

## Taste and see that the Lord is good

### The amazing joy of tasting good things

Discussion with Beth

Biscoff cheesecake

“You have to taste this....!”

“Try it – it’s amazing”

Bernie the feeder...

Alpha invitations - Taster session – try it...

The exclamation of the Psalmist: Psalm 34

“Taste and see that the Lord is good!”

Sensual language to say – God is good! You have to taste and see! You have to experience this for yourself

It is the language of **Isaiah (55)**:

‘Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. **Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy?** Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

The finest of foods...

Why spend money on what is not bread?

Why work for what does not ultimately satisfy?

Jesus said something very similar in John 6:27

“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”

Jesus then says:

‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

The thing is – a lot of people are working for what does not satisfy – spending their time and money and life on what is not bread – what does not nourish or sustain or give life.

But there is a food that endures to eternal life – the bread of life....

The joys of bread – freshly baked. Sustenance and life.

“Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread....”

Bread = Flour, water, salt and yeast

## Flour

Flour is made by milling the wheat grain – the kernel of wheat – some of it or all of it depending on whether you want wholemeal, brown or white flour.

John 12:24-26 “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me”

Jesus was speaking of his own death with this analogy – equally we are called to give up our life and to submit to God and to follow him.

We can try to keep our life to ourselves – or we can submit it to God.

Equally we must give of ourselves to others to share this gospel good news. It is not to be kept to ourselves.

Pre-Christian society

John 4:35 “Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”

## Water

We need water and we crave it – physically. If we don’t have it, we will very quickly die.

Jesus says to a woman he meets at a well – and to every one of us: “your soul craves for something and I am the only one that has it.”

I have something that your soul needs every bit as much as your body needs water.

You are spiritually thirsty for what I have, even if you don't recognise it.

There is a character in one of Albert Camus' novels, who says:

“Because I longed for eternal life, I went to bed with harlots and drank for nights on end. I slept in bliss but woke with **the bitter taste of the mortal state.**”

What are people after? They are ultimately longing for God and for eternal life.

Jesus says: “I have what you are looking for.”

“Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

French mountains – leading people to water...

In Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, as Pippin looks at Gandolph's face...

“he saw at first only lines of care and sorrow; though as he looked more intently he perceived that under all there was a great joy: a fountain of mirth enough to set a kingdom laughing, were it to gush forth.”

Jesus offers us a form of life that may very well have cares and sorrows, but underneath it all and through it all, he

promises, there will be a **rich joy**, a spring that no-one can extinguish – a great joy!

Peter calls it a joy unspeakable!

**John 7:37-39** – rivers of living water

“Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’”  
(When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him.)”

This is what we are inviting people to when we invite them to Alpha, or church .....

**Alpha video**

**Interview – Julia and Harry**

**Yeast**

**Luke 13:20-21**

“What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

**VIDEO Breadmaking Jenny**

Israel at Passover time. No leavened bread – only unleavened matzo bread. (Bread made without yeast or

leaven.) Everywhere we stayed – large sheets of this cracker-style bread. No normal bread in sight. Eggs in the morning – with matzo. Fish and chicken in the evening – with matzo.

Our Jewish mechanic would roll his eyes and complain at every meal – I hate Matzo bread, I hate it. It's like eating cardboard. I want real bread. **Give me some fresh bread.** Some real bread....

Of course, Jesus' audience knew all about bread. They made it all the time. Leavened and unleavened.

“What shall I compare the Kingdom of God to?” Let me see now. He then took an everyday occurrence – something people dealt with everyday and used it as an object lesson.

“The Kingdom of God idiots guide.”

The kingdom of God is like yeast....

What does yeast do?

It spreads. It is strong. It is secret. It is savoury.

### **It spreads**

The word of God and the Spirit of God:

The Spirit of God is active in every part of our journey of faith.

He draws us towards faith. He opens our hearts to accept God. He comes into our lives when we become Christians. He brings spiritual life where there is none. He then works in us to show us truth. Things like the fact that we are the children of God. He convicts us, or makes us really conscious of things we have done wrong. He changes us from the inside out. He gives us peace. He starts a lifelong work of making us more like Jesus. He is the agent of God at work in our lives.

### **It is strong:**

Yeast is potent stuff – it only takes a small amount to affect the whole batch of dough.

You may feel you don't have much to offer. You may feel that you are a young Christian or that you have so far to go in your faith. So many faults. So many feelings. A weak, fragile or imperfect faith. You may feel unqualified to share your faith with others...

But God wants to change you and those around you. You can work with him.

### **Paul said:**

**"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes."**

**(Romans 1:15 NIV)**

This is strong stuff.

When God touches your life everything can change. This gospel – it transforms people. It gives people new life. It brings forgiveness and healing and eternal life.

This power is at work in us and Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they would get this:

“I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead”  
(Ephesians 1:19-20 NLT)

Lee Strobel’s invitation to a friend.

New Christian – journalist working on Chicago Tribune.

Felt prompting of the Spirit to invite a colleague to Easter services.

Friend behind the desk. Easter is coming up.

Lee I am an atheist. I don’t believe in that stuff.

Lee began to give him the historical data for the resurrection.

Do you have any questions about God? No.

Do you ever think about God? No.

You love music. We have great music.

I don’t want to go to your stupid church.

I walked out and felt like an idiot.



Why had I felt so compelled? To this day, he is still an atheist.

Several years later. Guy came up to me...

A few years ago, I lost my job. I got some casual labour at the newspaper. Can you tile floors?

One day, just before Easter, I was on the floor in the business section of a newspaper.

You started talking to this guy about God.

I am on my hands and knees on the floor. Thinking I need God.

As soon as you left, I rang my wife and said we are going to church this Easter. My whole family became Christians.

A new form of evangelism.

Ricochet evangelism.

### **It is secret:**

I remember when I was growing up my mum would occasionally bake fresh homemade bread. She would make the dough and put it in a tin and then she would put in a dark warm place and wait for the yeast to do its work and make the bread rise.

God works in hidden places. In silent places. In lonely places. You can't always see what God is doing, but He is at work. You may feel He is inactive in your life, or in the life of your friend or family member. But He is not. He is at

work in us, the bible says, to will and to act according to his purpose.

But the hidden stuff is important. That's where God's word and Spirit and character grows in us... We don't always recognise the process, but the results are there for all to see. Some of God's best work is done in dark and obscure places.

Don't doubt it!

### **It is savoury:**

Isn't the smell of fresh warm bread one of the greatest smells ever?

It's up there with the smell of freshly ground coffee or the smell of bacon frying!

Paul said in [2 Corinthians 2:15](#):

**“We are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.”**

We should have a distinctive smell as Christians! We should smell good! Like yeast in flour.

The process of the Holy Spirit working in us begins to produce a wonderful fragrant aroma and it is a pleasing thing to God.

Yeast spreads. It is strong. It works silently. It is savoury.

## Salt

### Matthew 5:13-16 - Salt and light

“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavour? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

Jesus says to us:

“I want you to live salty lives. Lives that make people thirst for me.”

“And I want you to live lives that are full of light – that shine grace and compassion into dark places...”

By living out our faith even when it costs us something

He went hunting for a rival street gang member. Running down a street in Chicago. Ron shoots the guy in the back. He's begging for his life. Ron pulled the trigger again, but it was out of bullets.

Fled to Canada. Settled in Portland Oregon.

Got a job in a metal shop with Christians who were like salt and light.

Ron received Christ and his life was radically transformed.

Married. Had a little girl called Olivia. Became a pillar in his church. Highly regarded in his community. The police

had stopped looking for him. He could have lived the rest of his life and no one would have known.

But he knew there was still a warrant out for his arrest for attempted murder. He kissed his wife and daughter goodbye and went to Chicago.

Lee Strobel is the atheist reporter covering the story for the Chicago Tribune.

Ron: "I am a Christian now and I want to admit what I did and say I am sorry and face my punishment."

Lee Strobel was shocked, stunned and attracted by this man's faith.

We live in wishy washy times – when people do something not because it is easy but because it is right – this is attractive.

Strobel was so attracted he wanted to know his story. He wrote an article in the Chicago Tribune.

To be stronger salt and brighter light means living out our faith even when we have to pay a price to do it. When we take our faith that seriously, others will sit up and look and listen.

**"let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)**

May be in our job – where we will not cross an ethical line.

Maybe a social price – speaking up for our faith at a dinner party.

A valued possession – that we give someone who needs it more than us.

Sacrifice of our time or money.

When you are so changed by Jesus Christ that it causes you to take steps that are right, even if not convenient.

*“And let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint.”*

*(Galatians 6:9 – Amplified version)*

Ron trusted himself to the God who made him.

The judge read the article that Strobel had written.

The next day, the judge said “with your record, you deserve 20 years in prison. But I believe you are a changed man.

I sentence you to go home to be with your wife and little girl.”

Ron: Lee what that judge did was show me grace, a little bit like Jesus did.

Lee, if you let him, God will show you grace too.

Ron was a link in a long chain of people and circumstances used to lead Lee to Christ.

If we are truly salty, we will make people thirst for Jesus.

Is your lifestyle – your “conversation”, your conduct, your citizenship – worthy of the gospel? Do you attract people towards Christ by the way you live? By your generous spirit? By your brilliant work ethic?

We become stronger salt and brighter light when we live out our faith, even it costs us something / especially when it costs us something.

“For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?” (Romans 10:13-14 – NLT)

We have to explain God's message of grace – or invite them to a place where they can hear that message explained.

We have tasted the bread of life.

Now we must invite others:

“Taste and see that the Lord is good!”

### **Alpha video**

#### **Community group questions and discussion points:**

Please don't feel that you have to work through all of these.

1. Read Psalm 34 together. What do you think the Psalmist is expressing with the phrase “taste and see that the Lord is good!”
2. There is a similar invitation in Isaiah 55 and John 6:27. What are these invitations saying to people?
3. What does Jesus mean when he says he is the bread of life?
4. If “evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread” how might we do that?
5. What stops you sharing your faith with others? How can we do this more effectively and boldly?
6. Read Luke 13:20-21. In what ways is the kingdom of God like yeast?
7. What do you think Paul meant when he wrote that we are the aroma of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15)?
8. Take some time to read Matthew 5:13-16 and consider its implications for us as Christians today. Pray together for the boldness and power to invite others to taste and see that the Lord is good!