

What ruins good food? (17:1)

Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it, than a house full of feasting with strife.

THE TEXT (NASB)

Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it, than a house full of feasting with strife.

Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife. Classic KJV - Proverbs 17:1

INTRODUCTION



Unresolved conflict will ruin a meal.

A good meal is more than good food. A simple, tranquil meal is happier than a banquet in turmoil. Time and money spent in gourmet grocers or restaurants may be better spent connecting with the people in our lives.

Obsessing about food is myopic materialism, making us luxurious but miserable—so what does this say about food budget.



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COMMENTARY

Translation: *Quietness*



The Hebrew word for “quietness” here, שְׁלוֹה (šāl•wāh, pronounced “shal-vah”), is used eleven times in the Old Testament, first in Jeremiah 22:21 where it’s actually translated as “prosperity.” Yet this same word is best translated three times in the Book of Daniel as “peace.” The Hebrew word combines our “peace and prosperity,” not as an absence of noise, but serenity and security.

There’s a subtle message here about housing. The Hebrew expression, “a house full of feasting,” combining “house,” “full,” and “feasting,” means what it says. It points to a real dwelling, providing shelter and furnishings for a banquet. A dry morsel can be eaten in a tent or on a dusty road. For the word “feasting” here, the KJV uses “sacrifices,” because ancient Hebrew sacrifices were characterized by the best and widest variety of meats, indicating a table set even better than an ordinary feast. So neither the comfort of a house nor abundance of food can compensate for an absence of peace. Every dinner host should think long and hard on this proverb.

Good Nutrition with Bad Digestion

We all know that gobbling down our food dulls our enjoyment and sours our digestion. Tension and stress does the same—no surprise. Rather than listing nutritional content on cans and cereal boxes, maybe manufacturers should print tips for friendship and cooperation. In business, personal “issues” often loom large. Yet more effort is spent on business lunches than clearing up misunderstandings.

Does Consumerism Cover-Up Cold Heartedness?

Sometimes we try to compensate for fragile relationships with elaborate foods. This proverb advises that it’s better to “prep” our relationships, than our ingredients, with profound implications for a consumer society. Do we good consumers really put consumables first? A friend once compared the society of communist Eastern Europe with our prosperous West: In the West, we have many things, but in the East, we have a few good friendships.



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Excellent Eating Experiences



How should we treat our meal money? If we plan to spend \$200 or \$300 on a fancy meal with an irksome colleague, might we not do better to spend half the money on some sort of friendly gift—a pen or funny gadget—and then spend the rest on a more modest dinner, something that looks less like a culinary competition? The text doesn't say we should serve guests second-best. But often guests feel more welcomed, if they see their host making an effort rather than spending money. Obviously the proverb isn't condoning laziness or stinginess in meal preparation, but it's insisting that there's much more to dinner than just good food. So, grocery stores today now have ever-bigger sections with cards, souvenirs, games, joke gifts, and books on resolving personal conflicts.

Get Best Value On Food Budget

Perhaps we're allocating too much money on fancy foods. We can give our guests pleasant company, good conversation, and simple foods, rather than stressing ourselves and them with elaborate dishes served with tension. The quality of our life is more important than the quantity of our assets.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus told us to nourish both our bodies and souls—our physical and emotional health.

Jesus said to ask God for our daily bread (Matthew 6:11), but he did not include asking for meat and butter. Instead, His very next words dealt with our friendships: “And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” Matthew 6:12. Bread and peace is better than bread and jam.

The cravings of the tongue and tummy are best kept in check, to strengthen our generous spirits; bitterness and resentment feed an unforgiving spirit.

APPLICATION



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- Memorize the text in your favourite translation and think about it often.
- Don't overdo food preparation while leaving personal conflicts unresolved.
- Speak gently and with kindness during a meal. Don't argue.
- Try to resolve disputes before eating together.

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



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KEY WORDS

better life (quality), consumption, contentment, entertainment, food, house, peace, strife, budget, bf spending

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Prudent Pauline?



Prudent Pauline is a planner. She looks before she leaps, she thinks before she speaks. Her favourite mottos are: “Haste makes waste,” “brains over brawn,” and “don’t jump to conclusions.”

When Pauline first heard that famous maxim: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step,” she said NO! It begins with a good map. The map must be studied and the best route plotted. Consider road conditions, terrain, rest stops, refuelling, hostile territory, expected weather, travelling companions, clothing, supplies, and many more factors, including (if necessary) a guide.

She has studied the wisdom of Solomon and even helped teach him a thing or two. Solomon wrote these words about 3,000 years ago in honour of Prudent Pauline. “Whatever your hand finds to do (no matter what you are doing) do it with all your might (give it your full ability and energy) for there is no activity or planning or wisdom after you die—it will be too late.” Pauline says, “First comes wisdom, then comes planning (her favourite activity), and then comes activity.”

Pauline makes the time to do tax planning. She does a work plan every day. She uses a day



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timer or planner to assign priorities to her activities. She and Diligent Daniel are an incredible pair. Pauline does all her homework before she starts an activity.



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FOOTNOTES

Testing footnote one.

