

Wisdom in Eating and Drinking

Please open your Bible to the book of Proverbs.

We looked at chapter one a couple weeks ago and saw that this book is intended to point us to Jesus – He is the fulfillment of all wisdom. Brother Dennis showed that to us as well, helping us see God’s wisdom for friendship and marriage last week.

This morning, I want us to look at another topic from the book of Proverbs – eating and drinking. We’ll be primarily looking at food, though we’ll touch on some verses that mention alcohol as well. But this isn’t a sermon examining all that God says about that subject. We’ll looking mostly at food and eating today.

This is probably not the first time you’ve thought about food during the message on a Sunday morning, maybe daydreaming about what’s for lunch or where you’re going to take Dad out for Father’s Day. But today – I’m asking you to do that. I want you to think about food with me from God’s Word.

And the Bible does talk about food. Quite a bit, actually. I went to a Christian summer camp as a kind, and we used to recite this verse before every meal...

1 Corinthians 10:31

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

We said it so much that I easily memorized it that week. It’s probably a good one for you to memorize as well. What this verse says is that there is a way to eat and drink which glorifies God and it implies that there is a way which does not. So we need to ask ourselves – how do we do that? What does that mean?

And the book of Proverbs will help us see that there is a way to eat and drink to the glory of God. There are over 40 texts about eating and drinking and things associated with that in this book. I’m not going to read all of them this morning, but I do want us to start with a few of them.

Listen as I read... **Proverbs 24:13**

My son, eat honey, for it is good,
and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.

Proverbs 25:16

If you have found honey, eat only enough for you,
lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.

Proverbs 23:19-21

Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way.
Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat
for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty,
and slumber will clothe them with rags.

Proverbs 30:7-9

Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die:

8 Remove far from me falsehood and lying;

give me neither poverty nor riches;

feed me with the food that is needful for me,

9 lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?"

or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

Let's pray...

Intro

There are several topics which may be dangerous to preach on:

- Greed and money
- Race and ethnicity
- Marriage and divorce

And probably up there on that list would be preaching on eating and drinking. This can be a sensitive issue for some of us. For many, exercising self-control in what we eat has been a life-long struggle. That's certainly true for me. This has been an ongoing battle.

So some of you may have gotten a sinking feeling when I said that we were going to talk about this subject this morning. You may have gotten nervous about what I may say here.

Well, I want to say up front, please don't be afraid, we're not talking about body size or weight this morning. That's not the issue. God is after our hearts. He is concerned about how we make decisions with food and drink, what is driving us and motivating us when we eat and drink.

So you might think, does this really matter? Does God really care how I eat and drink? Whether I have one hot dog or three? Should I get seconds or thirds on ice cream? And I think the answer is pretty clearly “Yes!”

Think about how God set up this world. God created us as bodies and souls. We have to continually eat to survive. It’s an ongoing reminder that we need daily bread, and we should give thanks to God for providing us with food each day. We know food is important to God because He commanded the sacrificial system in which His people were to eat clean animals and dedicate offerings to the Lord. Jesus did much of his ministry around food – eating with the tax collectors and sinners, performing his first miracle at a wedding feast, etc. And on to today, God has gifted us communion or the Lord’s Supper as a meal to celebrate the New Covenant and commemorate the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf.

But we also recognize that we can misuse food. We know that the first sin in the Garden of Eden was Adam and Eve eating what was forbidden. We know that God’s people in the wilderness grumbled about their food against God, despite receiving manna and quail from God. And one of the controversies in the early church was about whether or not the food laws continued on from the Old Testament, only being resolved when Peter received a vision from the Lord that all food (and all people) were now clean.

So we see that God does care about how we eat and drink. So how do we enjoy good food and drink in a way that glorifies God?

And I want to start by asking this question – what is food for? Why did God create food? Let me suggest there are three reasons that we can see in the Bible to help us understand why God created food:

Food is for fuel, Food is for fun, and Food is for feasting

(and there’s the issue of fasting or abstaining from food out of devotion to God, which is worthy of study, but not part of our discussion today)

We see right from the beginning, God tells us that He has made plants for food as fuel for humans.

Genesis 1:29

And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

And after the flood in the days of Noah, God gives the animals and birds and fish for mankind to eat,

Genesis 9:3

Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.

God has filled the earth with plants and animals for people to eat as food to nourish our bodies. So food is fuel for our bodies, but it is also good for us to enjoy. It's for fun!

1 Timothy 3:4

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, **5** for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

God made food to be enjoyed. It tastes good and the Lord wants us to enjoy the good things He has created as we recognize Him with thankfulness. The goodness and deliciousness and fun of food is an opportunity to praise and worship God. Good food points beyond itself to the God who created and provides it.

God has given food to us for fuel and for us to enjoy in fun. So how do we enjoy food with wisdom? Let me try to summarize some principles for wise eating and drinking from Proverbs. I think we see three guides for us as we try to grow in this area.

Listen to your stomach

The first guide that I want us to see is that we are to listen to our stomachs or our bodies. But this is also the most unreliable guide because our bodies have been affected by sin – they are not always helpful and accurate guides for us. My body isn't always my friend in the battle against sin.

Nonetheless, God has designed us to desire good food. That's a good thing that God has put into us. Listen to...

Proverbs 16:26

A worker's appetite works for him;
his mouth urges him on.

God has designed hunger to motivate us to work so that we will be able to eat. He has set up the world this way. We are driven by hunger to work. So if you're feeling hungry, that's a good time to eat something.

But also if you're not hungry, then you should probably not eat. I have gotten myself in trouble so many times by eating when I wasn't really hungry – I was just bored or stressed or sad or I told myself it was a 'special occasion.' And that can cause a host of problems when we aren't listening to our stomachs.

I have sometimes pursued that kind of "Thanksgiving feeling" when you feel really full and satisfied. I thought I could have that every day – or every meal. So I wasn't listening to my stomach, I was only chasing a feeling I wanted to experience.

When you are listening to your stomachs, they will help you know when you are really hungry. And that hunger is a gift from God to tell you that it's a good time to eat. And you should eat something *good*.

Proverbs 24:13-14

My son, eat honey, for it is good,
and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.

There's a command here that we are to eat honey because it's good! Food is for fun! For enjoyment and pleasure!

And when this verse says to eat honey, it's not just talking about honey.

"Eat honey" = cheesecake, good coffee, a PB & J made by your mom, an ice-cold Coke on a summer day, homemade Butterfinger ice cream, or a steak cooked exactly the right way. Or you can fill in whatever that good food is in your life.

He says, "eat honey, my son." This is fatherly instruction. God is not thundering a command to us from Mount Sinai. He's not threatening us like He's about to overthrow the Assyrians. Here, he's a shepherd, He's our Abba Father explaining to us what we should do. He's inviting us to enjoy what is good. We are to eat honey *because* it's good.

This sounds just like creation – like in Genesis 1-2 when God created all things and declared that it was good. It is good for people to enjoy good food. And it is good because the drippings of the honeycomb is sweet to your taste. In the deliciousness of food, we see God's good plan in creation – like a fabric that God has woven into the created order.

Think for a moment with me – how do we get honey?

God didn't have to use a flow chart or a whiteboard to decide how He was going to design this. But you can imagine it something like that: first the flower grows and produces nectar to attract bees and help with pollination. Then the bee brings the nectar back to its hive. And then this little bee knows how to make the nectar into honey, and it makes more than it needs. So it also makes this wax honeycomb so that it has a place to store it. And when a clever bear or a human comes along, then we can eat the honey from the honeycomb, and it hits the human taste bud, and it's delicious. God designed all of this for our joy.

The same could be said for chocolate. It's amazing that people discovered, by the grace of God, that if you take this cocoa bean and do all of these steps (drying the beans, and roasting, and grinding, separating out the cocoa, combining it with other ingredients, stirring and tempering it), then you'll get chocolate. It's incredible that people discovered how to do that with this bitter bean so that we can enjoy God's gracious plan for us through food.

So the instruction here is to eat honey because it's good. If you're hungry, then eat. Listen to your stomach.

But...Solomon also tells us not to overdo it. Do not be ruled by your appetites. It is possible to have too much honey.

Proverbs 25:16

If you have found honey, eat only enough for you,
lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.

We don't often talk about doing that, but here it is in God's Word. God wants us to know this. We should eat honey (and all that means). But eat just enough. Do not over-eat or bad things may happen. In the short-term that may mean vomiting. In the long-run, that may mean other health problems that come from over-eating.

In God's plan, our stomachs let us know if we're hungry. But they also let us know when we've had too much, don't they? If your stomach is telling you that you're full, then you should have stopped already. Eat just enough and not more.

God has created and designed us to desire food when we're hungry and abstain from it when we're full. That's part of God's good design. He has even given us help in the way our bodies work...

Proverbs 27:7

One who is full loathes honey,
but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet.

This is Solomon making an observation, under the inspiration of the Spirit, and saying, "The person who is full doesn't want more, but for the hungry even bitter things are sweet and desirable." I'll sometimes say to my wife after we've had a good meal on a date night – and we drive past this Wendy's on our way home, do you a baconator?

That's the pattern that God put into the fabric of the universe. You desire good food when you're hungry, but when you're full, more can sound terrible.

The problem for many of us is that our bodies adjust to our eating habits. If we eat beyond when we're full, then our stomachs adapt to that. We make it harder for ourselves to know that we've had just enough. And that makes it easier to overeat at each meal. And over time that makes it even harder to practice self-control.

So how are you doing with that? Are you given to over-eating? Do you know when you're full, when you've had 'just enough'? Listen to your stomach.

Use your mind

Secondly, Solomon would tell us that we are use our minds and be intentional about what we eat and drink. We have been given minds by God to think; we're not just to be ruled by our stomachs. We're not just animals driven by instincts. We are rational creatures, given minds to use with wisdom when we decide what and how to eat.

I think one of my problems with food has been a general thoughtlessness or laziness when it comes to food. My wife is more inclined to know and think about what she eats. -when we got married, she asked what my favorite 'lunch vegetable' was? Now, I'm telling Josh that he needs to have veggie trays when he serves pizza to the church...

It is possible to be sinfully complacent about our eating. In our day, we can practice diligence in our eating and drinking by reading labels and listening to trusted healthcare

professionals. I know there's so much information and misinformation out there about food and dieting and all of that. I'm not saying you need to become an expert, but there are some basic things that many experts agree on – most of us should eat less sugar and processed foods, we should control our portion sizes, and we should be more intentional about which foods we select to eat.

We should use our minds. We need to think rightly about what we eat. And that may also mean taking out of our heads some of the bad advice we may have been taught or caught by watching others. We may have learned bad habits with food growing up. We may have used food to escape from problems or as a comfort when we're sad, and we need to unlearn some of those unhelpful habits.

So, for example, think about this: do you need to clean your plate?
You may think, "Yes! Of course! Mom said so!"

And if you're a kid here this morning – then yes, you need to clean your plate if your parents tell you to. Most likely, your mom and dad have given you 'just enough' food for you. And they are trying to teach you how to eat and drink for the glory of God in thankfulness to Him.

But if you're an adult here. You need to ask yourself, who is telling you to clean your plate? And do you need to do that all the time? Particularly if you're at a restaurant? Should you let the restaurant choose for you what 'just enough' food is for you? Portion sizes in many places are beyond what we truly need. Restaurants may not be the best decision-maker for how much salt or fat or sugar you need to have 'just enough.'

So use your minds. You don't necessarily have to clean your plate.
And I can hear some of you thinking – but food will go to waste! And yes, that may be. Or you may have to just save it for another time. But let me suggest that eating and drinking to the glory of God should outweigh our fear of 'wasting food.' There are worse things than wasting food.

Listen to: **Proverbs 21:20**

Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling,
but a foolish man devours it.

This verse isn't exactly about cleaning your plate, but it does get at the principle that we should not just immediately devour everything we happen to have on hand. A fool devours his treasure and oil right away.

Proverbs 21:17 says something similar:

Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man;
he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.

If you continually spend your money on temporary pleasures like wine and oil, you will not be rich. If you love food and drink more than the wise stewarding of your money, you will squander it all like the prodigal son, burning through it all as quick as it comes to you.

So we need to use our minds. We want to listen to our stomachs and eat 'just enough' when we are hungry. But we also ought to use our minds and be intentional about selecting which foods and how much.

Check your heart

Finally, the third principle is that we should check our hearts. In the Bible, the heart is the control center of the person. It's the seat of your emotions and will. The heart contains your desires and fears. It's the reason why you do what you do.

Elyse Fitzpatrick tells us "Your eating is a mirror upon your heart."
In other words, our eating habits reflect what is going on in our hearts.

Proverbs 13:25

The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite,
but the belly of the wicked suffers want.

The word 'appetite' there can also be translated 'soul' or 'heart.' The heart of the righteous will be satisfied. Does that mean that they eat and eat and eat forever? No. Solomon is saying that the righteous person will be content with their food. It's talking about the inner part of us which is satisfied or content, as opposed to the belly or the cravings of the wicked which are never satisfied and only want more and more.

The righteous person reaches the point of 'just enough' but the wicked never get there. They always want more. Their desire for one more chip, one more cookie, one more bite will never be able to give them the contentment or satisfaction they desire.

And there's a word for this insatiable desire for more – gluttony. A glutton is motivated by their appetite for more and more. But God says that there are consequences to that kind of behavior. Listen to:

Proverbs 23:19-21

Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way.
Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat
for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty,
and slumber will clothe them with rags.

The one who eats more than he or she should, that person will come to poverty. We made a similar point just a moment ago – the one who can't be around food without giving in. The one who is unable to control their impulses – that person will never have enough and is on the path toward poverty.

Instead, Solomon says we are to direct our hearts in the way. We are to look to God and the fullness of God's provision for us in Christ to receive the satisfaction that our souls desire.

So you see, the problem of gluttony has to do with our hearts. What is the root problem of gluttony and drunkenness? It is a desire to worship myself instead of God. It's a lack of self-control due to idolatry in our hearts. It comes from a selfish discontentment. It is using food and drink to try to satisfy what only God can satisfy.

God has given us all good things to enjoy – eat honey! But only eat just enough. Don't look to honey to give you what God alone can give, the true joy of knowing Him with a clean conscience and hearts at rest.

When we check our hearts, there are all kinds of things that we might find. Let me tell you some of my own struggles with food and my heart and see if any of them resonate with you or if your struggles are different from mine. These are bad motivations, bad reasons to eat or over-eat.

1. Fear of man – eating to be accepted by other people. I don't want the cook or others to think badly of me, so I would eat too much. Or I want to look this certain way, so I eat or don't eat to that others will approve of me.

2. Fear of hunger – I don't want to feel the discomfort of being hungry, so I would eat more than I needed to avoid that feeling. The problem is that I would do that at every meal. I used food for avoiding pain and discomfort.

3. Ingratitude – instead of being satisfied with what was available, I'd want just the right thing that was sweet or cheesy or crunchy or spice, and I wasn't content what we had on hand.

4. Laziness – in a similar way, I would value convenience over nutrition. I just couldn't be bothered to make something and just grabbed something processed or went out to get some fast food that wouldn't be as healthy for me.

5. Greed – I sometimes want to just keep on enjoying the good taste of delicious food without end. I just wanted to enjoy it forever. I wanted the self-indulgence to continue and so I sought more and more and more.

These are some of the ways that my own heart has gone astray when it comes to food. You may share some of these, or you may have your own.

So when we eat and drink, we should check our hearts – what is our motivation? Are you trying to get from food what God alone can give? Are you running from the difficulty of life by numbing yourself with food or drunkenness?

Brothers and sisters, we should eat 'just enough' for the glory of God and our eternal joy. We should not over-eat or become drunk for earthly pleasure out of selfishness, trying to use food to satisfy what only God can satisfy.

We should listen to our stomachs, use our minds, and check our hearts. Some of you may think – wow, that sounds like a lot of work. Am I going to need to get a bunsen burner and count the calories for every meal in my life? Well, no. But I think most of us could use a bit more intentionality when it comes to what we eat and drink.

The battle with food and drink is much like the battle to master our words. James says that no one can tame the tongue – all of us struggle to use our words with perfect

wisdom. And that's because our words, like our eating and drinking, reveal what's in our hearts. And our hearts are prone to wonder. We're prone to self-indulgence.

What we need is for God to give us new hearts. And the good news is that in the gospel, that's exactly what Jesus gives. Jesus, the very Son of God, died on the Cross so that we would be freed from slavery to sin, even sins like gluttony and drunkenness.

The take-away this morning is not that you need to try a new diet. Now, God may be calling you to be more wise in what you eat or not eat. But God is calling all of us to look to Him alone to satisfy our hearts.

And if you're here and you've not put your faith in Jesus to save you, then all of this discussion about food and drink may sound really weird. I recognize that there may be some visitors here this morning who are thinking, "what kind of church did I walk in to today?" Or if you brought a friend, they may be looking at you like, "what kind of cult is this? Regulations about food and drink?!?" Well, I hope that you'd see that this is the kind of church that takes the Word of God seriously. We want to be pleasing to God in all that we do.

And God tells us that we all struggle with sin, including sins with food and drink, because we have rebelled against God. We need God to save us, and the only way that happens is by putting our faith in what Jesus has done in dying for sin and rising again from the grave. And when we put our trust in Him, we can be forgiven and receive new hearts, so that we're gradually transformed in every area – including what we eat.

We're not immediately made perfect, that won't happen until heaven. But we work now in the meantime to grow in following Christ. So if you've not put your trust in Christ, that's where you have to start.

And let's be clear – you cannot be saved by what you eat or drink. Paul says in

Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

God's kingdom is so much bigger than eating and drinking. God desires your righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. These things come through the gospel of Jesus Christ. I hope you'll trust in Him today.

For those who are Christians, let me give you some practical questions to think about:

- Do I believe God cares about what I eat? Do I need to be more intentional about selecting which foods I eat and how much?
- Am I too concentrated on food or drink? Am I controlled by a desire for food or a desire to abstain from food? Has food become my master?
- Do I overeat? What is my motivation when I determine what and how to eat?
- Do I avoid good foods out of a sinful desire to appear a certain way or have a certain look?
- Am I thankful for God's provision of daily bread and delicious food and drink?

Proverbs tells us to listen to our stomach, use our mind, and check our heart. Brothers and sisters, let's trust in Christ so that as we eat and drink and whatsoever we do, we will do it all to the glory of God.

Let's pray...

Lord's Supper

(invite deacons and band)

I mentioned at the beginning of the message that God has given us food for fuel and for fun. But He has also given food for feasting. When God finally defeats and eliminates evil and brings in the kingdom of God in all its fullness, the book of Revelation tells us Jesus will host a marriage feast. As Sandra McCracken sings, we will feast in the house of Zion. We will sing with our hearts restored. He has done great things, we will say together. We will feast and weep no more.

God created food to be used in celebration. Feasts are a part of God's kind plan for His people to be reminders of what He has provided. And so now, as we turn our attention to the Lord's Supper, we see that this is a feast given for us. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic meal. We are invited to this table at which God gives us bread and wine or the fruit of the vine to drink.

God calls us at this table to feast with Him – to celebrate His gracious provision for us. And God has provided not only sustenance for our bodies, not only pleasurable ways to enjoy His goodness, but He has given us forgiveness for our sins by the broken body and shed blood of Jesus.

In Luke 22, Jesus eats the Passover meal with His disciples and institutes this practice for the church.

Luke 22:19-20,

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **20** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

This table reminds us that God has established a New Covenant, a new promise for us as His people. And in this New Covenant, we have been given new hearts which are soft to the Lord and no longer hearts of stone and stubbornness. In the New Covenant, we can now know the Lord directly, each one of us having a relationship with Jesus.

But this New Covenant and the blessings it brings are for those who know Jesus and have put their faith in Him for salvation. And so this table is for Christians. If you’re here this morning and not trusting in Christ alone for your forgiveness, we’d glad you’re here! But we would ask that you heed the warnings of Scripture and refrain from partaking. Likewise, parents this is an opportunity for you to explain to your children who have not trusted in Christ what these elements represent.

In just a moment, we’re going to pray, and you’ll be dismissed by row. Those in the back section are welcome to go ahead and serve yourselves from the back table. As you pick up the bread and the juice, please hold on to them and we’ll partake together in a few moments as a sign of our unity.

The bread is gluten-free, and the cup is grape juice. These elements are signs of the body and blood of Christ, given for us. And in this table we anticipate the Marriage Supper of the Lamb – when Jesus Himself will eat and drink with us in His eternal kingdom. Let’s pray...