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## CHAPTER 7

### Eat for Strength—Tempted by Satan

Satan executed two temptations involving food; each held widespread and long term consequences. First, Satan targeted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Much later, he targeted Jesus in the wilderness.<sup>1</sup>



"The Fall of Man" Hendrik Goltzius (Dutch) 1616

Slithering on his stomach, Satan weaponized an edible fruit growing on a peculiar tree. No other weapon has destroyed more people than this menacing snack taken from *"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"*. Eating from Satan's menu killed Adam and Eve, and destroyed their offspring.

From the beginning, God bound the destiny of the human race to food. Before the first man and woman sinned, He defined their menu saying:

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*"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".* (Genesis 1:29 NIV)

One exception to their approved diet held fatal consequences for Adam and Eve and their offspring. The Lord commanded:

*"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 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.**"* (Genesis 2:16-17 NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and Jesus in Matthew 4 and Luke 4

The food consumed by Adam and Eve not only sustained their strength, it revealed their heart. The Bible emphasizes three words while describing this infamous act of rebellion: eat, eaten, and ate (used seventeen times in Genesis 3).

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not **eat** from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may **eat** fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not **eat** fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you **eat** of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was **good for food** and **pleasing to the eye**, and also **desirable for gaining wisdom**, she took some and **ate** it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he **ate** it. (Genesis 3:1-6 NIV)*

Engaged in high stakes spiritual warfare, Satan manipulated a palatable food into a deadly weapon. He strategically targeted the bond of trust that joined Adam and Eve with their Heavenly Father. Enticed by her own desire, the first woman separated herself from God by embracing Satan's deception. In one heedless act, Eve disregarded her divine trust and aligned herself with Satan. In so doing, she betrayed her descendants. James used four words to summarize this recurring saga of spiritual realignment: temptation, desire, sin, and death.

*But each person is **tempted** when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then **desire** when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and **sin** when it is fully grown brings forth **death**. (James 1:14-15 ESV)*

Pursuing independence, Eve detected that the fruit growing in the center of the garden was "good for food"; she also noticed its attractive beauty. Craving more than flavor and nourishment, this pleasing sight fueled an ungodly appetite for self-determination. Eve did not eat merely to fill her stomach; she ate to satisfy her desire for power. Intending to gain wisdom through knowledge, Eve implemented a defiant impulse. She ate herself to death by attempting to fill a perceived power void.

### **From Superior Strength to Deadly Weakness**

Eve's appetite for power convinced her to eat a forbidden fruit. Her motive for eating went beyond culinary curiosity. She craved control—and that craving is what Satan exploited. Eve wanted to choose for herself what she put in her own body. She also craved knowledge—privileged information used for determining

good and evil. Eve pursued self-centered power derived from self-serving knowledge. Under Satan’s nefarious influence, she sought to enhance herself with wisdom—the earthly, natural, and demonic variety, rather than God’s wisdom.<sup>2</sup>

*But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.* (James 3:17 NAS)

Attempting to be more like God than she already was, Eve ingested a fruit that He was not offering. She bought Satan’s recipe for mass destruction, paying for it with her life and the lives of her extended family. Eve consumed an illicit meal to feed an arrogant ambition. She learned the hard way that pursuing strength apart from God has fatal consequences.

Adam and Eve forfeited God’s best meal—they lost access to the tree of life. Eve aimed her appetite at superior strength but hit the bulls-eye of terminal weakness.

In Psalm 23, David conveys an unconventional battle plan for spiritual warfare—eating from God’s table. Referring to our Good Shepherd, he wrote, *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”*.<sup>3</sup>

### **We need more than Food to Stay Alive**

In contrast to Eve’s self-indulgence, Jesus refused Satan’s hasty hunger fix. After fasting forty days in the wilderness, He rejected a fast food scheme, which turned stones into bread. Jesus fought Satan on an empty stomach and won because neither food nor power controlled His appetite. Jesus delayed gratification because pleasing His Father dominated His ruling passion.



Wilderness near the Dead Sea 2014

*Jesus answered [Satan], “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”* (Matthew 4:4 NIV)

Unlike Eve’s prideful independence, Jesus fed His hunger by humbly relying on His Heavenly Father. He refrained from using supernatural power in a

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<sup>2</sup> James 3:15

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 23:5

self-serving way. Jesus did not compromise His redemptive mission by eating an inferior meal aligned with Satan’s bait.

Because the Word of God provides power and life, demonic short cuts failed to snare our Savior. The Son of God, A.K.A. “the Word of God”, set His hunger aside until angels attended Him. No doubt, they celebrated with a victory meal fit for the occasion—much better than bread made from stone.

*Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. (Mat 4:11 NIV)*

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