

WORDshop Session 7 – Food Fight

So, what does the Bible have to say about food? A lot, actually. The desire for food is a surprisingly common topic and theme in the Bible. That desire and a well spoken lie set all of humanity down a dark path of bondage that required Jesus' death on the cross to redeem. Is it any wonder that desire for food and Satan's lies can still entangle, distract and limit us today? Let's take a look at how this desire for food has been illustrated and addressed throughout the Word. Appetite is a far greater spiritual issue than I ever imagined.

Eve

Genesis 3:1-6, *“The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?” “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’” “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.” The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and **its fruit looked delicious**, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.”*

We only get to chapter three, in Genesis, before food becomes an issue. Eve is confronted by the serpent and he plants doubt. Eve knows what God said and actually quotes Him. The serpent lies, and since the fruit looks good and she wants to know what God knows, Eve eats it. Then we see the first incident of mindless eating as Adam partakes as well. Eve was tricked into disobeying God. The serpent lied, but Eve knew exactly what God had said. She wanted the fruit and what it offered, so she chose to believe the lie instead of what God had spoken.

Genesis 3:13, *“Then the Lord God asked the woman, “What have you done?” “The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”*

When I re-read this story, for what was probably the thousandth time, I had to ask, “Was Eve telling the truth?”, or did she deceive herself because she wanted the food? She *believed* what she wanted, so she could *do* what she wanted. This is the very heart of deception. Have you ever done anything similar? What lies are you choosing to believe? The battle with appetite is what plunged us all into sin. Think about that for a minute. The first recorded spiritual battle was over food and it lead us all into the bondage of sin. We are still using the same tired excuse that Eve did – justifying our behavior by questioning if God really said what he did and if what he said was true. This applies to every area of our lives. Do we want to indulge the desires of our flesh more than we want to walk in obedience to God?

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Esau-Jacob

Genesis 25:27-33, *“When the boys grew up, Esau became an expert hunter, an outdoorsman, but Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home. Isaac loved Esau because he had **a taste** for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field exhausted. He said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stuff, because I’m exhausted.” That is why he was also named Edom. Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.” “Look,” said Esau, “I’m about to die, so what good is a birthright to me?” Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to Jacob and sold his birthright to him. Then Jacob gave bread and lentil stew to Esau; he ate, drank, got up, and went away. So Esau despised his birthright.”*

How many times have we despised our birthright, as Christians, because of our relationship with food? By that, I mean how have we sacrificed our testimony or effectiveness because we chose our appetite over what God has

for us? What have we given up because the desire for food was so strong? What have we not done because the consequence of indulging that desire is a body that is sick, tired and depressed; a spirit that is defeated?

Children of Israel

Exodus 16:1-31, 1 “Then the whole community of Israel set out from Elim and journeyed into the wilderness of Sin between Elim and Mount Sinai. They arrived there on the fifteenth day of the second month, one month after leaving the land of Egypt. **2** There, too, the whole community of Israel complained about Moses and Aaron. **3** **“If only the Lord had killed us back in Egypt,”** they moaned. **“There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness to starve us all to death.”** **4** Then the Lord said to Moses, “Look, I’m going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. **5** On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual.” **6** So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “By evening you will realize it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt. **7** In the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaints, which are against him, not against us. What have we done that you should complain about us?” **8** Then Moses added, “The Lord will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread to satisfy you in the morning, for he has heard all your complaints against him. What have we done? Yes, your complaints are against the Lord, not against us.” **9** Then Moses said to Aaron, “Announce this to the entire community of Israel: ‘Present yourselves before the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.’” **10** And as Aaron spoke to the whole community of Israel, they looked out toward the wilderness. There they could see the awesome glory of the Lord in the cloud. **11** Then the Lord said to Moses, **12** “I have heard the Israelites’ complaints. Now tell them, ‘In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’” **13** That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew. **14** When the dew evaporated, a flaky substance as fine as frost blanketed the ground. **15** **The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. “What is it?”** they asked each other. They had no idea what it was. And Moses told them, “It is the food the Lord has given you to eat. **16** These are the Lord’s instructions: Each household should gather as much as it needs. Pick up two quarts for each person in your tent.” **17** So the people of Israel did as they were told. Some gathered a lot, some only a little. **18** But when they measured it out, everyone had just enough. Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. Each family had just what it needed. **19** Then Moses told them, “Do not keep any of it until morning.” **20** But some of them didn’t listen and kept some of it until morning. But by then it was full of maggots and had a terrible smell. Moses was very angry with them. **21** After this the people gathered the food morning by morning, each family according to its need. And as the sun became hot, the flakes they had not picked up melted and disappeared. **22** On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much as usual—four quarts for each person instead of two. Then all the leaders of the community came and asked Moses for an explanation. He told them, “This is what the Lord commanded: Tomorrow will be a day of complete rest, a holy Sabbath day set apart for the Lord. So bake or boil as much as you want today, and set aside what is left for tomorrow.” **24** So they put some aside until morning, just as Moses had commanded. And in the morning the leftover food was wholesome and good, without maggots or odor. **25** Moses said, “Eat this food today, for today is a Sabbath day dedicated to the Lord. There will be no food on the ground today. **26** You may gather the food for six days, but the seventh day is the Sabbath. There will be no food on the ground that day.” **27** Some of the people went out anyway on the seventh day, but they found no food. **28** The Lord asked Moses, **“How long will these people refuse to obey my commands and instructions? 29** They must realize that the Sabbath is the Lord’s gift to you. That is why he gives you a two-day supply on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must each stay in your place. Do not go out to pick up food on the seventh day.” **30** So the people did not gather any food on the seventh day. **31** The Israelites called the food manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey wafers.

Numbers 21:5-6, “The people spoke against God and Moses: “Why have you led us up from Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread or water, and **we detest this wretched food!**” Then the Lord sent poisonous snakes among the people, and they bit them so that many Israelites died.”

In **Psalm 78:18**, David refers to how the Israelites related to God over food, *“They stubbornly tested God in their hearts, **demanding the foods they craved**”*.

Exodus 16 is an entire chapter about disobedience toward God over food. It manifests in many ways, just in that one example. God’s people, who had seen His provision so many times and were led by visible signs of God’s presence in the cloud by day and fire by night, were basically at war with him over food. They wanted to go back to physical slavery just to have the foods of Egypt again. They preferred slavery and death to God’s provision, because it was not what their flesh craved. Think about that for a minute. Do you stay in bondage to food because you want it more than what God has for you?

Look at how the Israelites interacted with manna – God had to order them not to be gluttonous and greedy with his provision. He wanted them to trust him, but they did not have enough faith to trust him for a single day. They disobeyed him at every turn because of their appetites. They complained to the point that God sent snakes and killed many of them. I am incredibly thankful that grace has covered all of my complaining about food!

In what ways have you complained about food? Have you actually complained about God’s provision? I know that I have. “Why don’t vegetables taste like chocolate?” “Why can’t I just eat what I want and not have to think about it?” “Why don’t the things that are good for me taste better?”

The irony to it all is that the Promised Land, where God was leading them, was described as a “land flowing with milk and honey”. **Exodus 3:8**, *“So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. **It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.**”* I find it interesting that the Promised Land was described by the promise of delightful food. God truly speaks to us in ways we understand, if we can manage to look at his promises rather than our own desires. What he offers is far better. We just need to trust him to get there.

Has your battle with food ever made you question God? How did that manifest?

Practical steps to freedom:

Know the Word. Stop complaining. Be thankful.