

Nourished by Design – Small Group Study Questions

Introduction

Discussion Questions:

- How does the biblical storyline—from Eden to the Resurrection—frame our understanding of food and human hunger?
- In what ways has modern Christianity tended to separate “spiritual life” from the physical body? What effects has this had? How does Francis Schaeffer’s claim that spirituality must be practiced in the external world challenge our assumptions?
- Do you see Christians affirming God’s design in some areas (marriage, sexuality) but ignoring it in diet? If so, where?
- What cultural forces have shaped our modern view of healthy eating? Which influences surprised you most? How has the cultural and political landscape with respect to nutrition changed since this book was released in the summer of 2025?
- Which of Jesus’s many titles, attributes, or characteristics can provide a starting point for how Christians think about nutrition?
- Some people believe the Bible provides God’s revelation for health and nutrition. Some believe God doesn’t care at all how we eat, so long as we are thankful and not gluttonous. Is nutrition inherently theological? Why or why not?

Chapter 1 — Nourishing the Temple

Discussion Questions:

- Which error appears more common today: dualism (body unimportant) or materialism (body is all there is)?
- What does Adam’s “original solitude” reveal about personhood? How does Erwin Straus’s concept of the *Upright Posture* shed light on some of the unique characteristics that separate humans from animals?
- In what ways has the Fall distorted our experience of embodiment?
- Evaluate the claim that the body is not an entity but rather a process. How does Leon Kass’s distinction between the body’s form and material help highlight both spiritual and physical realities without reducing either?
- What does Christ’s incarnation and bodily resurrection reveal about the importance of the body? How might our resurrected bodies be the same or different than our current bodies?
- Christians are often tempted to use the verse, “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19) as a biblical justification for diet, exercise, and other health practices. What is Paul’s primary purpose with this verse, and in what sense is he using the word “body” (individually or corporally)? Does this concept have any bearing on our personal health practices?

Further Reading:

- *The Upright Posture* by Erwin Straus (1952) (33-page essay)
- *Thinking About the Body* by Leon Kass (1985) (12-page essay)
- *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* by John Kleinig (2021)—This book provides a concise and practical theology of the body in Protestant terms, but the quintessential theology of the body is John Paul II’s.

Chapter 2 — Old Manna

Discussion Questions:

- How does the Old Testament portray God as the provider of physical sustenance? In what ways do the Israelites' repeated disobedience for this provision reveal something about mankind's fallen spiritual condition? Where do you see unhealthy hunger or grumbling reflected in your own life?
- Some Christian nutrition books, such as *The Biblio Diet* (Rubin & Axe, 2025), suggest that biblically unclean foods are particularly harmful to human health and should not be consumed by Christians. Evaluate this claim from the privileged vantage point of Christianity by considering the purposes of these laws in God's great redemptive plan.
- What is the biblical and anthropological significance of bread in the Old Testament? How does this understanding shape how Christians should think of the "Paleo Diet" and whether it is truly the most natural diet for humans?
- Which Old Testament food images resonate most with you and why? What is your favorite quote or idea from this chapter?

Further Reading:

- *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* by Grant Pitre (2011)—This provides a great explanation of much of the food imagery of the Old Testament. The conclusions are ultimately given from a Roman Catholic perspective.
- *Why the Dietary Laws?* by Leon Kass (1994) (essay)—This presents the dietary laws from Kass's Jewish perspective, but it remains fascinating for Christians even if not completely correct.

Chapter 3 — New Manna

Discussion Questions:

- What details about Jesus’s birth foreshadow his identity as the “Bread of Life?” What evidence from Jesus’s ministry solidifies his close identification with food?
- According to John Calvin, the famous “Bread of Life” discourse in John 6 does not explicitly teach the Lord’s Supper, yet everything Christ teaches there is more visibly signified and more firmly sealed in the Lord’s Supper. Why was the kind of eating discussed in this passage so difficult for the assembled crowd to understand?
- What is meant by “Eucharistic eating”? What foundational insights from the Lord’s Supper—as the highest form of eating—can be carried into our daily meals? Beyond the two main pillars discussed in the chapter, what additional reflections might apply?
- The author suggests that delight is central to genuine thanksgiving. Which reflections on delight stood out to you most, and how does intentionally cultivating delight and gratitude help shape a distinctly Christian approach to diet?
- The author urges readers to apply Paul’s warning in 1 Corinthians 11 toward a diet that fosters reconciliation. In what ways does the Standard American Diet fall short of this principle, and what are two or three practical ways our eating habits could reflect a posture of reconciliation?

Further Reading: The author portrays a broadly Reformed perspective on the Lord’s Supper. For more on this perspective, refer to these helpful resources.

- *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper* by Herman Bavinck (translated 2008) (16-page essay)
- *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper* by Keith Mathison (2002)
- *The Lord’s Supper* by Thomas Watson (1665)
- *The Lord’s Supper as a Means of Grace* by Richard Barcellos (2013)

Chapter 4 — The Divine Physician

Discussion Questions:

- What is a distinctly Christian definition of health? In what ways do secular definitions fall short, and how do those shortcomings shape how we view—and rely upon—the healthcare industry?
- Karl Barth describes Christian health as both a “good among goods” and an “enabler of other goods.” What does each of these mean, and why are they especially helpful for framing health within a Christian worldview?
- In what ways, if at all, can neglecting one’s own health be considered a sin? How might the framework provided in Hebrews 12:1 help us to consider the moral ramifications of health without drifting to either legalism or apathy?
- How does considering our roles, responsibilities, and purposes as Christians animate and motivate our desire for health? Consider 2–3 tangible ways in which improving your health can help you live out these purposes.
- What temptations arise when Christians pursue health? Is the author’s 80/20 rule for healthy habits an appropriate way to consciously steward health without being legalistic?
- The author recommends establishing a baseline for your health and routinely monitoring several biomarkers. This can help you understand and address potential issues more effectively. What might be some drawbacks or challenges of tracking your health through biomarkers?
- Have you ever heard someone described as “healthy” who later died of a heart attack? Or been told by a doctor that you were healthy when you felt unwell—or unwell when you felt great? How does thinking about health at the cellular level help simplify our understanding of stewardship?

Practical Application:

- The Appendix highlights several key biomarkers worth understanding and tracking. If you work with a functional or integrative health practitioner, some of these tests may already be available to you. Otherwise, many will not appear on a standard blood panel. Take time to research two or three direct-to-consumer diagnostic services that offer these biomarkers, and consider which options best fit your budget and comfort level.

Chapter 5 — Fearfully Made

Discussion Questions:

- Which aspect of human physiology most deepens your appreciation of God’s design?
- The author suggests, “As we become more aware of our interconnectedness with the rest of creation—that we are both a host and are hosted in numerous ways—we not only learn more about the logic of God’s designs, but hopefully gain an appreciation for cultivating these relationships and reaping the benefits for our health.” How do modern insights about the microbiome enrich our understanding of God’s design?
- A modern understanding of DNA (specifically epigenetics) suggests that the information provided by our food (and lifestyles, in general) can have a profound impact on the way genes are *expressed*, both for ourselves and potentially even future generations. How is this insight liberating? How does it shape the moral repercussions of failing to steward one’s own health?
- In what ways is the body’s complexity an argument for humility? How might this humility be practiced in a health and wellness context?

Chapter 6 — The Root of Disease

Discussion Questions:

- Which root causes of disease were most eye-opening to you? Other than mitochondrial dysfunction, leaky gut, and mineral imbalances, what other foundational causes of chronic disease are worth mentioning?
- Did you have any personal “aha” moments about your health from something mentioned in this chapter?
- What links do you see between bodily disorder and spiritual disorder?
- What emotions arise when you consider how much modern disease may be preventable? What is a distinctly Christian posture toward those suffering from seemingly preventable chronic illness?
- Modern wellness culture treats disease as a problem that can be solved with advanced in science and technology while, on the other hand, many Christians treat disease as an inevitable product of our fallen condition, over which we have no power at all. Evaluate the elements of truth and falsehood in these arguments and consider how Christians *should* think about disease.

Further Reading:

- *Why We Get Sick* by Ben Bikman (2020)
- *Good Energy* by Calley and Casey Means (2024)

Chapter 7 — Discerning Dining

Discussion Questions:

- When discussing refined carbohydrates the author says, “We often misappropriate God’s gifts—meant for nourishment and joy—in ways that harm us and distort their intended purpose. Instead of receiving them with gratitude and restraint, we consume them compulsively, severed from the logic of God’s design.” What are some practical ways to enjoy carbohydrates responsibly without being legalistic about them?
- What other gifts from God (food or not) do we tend to misappropriate? How can we cultivate a joy in receiving God’s good gifts on His terms?
- What role should flavor and enjoyment play in guiding healthy eating?
- Seed oils—or what the author calls cheap, ultra-processed oils—are a topic of intense debate, with some claiming they cause nearly all disease and others insisting they are harmless. Amid these competing claims, how can reflecting on God’s design help us discern which fats and oils are appropriate for human consumption?
- Which of the “misguided micronutrients” was the most surprising, counter-cultural, or controversial to you? How does this knowledge make you feel about wisdom of God’s design compared with the wisdom of man?

Further Reading:

- *Cu-RE Your Fatigue, Second Edition* by Morley Robbins (2025)

Practical Application:

- The author highlights Deuteronomy 24:6 to show the central importance of the family grain mill in ancient Israel. One of the easiest, most impactful, and tastiest changes a household can make is switching to whole, freshly milled flour. Consider researching electric grain mills, such as the WonderMill, along with recipes and resources available at Bread Beckers.

Chapter 8 — Pillars of the Plate

Discussion Questions:

- Which foundational foods do you already rely on, and which feels new or challenging?
- Of all the categories listed in this chapter, fermented foods speak most to God’s living provision. How has this section shaped your perspective on fermented foods, and what are some ways in which you might incorporate them into your daily diet?
- How should supplements, if at all, fit into a Christian paradigm for nutrition?
- How might building a diet around these pillars help promote other positive aspects of a Christian diet, such as thankfulness, reconciliation, and hospitality?
- What obstacles—practical, cultural, or spiritual—most hinder you from building your diet around these pillars, and how might faithfulness (rather than perfection) shape your next steps?

Further Reading:

- *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration* by Weston A. Price (1939)—while long, this remains the quintessential nutrition book, describing what the diets of remote and traditional cultures all have in common to promote health.

Practical Application:

- Research (or rediscover) 2–3 easy recipes that are built upon many, if not most, of these pillars.
- If you don’t already ferment foods at home, consider trying a simple starter recipe such as sauerkraut, beet kvass (the author’s personal favorite), or another accessible fermented dish.

Chapter 9 — Feasting and Fasting

Discussion Questions:

- Which rhythm—feasting or fasting—is more distorted today?
- Fasting is often framed either as a tool for bodily optimization or as a purely spiritual practice that ignores the body. How accurate is this tension, and how should Christians navigate it?
- Read Isaiah 58:3–12, in which the prophet rebukes fasting used to manipulate God or display religious seriousness, and instead calls for a fast that reorders the heart toward justice, mercy, and love of neighbor. How can we guard against this kind of misguided fasting?
- The author promotes three potential benefits of fasting: metabolic benefits, mental clarity, and the pursuit of virtue. Which of these could you benefit from the most?
- The author promotes daily, weekly, and seasonal food rhythms. What practical adjustments could you make to better align with one of these rhythms?

Further Reading:

- *Eat, Fast, Feast* by Jay Richards (2020)

Chapter 10 — Rise, Kill, and Eat

Discussion Questions:

- The author suggests that perhaps the original creation blessing was not exclusively plants, citing the omnivorous design of humans and the purely carnivorous design of many animals. Evaluate this claim within the context of the Creation account in Genesis.
- Explain how God’s explicit provision of meat after the great flood should not be considered a moral downgrade, but rather a positive covenantal development that ultimately points to Jesus.
- What, if any, misunderstandings about meat and health were corrected for you?
- How might gratitude transform the act of eating meat?
- Western anti-meat sentiment has developed through a complex mix of religious (particularly SDA), political, and secular influences, culminating in the 2010s and early 2020s. Do you sense a shift in dietary advice in recent years, and if so, do you think this shift represents a lasting trend?

Chapter 11 — Steak and Stewardship

Discussion Questions:

- How does stewardship over Creation relate to “Eucharistic Eating?”
- How does the “cultural mandate” of Genesis provide insight into the necessary elements of Christian stewardship?
- Ruminant animals are often criticized for inefficiency and environmental harm within modern food systems. In light of the counterarguments presented in this chapter, in what ways—if any—has your view of an animal-based food system changed?
- A common defense of modern industrial agriculture is that it reduces the labor required to feed the world. How does this chapter suggest that minimizing labor may be counterproductive, and why might a food system that relies *more* on human and animal labor be closer to the ideal?
- Which aspects of the regenerative agricultural vision give you the most hope, and in what practical ways might you contribute to that vision?

Further Reading:

- *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs* by Joel Salatin (2016)

Conclusion

Discussion Questions:

- The author suggests that a Christian diet doesn't fit neatly with frameworks such as Paleo, vegan, keto, Mediterranean, or any of the other common cultural trends we see today. In fact, the Christian diet is perhaps the only diet that speaks well of bread, dairy, and meat. How does this perspective expand your current ideas about food and health? In what ways might this perspective affect the choices you make at your table, in your household, or in your community?
- Nutrition and diets can be sensitive topics for many people, and sharing your perspective can sometimes be unwelcome. How can you communicate a Christian approach to nutrition to friends and family without making them feel uncomfortable?
- In what ways could adopting a Christian perspective on diet help to enhance your witness about Jesus?

Further Reading:

- *Broken Bread* by Tilly Dillehay (2020)—Tilly goes into many aspects of diet that were not discussed at length in this book. While she ultimately doesn't emphasize health considerations in the way this book does, she provides a thoughtful counterbalance that should be considered.
- *The Supper of the Lamb* by Robert Farrar Capon (1969)—This ever-quotable cookbook is a masterpiece.

Note: This small group study guide was inspired by and generously contributed to by Bonnie Robinson.