



Freedom: Embracing Feasting and Fasting

Key idea:

True freedom is found in a proper relationship with food, neither despising nor idolizing it, but rather rejoicing in it as God's good gift which points to our ultimate need for God Himself.

Key text:

Genesis 1:29-30

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

Genesis 2:15-17

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Key points:

1. Food is a gift from God to meet my essential need to be sustained by things outside of myself.
2. Food occupies an important place in the biblical story, appearing at every juncture from creation to the consummation of all things in the new heaven and earth.
3. Food is also presented as a major source of temptation throughout Scripture.
4. A proper response to food is to enjoy it as a feast for body and soul rather than merely as fuel for my body. To properly feast I should:
 - a. Take the time to prepare real food.
 - b. Sit down with family or friends to eat.

- c. Take time to give thanks to God for my food.
 - d. Let food point me to my ultimate hunger - my need for God and His Word.
 - e. Let my food remind me of the feast to which all history is moving: the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.
5. To protect from food becoming a source of temptation, I should periodically fast, abstaining from some or all food for either part of or a whole day. I should fast for several reasons:
- a. Fasting curtails the temptation to gluttony (one of the seven root vices).
 - b. Fasting reinforces the fact that freedom is found in embracing the limits set for me by God.
 - c. Fasting resets and renews my ability to properly feast.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. Was I surprised to think about what a major place food occupies in the biblical storyline? Why am I tempted to overlook the importance of food?
3. Could God have created me in such a way that I did not need food? Then why did He create humans so that we need food?
4. Why did God make the first temptation center around food? How else could He have tested Adam and Eve? What does this tell me about my relationship with food?
5. Why did the early Church Fathers think that gluttony should be one of the seven root vices (or deadly sins)? What is gluttony? How does it strengthen other sins in my life? How can I fight against gluttony?
6. When I eat, do I tend to "feast" or simply "refuel"? Why is this my tendency? If I often simply view food as "fuel", how can I begin to cultivate better practices in my eating?
7. When I consider the five parts of "feasting" listed in key point #4 above, which is the one I practice the most? Which is the one I practice the least? How can I improve in this area?
8. How often do I fast? How could I increase the practice of fasting in my life?

9. Bret mentioned the “hedonic treadmill” - the tendency for pleasurable things to lose their ability to give us pleasure over time. How have I experienced this in my life - not only with food, but with any area of life? How can I “fast” to reset my life in that area?
10. When I consider “feasting” and “fasting” which do I need to work on more in the coming weeks? What plan can I develop to help me grow in this area?
11. Who will I call or see to encourage this week?

For Further Study:

[The Feast of Fasting](#) (January 11, 2015)

[Jesus Is the Bread of Life](#) (February 14, 2016)

[The Thanksgiving Meal](#) (August 19, 2012)

[Praying for Our Daily Bread](#) (January 13, 2014)

[Gluttony](#) (March 18, 2018)

Preview of next week: Freedom: Embracing Sexual Limits (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:20-25)