t feel grateful just because you ought to.” - Father Daniel Homan
- “Better is a dinner of vegetables where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it.” Proverbs 15:17
- “People who love to eat are always the best people.” Julia Child
- “One cannot think well, love well, seep well, if one has not dined well.” Virginia Woolf
- “If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world” J.R.R. Tolkien

Question: Some churches have open communion where everyone is welcome to the table, other churches have closed communion, where only members of the church in good standing can receive communion. Should communion be open or closed? Why?

- “When you offer peace instead of division, when you offer faith instead of fear, when you offer someone a place at your table instead of keeping them out because they’re different or messy or wrong somehow, you represent the heart of Christ.” Shauna Niequist

- “Communion should be taken only by believers who have examined themselves before the Lord. If a person has not made a profession of faith or is unwilling to take Communion in a worthy manner, he or she should refrain from taking part in the Lord's Supper. If a believer is visiting a church which practices closed Communion, it is best to refrain from partaking, so as not to give offense.” Got Questions Ministries
- “Food is symbolic of love when words are inadequate.” Alan D. Wolfelt
- “Food, in the end, in our own tradition, is something holy. It’s not about nutrients and calories. It’s about sharing. It’s about honesty. It’s about identity.” Louise Fresco

Question: What do you know about where your food comes from?

- “Food is about the relationships that join us to the earth, fellow creatures, loved ones and guest, and ultimately God” Norman Wirzba
- “There's a hunger beyond food that's expressed in food, and that's why feeding is always a kind of miracle.” Sara Miles
- “Better a dry crust with quiet than a house full of feasting with quarrels.” Proverbs 17:1
- “When chickens get to live like chickens, they'll taste like chickens, too.” Michael Pollan

Question: A seminary professor once said, “Everyone is welcome at the table, not everyone is welcome to speak. Everyone is welcome to the table, but every behavior is not.” Who is welcome at your table, who isn't? What tables aren't you welcome at? How do we define and understand who and what is welcome?

- “Eating, and hospitality in general, is a communion, and any meal worth attending by yourself is improved by the multiples of those with whom it is shared.” Jesse Browner
- “What happened once I started distributing communion was the truly disturbing, dreadful realization about Christianity: You can't be a Christian by yourself.” Sara Miles

More Questions

- Think about the best meal you’ve ever had. What made it so special?

- Why did God create a world in which every living creature must eat?
- In the early church, communion was not a mid-service snack, it was a love feast, a kind of potluck dinner church. What would it be like if church was like that today?
- Why, at the end of his ministry, did Jesus give the disciples a meal to share as his legacy?

More Quotes

- “To those of us who believe that all of life is sacred every crumb of bread and sip of wine is a Eucharist, a remembrance, a call to awareness of holiness right where we are. I want all of the holiness of the Eucharist to spill out beyond church walls, out of the hands of priests and into the regular streets and sidewalks, into the hands of regular, grubby people like you and me, onto our tables, in our kitchens and dining rooms and backyards.” Shauna Niequist
- “Meals are powerful symbols in our memory. But someone has to make a meal happen. Someone must consider it important enough to give themselves to the work that goes into preparation...In genuine hospitality we work to make our entire existence a welcoming table, a place prepared for others to be at ease, to receive from us comfort and strength.” Father Daniel Homan
- “In Latin, the word *companion* literally means to “break bread” together. No wonder the Eucharist has such power. It is founded in our food experience, and our earliest experience of that is associated with warmth and touching. Food is powerful. It says, “You belong here.” It comforts.” Father Daniel Homan
- “The faith I was finding was jagged and more difficult. It wasn't about abstract theological debates: Does God exist? Are sin and salvation predestined? Or even about political/ideological ones: Is capital punishment a sin? Is there a scriptural foundation for accepting homosexuality? It was about action. Taste and see, the Bible said, and I did.” Sara Miles

Digesting Grace: Why the Food We Eat Matters to God originally published at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/7thcity/digesting-grace.html?paging=off> on 8/15/12

It's Tuesday afternoon, which means I come home from work to a kitchen counter filled with bags of veggies and leafy greens. I dig through the produce: bok choy again. I've eaten more bok choy in the past three weeks than I have in the past three decades, but I suppose that's sort of the point: When you buy into a CSA farm, you take what the land gives you.

Eighth Day Farm is our local CSA, or Community Supported Agriculture, in Holland, Michigan. Simply put, CSA is a model of farming in which community members buy a share of a farm's produce before the season begins. This gives the farmer—in our case, Jeff Roessing—a guaranteed source of income, and gives CSA members a regular supply of fresh, local food.

So tonight it's stir-fried bok choy, again, with kohlrabi, garlic scapes, onions, and you-pick peas. My family is eating our greens (fresh, organic, and about as local as they come) because I see it as a deeply theological act. What my family eats matters to me because, like all aspects of this earthly life, food matters to God.

Food is a gift. In fact, food is the first gift. In one entirely accurate sense, all things from God's good hands are gifts, but I think food is somehow unique. Open a Bible to Genesis 1 and look at what God does in the creation story. More specifically, look at the verbs: God creates, he hovers, he says, he names, he separates, he makes and blesses and sees and declares it good. But it isn't until the end of the chapter, in verse 29, that he gives. And what does he give? Food.

"Behold," God says, "I have given you every plant and every tree. You shall have them for food."

Later, after the Flood, God adds animals: "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything" (Gen. 9:3).

When properly understood as a gift, it becomes clear that food is a tangible expression of God's love for us. As theologian Norman Wirzba has put it, food is "God's love made edible." It is one essential way that he shows his care for us (see Matt. 6:26). It is a physical embodiment of God's common grace, given for the good of his creation. And it's one of the practical means by which Jesus Christ sustains all things.

"Food is not a product," writes gardener and author Fred Bahnson in *Making Peace with the Land*. "It is not 'fuel for the machine.' It is not a commodity or a reflection of our technological ingenuity. It is before everything else an unearned gift from God, manna from heaven, a blessing."

Because food is a gift, how we handle it—what we eat and how we eat it—is much more than a matter of convenience, taste, desire, or consumption. How I respond to a gift is an indication of how I feel about the giver. And because food is a gift of God's good grace, I respond by eating—and supporting within my community—food that manifests God's grace well.

Which raises a significant question: Is it possible for particular foods to better manifest God's grace than other foods? I think so.

Food that causes our bodies harm misuses and ultimately abuses his gift of grace. When food is healthy and grown with reverence for its environment and with care for those in our communities—precisely the type of food grown by Eighth Day Farm—it provides genuine nourishment, body and soul.

Another question: Is it possible to eat this food in ways that better respond to God's gifts than other ways? Again, I think so.

God, Paul tells us, gives "rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying [our] hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). Eating, then, should bring us satisfaction and gladness because, properly understood, food testifies of God and his goodness. I've learned over back-deck dinners with our closest friends that the finest way to eat is joyfully, in fellowship with others and, above all, with a profound sense of gratefulness—not only for the food and the hands that prepared it, but primarily for the God who has given us such flavorful gifts.

We can fairly describe eating in this way as feasting, as a celebration not (as some might suppose) of excess and gluttony but one of pleasure and appreciation. "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). Our eating should remind us of God's goodness, and make us uncommonly thankful for it.

To be honest, I'm still not very good at this. You'll find plenty of junk food in our pantry, and sneaking off alone to Burger King is an almost daily routine when my wife is out of town (did someone say "bacon sundae"?). I too often eat quickly and without gratitude. But I'm getting better at it, one bite at a time. I'm learning to intentionally choose food that makes me more aware of, and thankful for, the grace of God, and to eat that food with an abiding awareness of God and his goodness.

Which brings me back to Eighth Day Farm: I find it easier to see the connection between my dinner plate and my faith when I stroll past the farm a few blocks down the street. I look at the rows of vegetables and think of Psalm 65, which describes God's active role in preparing crops, watering the soil and blessing its growth.

We speak often of Christians as the hands and feet of Christ. When I see the hands and feet of Jeff and his volunteers sowing, cultivating and harvesting my bok choy, I can't help wondering if they are instruments God is using to accomplish his work and distribute his common grace to a fallen world.