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**Theo's Feast.**

**Setting the Table  
for Spiritual conversations**

**PRESENTERS GUIDE**

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**Intro**

Hello, and welcome to Theo's Feast! My name is Gary Stevenson, and I have the privilege of being your guide this evening. Tonight, we will provide you with a unique culinary experience that will bring you on a journey unlike any other. Each dish is an edible metaphor. Every detail of this unique gourmet meal plays a role in telling and discovering the story of humanity.

Socrates, the Father of Western philosophy, is well known for claiming that - 'the unexamined life is not worth living'. Socrates wanted people to be personally transformed by the insight they gained through deep reflection and probing conversations.

If Socrates was right then it is important to have meaningful conversations about the 'big questions' of life. And when we do that, we are often surprised to discover that we don't know as much as we think we do - and that is the inspiration behind this dinner. We want to set the table for you to have spiritual conversations with your friends. Through this delectable feast, you will be provided an opportunity to examine life in general, and your own life in particular.

We hope you're hungry tonight, since food tastes better when you crave it. But we also hope you're hungry to discover more about what it means to be human. This evening will be an exploration of worldviews as each of you share and discuss around your table. Everyone has a worldview, whether you are aware of it or not. We all have a collection of beliefs and assumptions about life and the universe that form how we see and interpret the world.

For many people, talking about religion and politics around the dinner table is taboo. But tonight, we encourage you to be open-minded and willing to share your views with those at your table. Our hope is that you will learn and grow through listening and engaging one another in the process of experiencing a mouth-watering, palate-enlivening, five course gourmet meal. There are Conversation Cards available on your table that can also be of help to inspire good discussion.

We will have a 5-7 minute explanation of each dish, followed by 20 minutes to eat and explore the dish and its meaning together around your tables. We hope that the combination of the food and story inspires some great conversations.

As you dive into each delectable dish followed by good conversation, please remember to savour the flavours in your mouth, listen to others, be open minded, and give everyone at your table a chance to share their personal views. This will help you to enjoy the evening so much more!

As a Christian, I believe in giving thanks before we eat, so we'll pause the video for your host to pray.

### **Amuse Bouche:**

Michael Pollen in his book entitled *Cooked*, says: "The shared meal is no small thing. It is a foundation of family life, the place where our children learn the art of conversation and acquire the habits of civilization: sharing, listening, taking turns, navigating differences, arguing without

offending." We are about to engage in one of the most simple, and significant practices of what it means to be human.

To begin our evening, we want to whet your appetite for good food and good conversation with what the French call an "Amuse Bouche", a mouth teaser of savoury flavour. Take this time to introduce yourselves as you enjoy the amuse bouche.

This will only be a short time of conversation — about 10 minutes total.

### **Course 1: Adamah Salad**

I am pleased to introduce our first course of the evening: Adamah Salad.

The very first story in the first book of the Bible, which is called Genesis, describes a newly created world filled with plenty of soil. God forms the first human being, who he named Adam, out of this dirt, which is called *adamah* in Hebrew. The Hebrew connection between these two words - *adam and adamah* - speaks to our human identity being linked to the soil. When we describe someone as - down to earth, or grounded - we are rightly acknowledging the connection of our humanity to the earth from which we were formed.

God then does another astonishing thing. He places the human "earthling" in a garden called Eden. Eden means "delight." If nothing else, we should be astonished by God's fondness for dirt! Life grows out of the soil whenever God breathes on it. We all depend on the soil and God's breath. No wonder, then, that God takes Adam into the garden and says, "Take care of this delightful place. Cultivate the soil. Protect it. Your life and the life of all the creatures I have made depend on it."

God invites human beings to participate in the divine activity of creating, nurturing and protecting life, and in this way we reflect the image of our Creator. Life's beauty and the taste and aroma of every good thing that springs to life from the earth is ours to enjoy.

Our Creator does not stay distant from His creation. He is not uncaring. He's not afraid to get his hands dirty! He's been gardening from the beginning of time, looking after all creatures and cultivating the conditions in which life can flourish. God continues always to look after the life He creates. That is what gardeners do.

So dig in... and enjoy your Adamah Salad...!

### **Course 2: Paradise Lost**

"'You will not certainly die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat from 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. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." Genesis 3:4-7 NIV

This story from Genesis, commonly referred to as the "Fall of Mankind," is the biblical explanation for the origins of why our world is so broken. Adam and Eve's disobedience had a devastating impact on all of creation, starting with the breaking of their relationship with God.

Consider the story of Yehiel Dinur:

In 1960, Israeli undercover agents orchestrated the daring kidnapping of one of the worst Holocaust masterminds, Adolf Eichmann. After capturing him in his South American hideout, they transported him to Israel to stand trial. There, prosecutors called a string of former concentration camp prisoners as witnesses. One was a man named Yehiel Dinur, who had miraculously escaped death in Auschwitz.

On his day to testify, Dinur entered the courtroom and stared at the man in the bulletproof glass booth — the man who had murdered Dinur's friends, personally executed a number of Jews, and presided over the slaughter of millions more. As the eyes of the two men met — victim and murderous tyrant — the courtroom fell silent, filled with the tension of an anticipated confrontation. But no one was prepared for what happened next.

Yehiel Dinur began to shout and sob, collapsing to the floor. Was he overcome by hatred? By the horrifying memories? By the evil incarnate in Eichmann's face? No.

As he later explained in a riveting 60 Minutes interview, it was because Eichmann was not the demonic personification of evil that Dinur had expected. Rather, he was an ordinary man, just like anyone else.

"I was afraid about myself," Dinur said. "I saw that I am capable to do this ... exactly like he."

Dinur's remarkable statements caused Mike Wallace to turn to the camera and ask the audience the most painful of all questions: "How was it possible for a man to act as Eichmann acted? Was he a monster? A madman? Or was he perhaps something even more terrifying? Was he normal?"

Dinur saw the truth as he faced Eichmann. Remember his words: "I saw that I am capable to do this ... exactly like he." Yehiel Dinur's shocking conclusion was this: "Eichmann is in all of us."

Journalist Hannah Arendt, who reported on Eichmann's trial for the New Yorker, said that Eichmann was not psychopathic, nor did he exhibit hatred or anger towards the Jewish people.

Instead he was an ordinary man who wanted to build a career. She then describes Eichmann as the “Banality of Evil”, which is another way of saying that evil lurks in the heart of all ordinary human beings. There is something dark within each and everyone of us. We are all capable of being an Adolf Eichmann. This in essence is what the Bible refers to as sin.

Within five minutes of watching the evening news, we can see that something is broken in humanity. There’s more brokenness, self-centeredness, and sin inside us than we want to believe. Sin is the desire to live without God, reject his instructions and deny his existence - and this human decision is what separates us from our Creator. We find ourselves lost in a garden full of weeds, and no matter how much good we sow, the weeds continue to grow. It’s like the soil of the earth has been contaminated and without God in the garden, the whole world becomes a jungle.

In this meal, each part of the dish is significant. The pear represents the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. The fruit is pleasing to the eye, yet marred (torched) as our world is marred or damaged since the fall of man. As Adam and Eve were tempted and deceived by the serpent, the pear has an unexpected twist. The pork tenderloin represents the end of the peace and harmony of Eden, as humans and animals enter into competition, even eating each other for survival no more will the lion and the lamb be next to each other without violence and strife. The edible orchid represents the Garden of Eden.

Consider that as you enjoy this next course of your meal!

### **Course 3: Salt of the Earth**

How do we fix the brokenness of our world both individually and universally? Can humanity fix itself? “Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt — seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth.” Matthew 5:13 (The Message)

Jesus calls His followers to be “salt.” Why salt? What’s so special about it? A Time magazine article from 1982 entitled ‘A Brief History of Salt’ sums it up well by saying,

“Salt comes from dead, dried-up seas or living ones. The history of the world according to salt is simple: animals wore paths to salt licks; men followed; trails became roads, and settlements grew beside them. When the human menu shifted from salt-rich game to cereals, more salt was needed to supplement the diet. But the underground deposits were beyond reach, and the salt sprinkled over the surface was insufficient. Scarcity kept the mineral precious. As civilization spread, salt became one of the world's principal trading commodities.”

Salt is a precious commodity. As early as the 6th century, in the sub-Saharan, Moorish merchants routinely traded salt for gold - ounce for ounce! A Roman soldier would often be

paid with *salt*. If the Roman Soldier failed to perform his duties, then he was “not worth his salt” and his pay would be cut.

We all know that salt serves to flavour and preserve food. And so, looking to our next course this evening, the first impression is salt. But salt is not the focal point of this course. Rather, salt provides a harmonious blending of flavours. This dish points to a full and meaningful life that is summed up in a single word in the Bible: shalom. Often times, the word is translated and understood simply as “peace,” but shalom has a much richer meaning. .

Theologian Timothy Keller tells us: “The English word peace is basically negative, referring to the absence of trouble or hostility. The Hebrew word for this perfect, harmonious interdependence among all parts of creation means much more than that. It conveys absolute wholeness — a full, harmonious, joyful, flourishing life.”

Humanity once knew this absolute wholeness in the garden, but we can't go back there on our own. There are countless examples of humans trying to achieve wholeness on their own — just look at the hippie movement of the 1960s and 70s, the massive self-help sections in most bookstores, or even the outlandish and destructive beliefs of Nazi Germany. None of these work. So, how do we fix the brokenness in us and in our world? We can't. We need someone to fix us, heal us, make us whole and produce change in us that we can't produce on our own.

*Jesus said, “Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt — seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth. If you lose your saltiness ... you've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.” Matthew 5:13 (The Message)*

Jesus wants humanity to be “salt” in the world in order to bring *shalom*: restoration, joy, harmony, holistic health and flourishing, fullness and permanence instead of brokenness in relationships. We can't do it without Him, but with Him we can bring shalom to this world.

In the next course of our meal tonight, salt is the key ingredient that brings shalom into your mouth. Each ingredient tastes good on its own, but when you eat them all together, the salt brings the sweetness to life. Shalom in one bite!

#### **Course 4: The Bread of Life**

Our next dish, called the Bread of Life, is packed full of symbolism that I hope will give you a deeper understanding of how the spiritual and physical are interwoven throughout creation. The three main ingredients are beef tenderloin, wine, and bread. Each of these ingredients are symbolic to the Christian story and the very essence of what it means to be human.

#### **Beef/Carne:**



Let's start with the beef tenderloin. Meat is also known as 'carne' which means flesh in latin. This part of the meal is inspired by the idea of God becoming human through the incarnation of Jesus.

The incarnation, or God coming to earth as a human in the person of Jesus Christ, is central to the Christian faith. God wrote himself into the story of humanity. Jesus was fully human, yet fully God. God became flesh. This was truly a new and profound idea for those in the ancient world — that a God would choose to become human, truly human, and walk among us, sharing our weaknesses and even submitting himself to death, was something that no one had ever heard of before.

The incarnation affirms the extraordinary reality that God took on human flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. Christians believe that Jesus' physical and human nature are the means by which we know God. It's through the person of Jesus, the words and actions of his teachings and ministry, that we can know the creator of the universe.

Whatever you might think of Jesus, he had an incredible way of communicating. Jesus was a master at using material things to explain spiritual realities. Through His teaching and performing miracles — making the lame walk, the blind see, and even feeding 5000 people with five loaves and two fish — Jesus revealed that, not only was He God and had the power of God, but showed us what life would be like in His coming Kingdom.

### **Wine:**

The second element of this dish is inspired by Jesus's very first miracle. Jesus and his mother were attending a wedding in a town called Cana. Weddings back in that day were often a week-long feast, so plenty of food and drink were needed. After the wedding was well underway, however, Jesus and his mother found out that this wedding party was running out of wine. So Jesus told the servants to fill some large jars with water, and they filled them to the brim.

“Then he told them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.’ They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the groom aside and said, ‘**Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink, but you have saved the best till now.**’” John 2:8-11

Feasting with bread and wine was a central part of the Hebrew culture in Jesus' time. Wine, in particular, was extremely important in ancient times and was symbolic in a number of ways. It was used as medicine and even compared to blood as the carrier of life. It also symbolizes joy and celebration.

So when Jesus turned 1000 liters of water into wine, He not only enhanced the party, but He made a profound statement about His coming Kingdom. It's going to be a feast! It will be a heavenly wedding banquet where joy and abundant blessings flow like wine toward all of creation. Turning water into wine as His first miracle was no mistake — it was Jesus pointing to a better day. It was Jesus showing us that life in His kingdom is full of justice, peace and joy.

## **Bread**

The third element of this dish is the bread that the beef is wrapped in. The process of wheat becoming bread is a wonderful illustration for what it means when Jesus claims "I am the bread of life." Bread goes through multiple transformations in the stages between going from a grain growing in a field to the loaf we can enjoy.

Bread starts off as grain in a field that we harvest. The grain is then ground into flour, formed into a dough with yeast and left to rise, and then baked. Think about how many transformations that is from seed to bread. In order for us to have the bread that sustains us, we need it to go through these transformations. We need it to become something other than its original state, and for that to happen, we have to kill the plant. It's the start of the whole process. We need to take life in order to give ourselves life.

Jesus went through a similar transformation at the end of his time on earth.

After one of his preaching sessions, he performed a miracle and created thousands of loaves of bread to give a meal to a hungry crowd. The crowd of people then wanted to see another sign from God. They asked Jesus for more bread-like the bread from heaven, they called 'manna', that God had given their ancestors for 40 years to sustain them in the desert — and asked Jesus to keep giving them bread so they wouldn't go hungry.

Instead, Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." This wasn't just an idle claim.

In this claim, Jesus is saying that he wants to be our spiritual sustenance. He wants to meet more than just our physical needs, but our spiritual needs, our longing for wholeness, peace and justice. As much as you hopefully enjoy the food you're eating now, you'll be hungry again by the time you're ready for your next meal. With Jesus, once he satisfies you spiritually, you'll never need anything else.

At the end of his life, Jesus died a criminal's death even though he never committed a crime. He was beaten, bruised, and crushed, just like the wheat that makes flour, the grapes that make wine, or the olives that are crushed to make olive oil. He willingly laid down his life for our sake. So that through his horrendous death, we might have life and have it more abundantly. He became our bread — our source of life.

But he didn't remain dead. He rose to new life and was totally transformed to a level of perfection the world hadn't seen since before paradise was lost - back to the perfected state of the Garden when humanity was first created.

What's more, he offers us that same choice of transformation. Not through human effort but through God, who became human in the person of Jesus Christ, and willingly died on a cross, burying our sins in the grave, and rose again so that we can have eternal life. Jesus showed us the way to a transformed life. If we are willing to die to our old lives, we will be reborn as transformed individuals sustained by God and empowered to join him in the work and the rewards that abound in his New Kingdom.

### **Course 5: A Taste of Grace**

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8)

Many people would likely say they've had a taste of Christianity - whether they've grown up in the Church, talked to a Christian friend, or seen it portrayed on TV or in the news. Our next dish is a metaphor for what many people think the Christian faith is all about.

If you were to ask people today to describe the Christian faith in a few words, what do you think they would say?

*Pause, let people think.*

Common ideas are that Christianity is:

- Just another religion
- A religion about following rules

- A boring or even ridiculous way to live, since following the rules isn't much fun.

Many people think the main message behind the Bible is essentially about religious morality. But if religious morality had a flavour, it probably wouldn't taste very exciting. Christianity is so much more than religious morality. It's about a human heart being transformed by a taste of God's grace. When we experience God's love and grace in a very real and personal way, it changes us for the good.

18<sup>th</sup> century preacher, Jonathan Edwards, described tasting God's grace in this way:

*"It's not enough to know that God is good, I want you to taste that God is good. Here is why, because you are not invited to anything less than this, you are invited to experience God.... When you experience God in a personal way, your heart gets a new sensory ability. The Christian faith pushes you beyond knowing about the power and goodness of God to actually tasting the power and goodness of God based on a real and personal relationship with Him.*

There is a difference between believing that God is good, and having a new sense in our heart of the loveliness and beauty of God's holiness and grace. The difference is like having a rational belief that honey is sweet and having an actual taste of its sweetness. This can only take place through a transformation of the heart.

This is the inspiration behind our next dish, A Taste of Grace. Grace is unmerited favour from God. This simply means that you get what you don't deserve. That unmerited favour is what empowers us to live the life that God desires us to live. Not by our own strength, but by the grace He has given us. And by His life in us, we are empowered to give grace to others.

U2's frontman Bono describes grace like this: *Grace defies reason and logic. Love interrupts, if you like, the consequences of your actions, which in my case is very good news indeed, because I've done a lot of stupid stuff. I'd be in big trouble if Karma was going to finally be my judge. It doesn't excuse my mistakes, but I'm holding out for Grace. I'm holding out that Jesus took my sins onto the Cross, because I know who I am, and I hope I don't have to depend on my own religiosity."* Bono in conversation with Michka Assayas

The power of God's grace is what transforms our hearts and gives us the power to change and live the life God intends for us.

### ***A Taste of Grace Description and Instructions:***

Once A Taste of Grace has been brought out, don't eat it right away. For the best results, follow these basic but important instructions on how to eat this dish.

1. Take a small taste of the dish and the lemon, but not the pink tablet.

2. Then take the pink tablet in the spoon, and slowly suck on it without chewing. It should take three to four minutes for the tablet to dissolve on your tongue.
3. Once the tablet has fully dissolved, taste the lemon again and discover the Taste of Grace.
4. Enjoy your dessert!

[Eating & Discussion]

The new flavour you are now experiencing is called A Taste of Grace. The first taste of the dish represents the tartness of brokenness and the sourness of morality based religion.

The sweetness you are experiencing from the dessert and lemon are the natural sugars that have always been there, but have been masked or overwhelmed by the sourness of the lemon. The tablet you dissolved on your tongue is a freeze dried Miracle Berry. Miracle Berries are a unique natural fruit that comes from West Africa. Some explorers observed that many of the local Africans chewed on the berry before they would eat. Later, scientists studied it and discovered that it has a very unique chemical compound called miraculin that temporarily covers over your sour receptors in your tongue, allowing you to taste the natural sweetness of the fruit that has been there all along.

The transformation from sour to sweet is the edible metaphor that communicates the transformative power of God's grace. God's grace covers our brokenness! And it also has a second meaning — that the Kingdom of God is a party, a feast with this gracious God!

Thank you for joining us this evening. We hope you've enjoyed the edible metaphors and spiritual conversations at your table. We encourage you to keep the conversations going. Talk to a friend about what you experienced at Theo's Feast and invite someone to attend a feast with you in the future. You can always learn more by going to our website, and check out our online store for new resources... (highlight 1 or 2 - ie; cookbook, DVD's, etc) We will be launching a new Theo's Feast Community.. (whatever you decide to call it) - where you can receive monthly recipes, watch cooking videos, learn how to host a feast, etc through a monthly subscription service.

We hope you enjoyed this experience and are leaving us with some good news in your heart and a good taste in your mouth... good night!

<https://time.com/3957460/a-brief-history-of-salt/>