

How much should you spend on food? (15:17)

Better is a dish of vegetables where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it.

THE TEXT (NASB)

Better is a dish of vegetables where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it.

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. Classic KJV - Proverbs 15:17

INTRODUCTION



It's easy to overspend on food: Sometimes, fancy foods are dangerous distractions or even a source of foolish pride.

Having less with friends is better than more with troublesome folks. Do we spend too much time dining in luxury, or too little time gobbling fast food, when we should be spending time with friends and family? When togetherness suffers, this proverb suggests we rethink the luxury and convenience.

The social, interpersonal environment is more important than the meal. The Living Bible puts it this way: "It is better to eat soup with someone you love than steak with someone you hate."



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COMMENTARY

Even Great Food Has its Limits

This text, like the preceding Proverbs 15:16, recommends limits to growth. “Enough” becomes “too much,” when the society turns vain, competitive, or mechanical. We can’t specify percentage of our income to spend on food or fine dining—fifteen, twenty, or thirty percent of our income on food? Every family is different in size, the kids’ age, and dietary needs. The text does not say how much, but it alerts us to the real issue with dinner. It warns us to change our focus from the food to the company we’re with. These days, that might also mean stressing home-meals instead of fast foods.

Ambiance: The Secret Spice



The proverb is not a commentary on the benefits of vegetarianism. Admittedly, for our budget, vegetables are cheaper than meat, but this text deals with the community, not the cost. In ancient times, oxen were beasts of burden, and their meat, usually tough. But the meat of a fattened ox would be tastier and juicier. Yet it costs something to fatten an ox, and the enhanced taste of well-marbled beef may be lost in unpleasant company.

Restaurants go to great lengths to create a pleasant eating atmosphere. The atmosphere during a meal is often more important than the food itself. Our attitudes affect our ability to enjoy the food (and our digestion). A meal eaten in a relaxed, comfortable manner “schmecks!” A pleasant atmosphere during a meal is like a cook’s secret spice. Love makes food better! But how can we create an atmosphere of love? Isn’t this beyond the scope of financial advice... or is it?

Fancy Foods Don’t Fix Foes



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The enjoyment of a meal depends on how the meal is served and with whom we eat. So 17th century preacher Matthew Henry's Commentary includes a beautifully rhyming Latin verse, roughly translated: "The most sumptuous entertainment, presented with a sullen brow, would offend me; while the plainest repast, presented kindly, would delight me."

Most of us have at one time or another, experienced "important" banquets that were strained and distracted because of unresolved tensions among the guests or with the host. In contrast, an atmosphere of love and acceptance, enhances every dish. So every meal should be a "family meal."

We all know someone who is so disdainful or particular that sharing a meal with them becomes intolerable. Dining is meant to be a sign of honour and solidarity—but not always. If a meal becomes an exercise in polite toleration, rather than a feast of love, the outlay cannot compensate for the discomfort of the guests, however great the expense. Sometimes, the added expense of the effort even magnifies the pride and bitterness. The extra spent on delicacies turns them bitter in the host's mouth, and then in everyone's mouth. There is real financial waste in uncomfortable dinners.

Better Versus More

The main message here is that "more" is not always a good thing. More is not better. Quantity is not quality. Whoever believes that more is better does not understand human nature. More assets cannot simply bring a higher quality of life. Attitude and atmosphere affect our affluence. The Message paraphrases it: "Better a bread crust shared in love, than a slab of prime rib served in hatred."

As an aside, homemade food prepared in a loving way, usually slowly, carefully, and in keeping with the consumer's tastes, is simply *magnificent* !

Good financial planning leads people to the best! We start traveling the road to the best, when we realize that more is not better!



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND



Jesus was not a picky eater. He had only one dietary preference. When His disciples urged Him to eat, He replied, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work,” John 4:34. Jesus got His sustenance by obeying His heavenly Father. Imagine enjoying more energy by rightly spending energy. Good work invigorates, gives us strength: The paradoxical principle of gaining by giving.

When fasting in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by the Evil One to turn stones into bread, but he rebuffed Satan with the words, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God,” Matthew 4:4.

Though he always loved dining with His friends—Matthew, Martha, Mary, and Zacchaeus—Jesus was so focused on His continual conversation, communion with His Father, that He cared little about the food. He trusted His Father would supply whatever He needed, as needed. Jesus never sinned, but always pleased His Father (John 5:19,30), and what a banquet awaits us, dining with Him!

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite translation and think about it often.
- Do you need to reconcile with someone?
- Are you spending too much time or money on food preparations for an upcoming party?
- Are there other ways to improve interpersonal relationships among the guests without spending money on fancy foods? Consider music, skits, and games.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take first? Ask Him.



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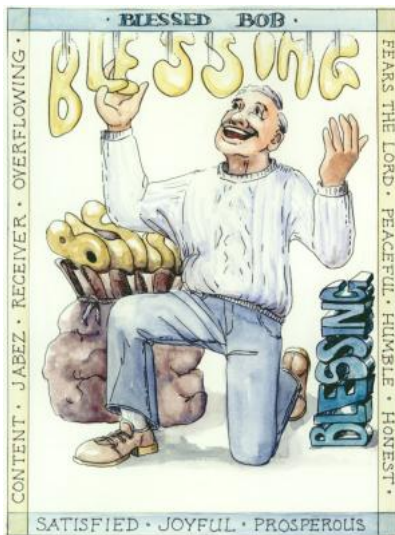
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KEY WORDS

better life (quality), contentment, distress, entertainment, hate, love, planning, prosperity, budget, bf spending

ILLUSTRATION

[Who is Blessed Bob?](#)



Blessed Bob is very fortunate. He recognizes that good things come from God! God is shunned by many, but not by Bob. Bob loves God. He wants to receive all the good things that God has for him. He's not too proud to ask God for help. In fact, Bob prays often. Some think that he prays without ceasing. But he is not without fault. Blessed Bob makes many mistakes, and when he does, he admits his errors. He corrects them and presses on.

Bob gets so many blessings he feels overwhelmed. His cup overflows. But he doesn't hoard his blessings. Like Generous Genevieve, Blessed Bob likes to give to others. He is truly prosperous, even though there are many who are financially richer than he is.

We see examples of Blessed Bob in the Bible in the lives of Job and Joseph. Job went through some very good times (Job 29:2-25) and some very bad times (Job 2:7-8). Joseph had similar financial cycles (Genesis 39:2,21). Both men kept their focus on God, not on their financial condition (Job 1:21, Genesis 50:19-21).

More recently we have examples of those who have lived with the same life focus. R. G. LeTourneau was the inventor of the largest earth moving machines in the 1930's and 1940's. He credited God for his tremendous success. He gave away much of his wealth while he was



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still living saying that, "When I shovel money out to God's interests, God shovels money back to me, but God's shovel is bigger than mine." He was called the mover of men and mountains because of his great work and influence. On his gravestone, R. G. LeTourneau left all visitors with these words, SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU MATTHEW 6:33.

Blessed Bob is full of joy. He is satisfied with life!

