



INTRODUCTION

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food . . .

Romans 14:20

IN THE BEGINNING, God created the Heavens and the Earth . . .

And He populated the Earth with fruits and vegetables of all kinds — such as broccoli, potatoes, tomatoes, cauliflower, spinach, and multi-colored bell peppers — so that the Man and the Woman would live long, healthy lives.

God said to His newlyweds, “Behold. Try my fresh green salad!”

Then using God’s great gifts . . . Satan made processed salad dressing, artificial bacon bits, and Texas-sized garlic toast on the side.

The Man and the Woman ate, gained a pound or two, and Satan smiled.

Then God created wheat to make bread, bees to make honey, and cows to give milk. And Satan fashioned bleached white flour from the wheat and sugar from the cane, then combined them and created cream-filled donuts and triple-decker ice cream sundaes.

And Satan said, “You want chocolate with that?” And Woman said, “Absolutely! As long as you’re at it, add some sprinkles.”

And the Man and Woman’s fig leaves did not fit anymore.

So God said . . . “I have sent you heart-healthy olive oil to use in your salad and with which to cook.” And Satan brought forth deep-fried fish and chicken-fried steak.

And Man's cholesterol went through the roof.

God then created running shoes so that His children might enjoy His creation.

And Satan gave Cable TV with a remote control so Man would not have to toil to change channels.

Then Man and Woman laughed and cried before the light of TV . . . and began wearing sweat pants.

So God gave Man lean beef to go with the potato, which was naturally low in fat and brimming with nutrition, so that Man might consume fewer calories and still satisfy his appetite.

And Satan created the 99-cent double cheeseburger. Then Satan said, "You want fries with that?" And Man said, "Yes, and Super-Size them!"

Then Man went into cardiac arrest and Satan said, "It is good."

God sighed and created Quadruple Bypass Surgery.

Then Satan created Health Insurance

The End.¹

Amusing, yes? The author of this food-related parody on creation is unknown, but the tongue-in-cheek description of Satan's tactics against humanity rings true. This fallen angel and ringleader of demons works very hard at corrupting our healthy desires. He loathes seeing our appetites satisfied and wants us to lust after a good thing until the impulse becomes our master. Reduced to a slave, we are yoked to that desire which — in the proper context — the Lord intended to be freely enjoyed.

"What!" you say. "*Enjoy food freely?*"

Yes, you read correctly. The Lord intended for you and me to have an intimate relationship with Him *and* freely enjoy the food He created — without struggle and without guilt.

So when and where did it all go wrong? The beginning of our struggle with food can be found in the Bible — in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 3 . . . in the Garden of Eden.

Almighty God gave Mr. and Mrs. Mankind a free food supply that spanned the face of the entire earth. It included every seed-bearing plant and tree that has fruit with seed in it. So God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees pleasing to the eye and good for food. But in the middle of the Garden of Eden stood one tree — just one tree — that the Lord commanded was taboo: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Spurred on by the lies of the serpent, Eve, *the mother of all the living*,² began to look at that one tree and its fruit differently. She found the fruit of that tabooed tree pleasing to the eye and good for food, but then she reasoned, from what the serpent had said, that God was cheating her and her husband out of something good . . . something better.

Just one bite was all it took to allow sin and evil to enter the human heart and banish mankind from God's holy presence.

Just one bite was all it took for our sacred hearts, bodies, minds, souls, and spirits to be corrupted.

Just one bite was all it took to ruin our holy relationship with God and all of His creation . . . including a pure and unadulterated connection with food!

So here we are, millennia later, still looking for the solution to the struggle that began with **just one bite**.

In today's culture, Almighty Food has become the new American idol. Food has taken center stage — on cooking shows, talk shows, in magazines, social media blogs, and of course, at our own tables. God's intentional blessing to our bodies and nourishment to our spirits has, instead, become a life-long curse for many of us.

So what is this fascination — this obsession — that caused the first woman to stumble and fall, and many women today to stumble and fall . . . into a vicious love-to-eat / hate-to-eat cycle?

From my earliest memories, my unbalanced eating habits led to constant weight gain

and various health issues. During adolescence, I realized I could not meet the image or model-thin body type exemplified in the media trends of the time, a body image which has gained momentum in our contemporary culture.

As a full-figured teenager, I tried to fit in by starving myself so I could wear the latest designer jeans. I recall exasperated efforts of lying flat on the floor, straight-legged, as I worked tight denim over my hips and then attempted to pull and stretch the button across a bulging waistline.

What this experience — and the media — did to my self-esteem started me on a lifelong journey of yo-yo dieting. Yo-yo dieting is “the practice of repeatedly losing weight by dieting, and subsequently regaining it.”³ In simple terms, the dieter is initially successful in the pursuit of weight loss, but unsuccessful in maintaining the weight loss long-term. The dieter then seeks to lose the regained weight, and the cycle begins again.

In my years living on this terra firma, I have tried almost every diet fad and trend on the market, to no avail. My fervent prayers and petitions to God went hand-in-hand with my own efforts to break free from the yoke, the control, and the enslavement of certain foods, eating habits, behaviors, and attitudes.

In 2001 I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior, and I earnestly hoped that in addition to the salvation of my soul, He would rescue me from my self-destructive binges and dieting tendencies. I did not realize that His rescue offered so much more. Although my eternal salvation was sealed forever — without my surrender to His lordship, it did not guarantee a godly or fruitful life here on earth.

Our Father’s will for us is to live under the lordship of His Son. That means we must submit to Jesus as the one in charge of our life. When we do, Christ provides us with wisdom and direction. (And even though I often make mistakes, He always reminds me that His grace is for imperfect people like you and me.)

After years of studying and teaching His Word, I realized the way I care for my body affects my relationship with God and with others. Committed prayer time on a daily basis showed me that I had not given God complete dominion over my entire life. I had just given him certain areas . . . such as my health issues, family, and career.

So, I pondered and prayed: Does the Bible — the infallible Word of God — have anything to say on the subject of food and eating? Is it truly possible to submit myself to the Lord in this area for permanent transformation?

My path to freedom began with Romans 14:20: *Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.* Destroy the work of God. Did He mean . . . me? Was I destroying the work of God with what I ate? A still, small voice whispered the answer: Yes.

So I surrendered my heart, and He brought me deeper into His Word, but with new, unveiled eyes. Eventually, studying God's *truth* about food set me free.

Free from its yoke. Free from its bondage. Free from its tyranny.

Free to fight through the power of Christ Jesus, and with the knowledge of how to win the battle with the sword of the Spirit (which Ephesians 6:17 declares is *the word of God*) hidden in my heart.

King David said it best: "*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you*" (Psalm 19:14).

Do you feel as though your body and spirit are at war when it comes to what and how you eat? Tell me, what would happen if you turned to Christ, instead of the fridge, to save you from your troubles?

You can step out of Hell's Kitchen and follow the blessed, fragrant aromas of hope that lead to God's Kitchen.

But, what is God's Kitchen?

With hundreds of references in the Bible, God has revealed how He wants you to eat and what your approach toward eating should be.

This *food and faith* Bible study will empower you to understand God's Word on the subject, and will strengthen your commitment to eat healthy, eat holy, and find comfort in God's provisions.

What distinguishes the God's Kitchen series from other publications, programs, and Bible studies is that this is *not* a diet or a Bible-foods-only plan, but an in-depth study

of Scripture as it pertains to food, eating habits, attitudes, and our relationships with Almighty God and others. Throughout this study of Genesis, we will learn life-changing lessons from a few of God's first families, such as Adam and Eve, Noah, Jacob and Esau, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

This unique interactive series offers you Christ-centered guidelines for physical and spiritual sustenance. Each lesson includes a food-focused Bible study segment with commentary and a daily devotional. As a tasty bonus, at the end of each lesson, God's Kitchen comes alive with an easy, yet delectable recipe inspired by the people and events in the Book of Genesis — a recipe designed for you to enjoy in your home or with your study group.

So get ready to embark on an incredible, unique journey that can change the course of your life! The Lord, Himself, says:

“Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.”

Isaiah 55:2

Taste and see how devouring Holy Scripture can help you trust God in all things . . . including your daily bread!

*In His Eternal Grip,
Joni Perry*