

Genesis 3:19

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Before Adam and Eve were disobedient to the Lord, the Lord provided all their needs. After they did the thing the Lord told them not to do, they and the humans that followed were responsible for gathering food and making things to eat. One of the most important was bread.

The Patriarch, Jacob, was recorded several times both eating and serving bread.

Genesis 41:55

When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.”

Joseph was one of Jacob’s sons, who ended up in the land of Egypt and rose in rank to become Pharaoh’s right-hand governor.

Later the Hebrews themselves were enslaved by the Egyptians, and a man called Moses was called by God to lead his people out of Egypt.

Exodus 13:3

Then Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.”

In the wilderness God provided manna for the people.

Exodus 16:12

“I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’”

The Lord set out laws about how the people should live and what they should and should not do, including laws about bread.

Exodus 25:23

The Table for Bread

“You shall make a table of acacia wood. Two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height.

Exodus 25:30

And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me regularly.

The people though, were disobedient to the Lord and Moses, in his frustration, got upset.

Deuteronomy 9:17-19

17 So I took hold of the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. 18 Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, for forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger. 19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the Lord bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me that time also.

Eventually the people settled in the Promised Land and customs began to develop. One of these was kindness to strangers. Among these, bread was also a symbol of friendship and welcome:

Ruth 2:14

At mealtime Boaz said to her, 'Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.' When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over.

The Israelites were also warriors who defended their land. At one time, one of their leaders, David, with his men, arrived at a place tired and hungry:

1 Samuel 21:6

So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the Lord and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away.

At a later time, a wicked queen of the people sought to kill the Lord's prophets in the land:

1 Kings 18:4

and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.

We find bread mentioned in other biblical writings:

Psalm 41:9

Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me.

A verse Jesus might have been thinking of when Judas betrayed him.

Proverbs 20:17

Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth will be full of gravel.

Do not deceive people; you will be found out eventually!

Proverbs 25:21-22

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.

Another of Jesus's sayings is not to hate your enemy, but love them.

The prophets also had something to say about bread:

Isaiah 30:20

20 Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them.

Amos 8:11

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

New Testament

In the New Testament we find bread has important things to say to us:

The Trickery of the Tempter:

Matthew 4:2-4

And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Something Jesus said we should pray for:

Luke 11:2-4

2 And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread, 4 and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

Bread would feature in Jesus' miracles:

Mark 6:35-39

35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. 36 Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." 37 But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" 38 And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." 39 Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass.

And Bread would feature in his teachings:

John 6:22-33

22 The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realised that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. 23 Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 Once the crowd realised that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, 'Rabbi, when did you get here?'

26 Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.'

28 Then they asked him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?'

29 Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'

30 So they asked him, 'What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

32 Jesus said to them, 'Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'

34 'Sir,' they said, 'always give us this bread.'

35 Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Jesus used bread to remind his followers that he had not left them:

Luke 24:25-35

25 He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further. 29 **But they urged him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.'** **So he went in to stay with them.**

30 When he was at the table with them, **he took bread, gave thanks, broke it** and began **to give** it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'

33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, 'It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

Did you notice in the highlights, the presence of the five 'cultures' that we are encouraging our church members to think about?

A culture of 'Invitation' - (yellow)

A culture of 'Welcome' – (green)

A culture of 'Servanthood in Christ' – (blue)

A culture of 'Giving' – (grey)

A culture of 'Thanks and Praise' – (purple)

When you take some bread

Give thanks to the Lord!