



On your marks

Here's an idea for celebrating your way through the stories of the Bible with your church by tasting some of the key foods and drinks that are associated with its pivotal stories. This could form the basis of a special Bible party to mark the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible (1611), or it could just be a tasty and fun way to explore the big story of the Bible at any time in a way that involves adults and children together.

Get set

Clearly, this will need some preparation before the day. However, the food and drink items that have been included are deliberately simple to prepare or can be bought ready-made. Perhaps different home groups or organisations at your church could each take responsibility for one table of food and drink. There are 21 suggested tables, which are designed to take everyone through the stories from Genesis to Revelation. Depending on space and time, you could use them all or make a selection.

Each table should have handouts of the Bible passages listed below, as well as a whole Bible open at the place the story comes from so that 'the travellers' gain a sense of the progression through the whole story. You can print these off for yourselves from www.biblegateway.com in the version of your choosing.

You might like to include some simple craft ideas at each table too, depending on how much time you have available. **The Encyclopedia of Bible Crafts** published by Barnabas has craft ideas for every book of the Bible. And there are some great crafts, all using paper plates, that you could make available at each table in **Paper Plate Bible Crafts**.

Finally, you will need to stagger the start of the groups who travel round the 21 tables - to do this you will also need a welcome area with someone to organise the time gap between those that set off.

And finally, remind the 'travellers' not to try some of the foods if they have particular food allergies. It might also be useful to have some water available near each table in case people want to wash down the taste of any unusual foods.

Go!

Welcome Area

Here, set out some tasty hors d'oeuvres to represent creation in all its splendour (Genesis 1). This could be done through canapé-style snacks in different colours to pick out the days of creation: yellow (light), blue (water), green (land and plants), orange (sun and stars), grey (sea creatures and birds) and red (land animals). Alternatively, offer a sparkling non-alcoholic cocktail that is 'dressed' to represent 'All things bright and beautiful' that God made.

Table 1 - Fruit Selection



Cut up lots of different types of fruit into small pieces and provide some cocktail sticks so that the groups can sample one each.

Genesis 3:1 - 8

You could talk about the relative attractiveness of some sorts of fruit over others.

- Which did you choose and why?
- Does that mean that less attractive fruit is not so good for us?

I wonder why God put this risky choice into his creation.

Table 2 - Angel Food

Provide a plate of mini beef sausages on sticks so that everyone in the groups can taste one.

Genesis 18:1 - 15

Despite our choice to go our own way, God still stays close to us. Abraham welcomed the three strangers, who in a mysterious way represented God himself. Over their meal, Abraham and Sarah hear God's promise of a son.

- Have you ever heard God speak to you through a stranger or an unusual situation?

Table 3 - In a Stew

Prepare a warm meaty or lentil soup in a slow cooker. You will also need some polystyrene cups, plastic spoons and a ladle to serve the soup. Give everyone in the groups a small amount to taste.

Genesis 25:27 - 34

- What do you think about the way Jacob tricked Esau into giving away his rights as the firstborn son?
- Who is most at fault?
- What temptations do you find hard to resist, which sometimes means you don't do things the way God has shown is the best?

Table 4 - 'Cereal' Jealousy

Have an almost-empty bowl of cornflakes or another popular cereal. Allow only one flake/piece each.

Genesis 43:1 - 16

More sibling rivalry:

- What do you already know about the story of Joseph and his brothers?

When Joseph looks back at all that has happened - the dreams, the time in prison and now the famine - he says God meant it for good (Genesis 45:5).

- What do you think he meant?

- Do you think that God can use our mistakes?

Table 5 - Thin Bread

Have some matzo bread broken in pieces for the groups to taste.

Exodus 12:17 - 20

The escape from Egypt was such a memorable event that it was never to be forgotten. When the people of Israel tasted 'thin bread' each year they retold the whole story.

- Why was this such an important time for the people of God?
- Have there been times that God has helped you that you will never forget?

Table 6 - What Is It?

Search out some honey-flavoured wafer biscuits from your supermarket. (If you are very ambitious - and rich - then you could even boil some quails' eggs and make a few egg sandwiches too.)

Exodus 16:1 - 17

God looked after his people on their desert journey. Even though they often moaned and rebelled, he did not give up on them.

- In what ways has God looked after you through the ups and downs of your life so far?

('manna' means 'what is it')

Table 7 - Food of the Promise

Provide some milk to drink from plastic cups and some honey on small slices of bread.

Deuteronomy 6:1 - 9

The Promised Land was a long time coming and it came with some important conditions.

- What sort of perfect world do you hope for one day?
- What would need to happen for it to come true?
- How can you and God work together to create a taste of the Promised Land in your lifetime?

Table 8 - Packed Lunch

Prepare some chunks of bread and pieces of cheese.

1 Samuel 17:12 - 23

This was what David brought his brothers who were serving in the army and it was when he first saw Goliath. Remind each other what happened next.

- What huge mountain of a problem have you ever had to face and how did trusting in God make a difference?

Table 9 - Raisin' Eyebrows

Have a small packet of raisins ready for each traveller.

2 Samuel 6:11 - 19

After his long years on the run in the wilderness, David became King, and he knew how to celebrate God's goodness.

- What different ways of praising God are there?
- How do you like to praise God?

Table 10 - Emergency Rations

You will need some figs (or you could use fig rolls) and some white grape juice.

2 Samuel 16:1 - 4

David was a great King but not a perfect King. He made many mistakes. His own son Absalom rebelled and forced him out of Jerusalem on one occasion. And he became a fugitive again. Ziba showed compassion.

- How can we help others who are down on their luck and finding things tough?

Table 11 - The Glory Years

Have some exotic food choices for the groups to try. According to some websites, the top ten luxury foods are: Beluga caviar, saffron, truffles, Kobe beef, bird's nest, pufferfish, foie gras, lobster, Japanese mushrooms and oysters. You might find an affordable version of one of these but maybe sticking with some olives or some Turkish delight may be exotic enough for most. Alternatively, a box of celebration chocolates/sweets might best fit the menu here.

1 Kings 10:1 - 11

David's son Solomon became a very wealthy and successful king. This is definitely a high point in the story of the people of God. He was able to provide lavish food and five-star hospitality to the visiting Queen of Sheba.

- How can we use our money and homes wisely for God?

Table 12 - Good King, Bad King

Provide some bread sticks cut up into small pieces.

1 Kings 17:1 - 7

After Solomon, the kingdom split and there was a series of kings. Some followed God's ways and some didn't. King Ahab didn't and was challenged by the prophet Elijah. While in hiding, God looked after Elijah and, rather than feeding the birds, they fed him.

- How does the church today stand up against things that are wrong in our country or the world?
- What injustices most concern you and what could be done about them?

Table 13 - Eat the Words

Roll up some rice paper into mini scrolls.

Ezekiel 3:1 - 11

God kept sending his prophets to warn people that they were going 'off the rails'. God's words spoken through them were sometimes strong warnings, and sometimes sweet as honey because God promised them a future and hope.

- How do you hear God speaking?
- How might you take God's messages to someone else?

Table 14 - Vegetarians Rule OK

Prepare a dish with a selection of raw vegetables, cut up into small pieces for the travellers.

Daniel 1:6 - 17

Finally, the people of God ended up in exile far from their homeland. But the Bible has stories of how God still protected those who stayed true to him, such as Daniel and his friends.

- In what ways have you had to stand out and be different because you believe in God?
- How did it feel?
- How did God help you?

Table 15 - Locust Man

People still eat locusts today but not often in our part of the world. Perhaps you could use Twiglets as locust look-alikes and then challenge the groups to dip them into honey and so share John's wild diet.

Mark 1:1 - 8

John the Baptist links the Old and New Testament. Like Elijah, he appears pointing the way to Jesus.

- Who helped you find out about Jesus?
- Who could you point towards Jesus?

Table 16 - Saving the Best 'Til Last

Time to drink: Have a variety of red-coloured drinks available for the groups. You might like to add to the fun at this table with some party poppers and/or crackers to pull. After all, it is a wedding story. You might also like to add in some extra interest by having some pieces of fizzy Vitamin C blackcurrant tablets to hand which would change cups of water to red.

John 2:1 - 12

John chose his miracle stories carefully. At Cana, Jesus turned water into wine. It seemed to everyone that the host had saved the best until last. John is showing us that Jesus is God's best and he has come at last.

- What is the best thing for you about Jesus?

Table 17 - Picnic Time

You will need bread and fish in some form – perhaps tuna sandwiches, or bread rolls and fish fingers.

Matthew 14:13 - 21

Jesus said and did amazing things. He showed people what God was like. He mended broken lives and filled empty stomachs. He taught them what it meant to have God as King.

- How does your church let your community know what God is like?
- How can your life show others that God is King?

Table 18 - DiVine Truths

Wash and break up bunches of seedless grapes for your travellers to enjoy.

John 15:1 - 17

Just before he was taken away to die, Jesus used the image of a vine with its grapes to teach his followers how they need to stay close to him and be filled with the life of God.

- What helps you stay close to God?

Table 19 - The Last Supper

You will need matzo bread again and some red grape juice.

Mark 14:22 - 26

Jesus gives new meaning to the annual celebration of the Passover. This time 'he' is the thin bread that is broken, and the rescue is not from Egypt but from all that is evil in the world – the greatest rescue ever.

- Which part of the Eucharist (Communion Service) do you like the best?
- How does it help you to remember and keep following Jesus?

Table 20 - Scales Fell from Their Eyes

Prepare some pieces of fish – perhaps smoked mackerel – or even fish fingers if you have not used this food already.

Luke 24:36 - 49

Jesus was seen alive again – death is not the end. Because of Jesus, God can give us a new sort of life that will last forever. He ate fish to prove he was not a ghost.

- How can we help people today to discover that the resurrection really happened? That it has changed everything?

Table 21 - Come On, Let's Celebrate

Bring your Bible party to an end with pieces of wedding cake and some sparkling non-alcoholic champagne.



Matthew 22:1 - 10 and Revelation 21:1 - 4

Heaven is compared to a wonderful wedding breakfast. God wants us all to be there. The missionary travels in Acts and the teaching in the Letters give us the first chapters in the ongoing story of how the invitation has gone out into all the whole world - an invitation to come home to God through Jesus. It is a story we can be part of today.

- What sort of story are you writing with God as you travel towards the moment when the bride and groom arrive as described in Revelation 21?