Margaret Feinberg's appetite for the feast of His grace makes you hunger for more of a fulfilling life. Read and taste the richest food for the soul!

Ann Voskamp, author of *The Broken Way* and *One Thousand Gifts*

I could not put it down! I lost track of time like reading an adventure novel, when in fact she is writing a factual and biblical documentary. Impressive! I'm the least foodie man on the planet, and yet I loved *Taste and See.*

Shane Farmer, lead pastor of Cherry Hills Community Church, Denver, CO

Margaret is a storyteller who never ceases to see the beauty of the world around us. If you love God, good food, and life around the table, this book will take you on an unforgettable culinary journey through the Bible.

Jennie Allen, author of *Nothing to Prove* and founder of IF:Gathering

Margaret Feinberg takes us on a gourmet tour of the earth and through the Scriptures that will fill your mind and satisfy your soul. Enjoy this scrumptious read.

Kyle Idleman, pastor and author of *Not a Fan* and *Don't Give Up*

I love Jesus, food, and the Bible . . . not in that particular order, of course . . . if you do, too, then this is the most delicious book you'll read this year!

Lisa Harper, speaker and author of *The Sacrament of Happy*

Feinberg explores the foods of the Bible in this delightful book . . . Christian foodies are in for a real treat.

Publishers Weekly

Only once have I received a prayer request for a friend because she was traveling alone in Israel to master traditional fishing methods and in Croatia to hand-harvest olives. But these escapades typify Margaret Feinberg's research into biblical food—from fish to figs and bread to barbecue—all to nourish us with special spiritual fodder as well as memorable meals. Deliciously written!

Craig L. Blomberg, Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary

Like an expert chef reaching for only the finest ingredients, Margaret Feinberg seasons her prose with generous dashes of wit and wisdom, whetting our appetites for the bounty of knowledge and inspiration she dishes out, chapter after delicious chapter. Oh, the people she meets and the meals she eats and the places she goes. Inviting us to travel with her from California to Croatia, Texas to Connecticut, Utah to Israel, Margaret reveals how our healthy dependence on food parallels our deeper dependence on the One who provides what our hearts need most. Her writing style is warm, and her message compelling, as she encourages us to taste and see the goodness and richness of God. What a feast!

Liz Curtis Higgs, bestselling author of *Bad Girls of the Bible*

Every Christian I know is looking for what this book provides—HOPE. This book is just like Margaret! Intensely personal, deeply moving, spiritually challenging, and a joy to be around. *Taste and See* is a spiritual goldmine.

Ray Johnston, lead pastor of Bayside Family of Churches

Don't miss this feast from Margaret Feinberg. It's one part rich storytelling, two parts authenticity, and three parts compelling exploration of Scripture. The refreshing images and insights in each chapter of *Taste and See* will nourish your heart and soul. It left me coming back for more.

Kara Powell, PhD, Executive Director of the Fuller Youth Institute

Margaret takes us on a wonderful, witty adventure to explore the world of food and the Bible. You'll literally travel the globe dining on incredible meals with mesmerizing people, excavating rich spiritual insights, and laughing at the hilarious stories. Make sure you take this journey!

Dave Ferguson, lead pastor of Community Christian Church

Taste and See is part cookbook, part Bible study, and part biography. My friend Margaret takes you on an inspiring journey to discover there is more to biblical foods than meets the eye. Believe me—you will love this book.

Phil Waldrep, founder of Women of Joy Conferences

In this rich and personal book, Margaret invites us to literally *taste* faith, not just believe it. It is an invitation you don't want to refuse. A delectable, grace-filled, God-nurtured world awaits!

Norman Wirzba, Associate Dean at Duke University and author of *Food and Faith*

TASTE and SEE

Discovering God Among Butchers, Bakers & Fresh Food Makers

MARGARET FEINBERG

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Requests for information should be addressed to:
Zondervan, *3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546*

ISBN 978-0-310-35682-0 (audio)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Feinberg, Margaret, 1976- author.
Title: Taste and see : discovering God among butchers, bakers, and fresh food makers / Margaret Feinberg.
Description: Grand Rapids, MI : Zondervan, [2018] | Includes bibliographical references. |
Identifiers: LCCN 2018036503 (print) | LCCN 2018040618 (ebook) | ISBN 9780310354871 (ebook) | ISBN 9780310354864 (softcover)
Subjects: LCSH: Food—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Dinners and dining—Religious aspects—Christianity.
Classification: LCC BR115.N87 (ebook) | LCC BR115.N87 F45 2018 (print) | DDC 248—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018036503

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Author is represented by The Christopher Ferebee Agency, www.christopherferebee.com.

Cover design: Faceout Studio
Cover photography: Shutterstock / Stocksy
Interior design: Denise Froehlich

First printing November 2018 / Printed in the United States of America

To the love of my life, Leif.

Your strength, courage, wisdom, and grace still take my breath away. Thank you for picking me.

To Jonathan and Carolyn.

Without you two—your love, support, encouragement, and the "little writing intervention"—this book would not exist. I love you both!

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WARNING: The following pages are likely to cause the side effects of becoming spiritually and physically hungry. We recommend devouring the pages with healthy snacks nearby.

1

An Invitation to a Culinary Adventure

"Let's eat and get out of here as quickly as we can," I whispered to Leif as we unbuckled our seat belts.

My droopy-eyed husband and I were soul-tired from a long, busy season of work, but had previously committed to dinner at a new acquaintance's home. As we pulled into the driveway, I was second-guessing that decision.

Dread grew with each step along the cobblestone path, but there was no backing out now. Leif stopped short at the door and looked at me as if to say, "Go on in, dear. You got us into this." My best hope was to get the evening over with, so I could return to bed and my pajamas. I gripped the door knocker, counted to three, and forcibly transformed my grimace into what I hoped was a believable grin.

The door swung open, and Matthew and Ashley enveloped us in hugs as if we were prodigal children returning home. *Whoosh*—the air around us rearranged, and with it, our attitudes.

Hospitality has a hidden power that is difficult to explain but even harder to deny. You can wake up cranky and sore, but a mere whiff of Mom's holiday sticky buns can bring your shoulders down from around your ear lobes. Or you find yourself drowning in loneliness and, just as tears well in your eyes, the phone rings and a new friend invites you over for a hot beverage and a bowl of fresh berries. One moment the world could burn to dust for all you care, and in a blink, it is sacred ground.

As the German author and poet Christian Morgenstern writes, "Home is not the building you live in; home is wherever you are understood."

Leif and I found home that night—against our wills, no less. These many years later, I still can't explain how it happened. Maybe it was the soothing flicker of candlelight or the broken-in couch that swallowed us whole, but nevertheless, our hearts stilled, and time became irrelevant.

Our more-than-capable host, Matthew, revealed himself as an avid foodie attuned to the finer points of knife-work techniques, the origin of rare ingredients, and the latest culinary breakthroughs. He served us wave upon wave of hors d'oeuvres—jalapeño-stuffed olives, salted pistachios, a charcuterie board of savory meats and exotic cheeses. Each bite tasted better than the last.

An hour after we arrived, Matthew pulled his *pièce de résistance* from the oven—a special-order roast from a local butcher slow-cooked for thirty-six hours. My mouth watered so much I struggled not to slobber on myself, but he informed us the meat needed to rest before we could enjoy. In the meantime, he served us an arugula salad with orange slices and homemade citrus dressing. The meat arrived alongside a fresh Kalamata olive loaf and flash-fried broccoli sprinkled with lemon shavings.

Yep, Leif and I were definitely prodigal children. Every meal prior to this one during our marathon season of work suddenly felt like pig feed. Our hearts weren't brought back to life because the dinner was swanky or exclusive; our hearts revived because the food was intentional and curated with love. The meal nourished my soul in places I didn't realize I was starving.

The meal nourished my soul in places I didn't realize I was starving.

After dark chocolate ganache flourless cake and specialty roasted coffee, Matthew took us to see an oversized refrigerator in the garage where he cured meat and aged cheeses—the ones we munched on earlier. Then, we followed him to the backyard to see his lush garden boxes of lettuces, an array of spices, and lemon trees.

The four of us talked late into the evening, and I didn't want to leave. By the time we said good-bye, a spiritual bond had formed. We had arrived cranky, sore, and exhausted, but left satiated in our bellies and hearts. Together we had enjoyed the gift of food, the gift of togetherness, the gift of presence. As Christian Morgenstern might say, we came home.

Years later, I recounted the story of that night at another dinner party. To break the ice, the host, Janie, asked the attendees to share about their most memorable meal. When nobody spoke up and the silence became uncomfortable, Janie volunteered to go first.

She described an evening in Venice with her husband. The Italian eatery lacked menus and only had five tables. The chef prepared the meal from fresh ingredients and his latest culinary whim. When the sun-dried tomato focaccia ran out, he sprinted down the street to buy more.

"The mushroom marinara sauce, the romantic setting, the time together, just us . . . that place," she recalls. "The restaurant is gone

now and that makes me love it all the more. The memory is frozen in time forever."

Nicholas followed with a memory from his childhood. Growing up in a military family meant bouncing from town to town and base to base. While stationed off the coast of San Diego, his parents slipped him cash for a beachside fish fry.

"I loved the freedom of going alone," he remembered. "I was only ten, and the fish had been caught that day. Moist. Tender. The best filets I've ever eaten."

Next, Emily described a holiday meal surrounded by family and a table laden with pan-roasted turkey, cranberry stuffing, and sweet potato pie: "That was the last Thanksgiving with my grandmother. I still try to follow her recipes, but they never taste as good as when she made them."

After I shared about my remarkable meal with Matthew and Ashley, Yang went last. She described the meal her adopted parents served on the first night she arrived in her new home. They tried to make the transition easier by serving her a syrupy-sweet teriyaki chicken atop mushy Minute Rice.

"I remember wondering how I could live with these people when the food was so bad," Yang said.

We couldn't help but laugh. But then Yang explained that her new mom appeared with dessert. A package of almond cookies from China. They tasted like home, and the tension dissipated.

In exchanging stories about our most memorable meals, we shared more about ourselves than our culinary preferences—we revealed our deeper longings. For Janie, the pasta in Venice uncovered the desire for closeness with her spouse. Nicholas's fish fry revealed

his need for independence from a young age. Emily's Thanksgiving memory unveiled the importance of family, tradition, and memories. Yang's almond cookies spoke of a deep need for belonging.

I saw a pattern unfolding before me that I couldn't ignore. The stories were different, but the theme remained the same: God had been intentional in each gathering. He used these encounters to uncover a deep need and satiate a deep hunger.

Driving home, I became curious whether it was all a fluke. Were my friends and I uniquely vulnerable during meal times or were our table experiences shared by others? Was there a connection between spiritual and physical hunger?

I couldn't stop thinking about it. Digging even deeper into my story, I realized that there were layers below the surface of the charcuterie and the thirty-six-hour roast. My deepest hunger was my longing for connectedness and friendship. I was raised by hippie-like parents who moved to new remote locations every few years. Few children ever lived nearby, so I spent much of my youth surrounded by adults and ached for contact with others my age. The few hours I spent with schoolmates in class never felt like enough, and I carried a deep loneliness during childhood. As an adult, I still ache for the rich relationships and the rootedness that comes from knowing and being known. And although my story is unique, I have a suspicion this hunger resides in each of us.

When we exit our mother's womb, the umbilical cord connecting us to our mother is snipped, severing our constant nutritional source, and from that moment on, we are perpetually hungry. Infants hunger for safety and security. Children starve for guidance and knowledge. Adolescents yearn for someone, anyone, to accept them and understand them. Adults crave all manner of things—power and success, recognition and affirmation, belonging and community. At midlife, amid juggling work and family, our longings shift toward

questions of impact and influence. In our twilight years, we crave good health, stability, and the grace to finish well.

It's not just our life stages that stoke our deeper appetites. Inherent in every human are longings for meaning and purpose. We yearn to know that God still cares and that the details of our lives really matter. We desire friends who will make us laugh and cry and feel again. We long to be recognized by someone who thinks we're special and smart—and maybe even funny or a little sexy, on our best days.

As humans, we hunger for so many things that extend beyond physical appetite. We hunger to know and to be known. We hunger for others to accept, understand, and adore us. We hunger to have someone to love and cherish with our affection. Knowing we were created this way, I began to suspect that food was created not just to satiate our bellies as we gather around the table but to create a place where God could meet us and fill our hearts. I started investigating the meaning and purpose of appetite in the Scripture.

As it turns out, food plays a major role in the pages of the Bible. Long before Rachael Ray learned to eat on forty dollars a day and Michael Pollan outlined the dilemma we omnivores face, God was the original foodie.

THE BIBLE'S DELICIOUS FIRST COURSE

The creation narrative in Genesis unfolds like a feast with fruits and vegetables everywhere. Birds fill the tree branches, fish school in the sea, and livestock roam free. Less than a thousand words into the Bible and God has already crafted every ingredient needed for an epic meal, so he takes the next logical step and creates someone to eat the fruits and veggies of this delicious bounty.

God handcrafted humanity to be dependent on food. The Creator could have required us to survive on air or water apart from eating,

but He designed the human body so food is not an option but a necessity.

Even more delicious, God creates food as a source of pleasure. One of the marvels of our bodies is that we come equipped with between 2,000 and 10,000 taste buds, each one harboring 50 to 100 receptors that distinguish between the five main flavors: salty, bitter, sweet, sour, and umami (savory—think ripe tomatoes or shitake mushrooms). The tongue could exist without these nubbins, but God imbues us with the ability to delight in eating.

But food in the Bible is more than a commodity to be consumed. It is often sacred and symbolic, showing up both on tables and in temples. Food plays a prominent role in the most spiritually significant events from the moment the story starts.

In Genesis, the first humans take delectable strolls with the Creator in the bountiful Garden of Eden. I imagine the first couple plucking raspberries and peeling tangerines as they enjoy togetherness with God in the cool of the day. In Eden, God consecrates the first farm-to-table dining experience.

Then the sweetness of the story comes to an end in a bite of fruit, of all things. Much like us today, the couple want what they can't have and reach for the forbidden. With a few chews and chomps, their lives derail.

As Adam and Eve are removed from the garden buffet, God unfolds a blueprint to draw humanity back to himself. And—once again—our daily diets are involved. Food plays a significant role in helping us taste and see God's goodness in our lives. Everyday edibles become both a source of sustenance and sacred symbols. They often take on a spiritual dimension, a physical representation of God's grace and provision. And something beautiful happens when we gather around the table.

For the remainder of Genesis, a primary symbol of God's blessing is—you guessed it—food. Tasty treats spring up throughout the book. God uses Noah to preserve food in the ark and establishes his covenant with Abraham over a meaty offering. Abraham's wife, Sarah, bakes up bread cakes for angelic visitors and their son, Isaac, breathes a sigh of relief when roasted ram appears on the menu as a substitute offering. Later, Esau trades his blessing for lentil soup, and Jacob tricks his father into giving the blessing with goat stew. When famine threatens the globe, Joseph blesses all who come to him by feeding them. In this act, he foreshadows a day when the Son of God will bless all who come to him by feeding them the Bread of Life.

Food plays a significant role in helping us taste and see God's goodness in our lives.

The story of God's people continues with Moses and his sidekick brother, Aaron, whose staff produces miracles *and* wild almonds. When the dynamic duo face off against Pharaoh, who has enslaved the Israelites, Moses pronounces ten plagues on Egypt. The list reverses the Genesis creation order and decimates the food sources of Egypt, including livestock, poultry, fish, vegetables, fruit—even the water.

After their escape, the great Israelite exodus is memorialized through a delectable meal of sacred remembrance. Roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and flatbread still adorn Jewish tables each year as a means of passing the harrowing story on to future generations.

Once freed from Egypt, the Israelites receive a forty-year sabbatical in the Sinai desert, a barren place where food is difficult to find. Less than a fifty-day journey from Egypt, the Israelites awake in the wilderness of Sin (yes, that's really the name). They're willing to barter their newfound freedom for memories of food from an animal fleshpot and hard, stale bread back in Egypt. Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. They probably developed a taste for these in utero or as infants. They craved the comfort of the only life they had ever known.

The Lord persists in displaying his loving affection to the grumblers by providing food. One of the first courses on the menu arrives during a stopover in Elim where God's people drink from twelve springs of water and enjoy the natural candy of seventy date palm trees.

God soon sprinkles the desert with "manna." You won't find this sweet bread of heaven in aisle seven, but it's prominently displayed in the book of Exodus. Since humans cannot live on bread alone, God also rains down quail on the Israelites. The book of Numbers says the poultry reached a yard high as far as anyone can walk in a day. To translate the scene into classic Forrest Gump terms—you can barbecue it, boil, it, broil it, bake it, sauté it. There are quail kabobs, quail creole, quail gumbo. Pan-fried, deep-fried, stir-fried. There's pineapple quail, lemon quail, coconut quail, pepper quail, quail soup, quail stew, quail salad, quail and potatoes, quail burgers, quail sandwiches. God is the first foodie, but he apparently loves a good buffet too.

The divine menu of the desert sets the table for daily worship and adoration of God—dependence for every meal, trust for every step, a pathway to joy. During those years, the Israelites are tempted to lose heart and give up hope, but God promises he is cooking up something delectable for them and uses mealtime for their spiritual formation. In the hands of the Great Chef, food provides more than nourishment. It becomes a doorway to the divine and the gateway to transformation.

Through food, the Israelites will break free from their unhealthy upbringing.

Through food, the Israelites will grow in dependence on and trust in God.

Through food, the Israelites will discover new ways to think and talk about God.

Through food, the Israelites will experience the goodness of God together.

The story of the Israelites challenges us to be expectant for God to do the same in us whenever we gather around the table.

THE BIBLE'S DELECTABLE NEXT COURSE

When God bursts through the swinging doors of silence separating the Old and New Testaments, it's a buffet all over again. Jesus uses a variety of foodstuff to teach spiritual lessons. He compares the kingdom to wheat fields and bountiful banquets, and mountain-moving faith to a mustard seed. The Jesus we meet not only dies on a cross, but he also picks wheat, craves figs, and commands fish to be caught in Galilean nets.

Jesus's first miracle is a culinary conversion of water into wine at a wedding banquet, and later he feeds thousands with a basket of barley loaves and a handful of fish.

Mealtimes provide an opportunity for Jesus to gather his disciples and introduce them to the kingdom of God. Often the way Jesus consumes food and who he eats it with angers the religious establishment. They appear baffled when Jesus eats with unwashed hands, and they rage over the sketchy people who pull up a chair—tax collectors, prostitutes, and other "sinners."

Many of Jesus's most famous stories center around food as well. There's the one about the prodigal son who hopes to fill his stomach with pig slop but ends up with a steak dinner. And the beggar Lazarus who longs to eat from the rich man's table. And the parables about the vineyard workers and the rich man who stockpiles grain, unaware his life will soon end.

Crucial conversations, including the defense of Mary of Bethany with

her alabaster jar and even Judas's betrayal, take place surrounded by food. On the night of his betrayal, Jesus offers his disciples a spiritual practice that they should continue until he returns: a holy supper. And let's not forget the moment when the disciples who walk the road to Emmaus alongside the risen Christ have their eyes opened . . . as they break bread.

Jesus reveals himself as foodstuff: the bread of life, the true vine, the one anointed with olive oil, the sacrificial lamb.

Jesus reveals himself as foodstuff: the bread of life, the true vine, the one anointed with olive oil, the sacrificial lamb. The Son of God is even described as someone who knocks on the doors of our souls, so we'll invite him in for supper. And when this whole shindig reaches its culmination, God handpicks the menu for the best banquet of all time—one that supersedes anything Adam and Eve experienced in Eden. Though food played a role in the fall, it plays a bigger role in God's redemptive plan.

If the God of the Bible uses food to open his people to divine possibility, and God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, then it stands to reason that God wants to do the same with us now.

A RECIPE FOR A RICHER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The design of our modern world makes it easy to miss mealtime blessings. With harried schedules, many of us find ourselves grabbing anything that can be thrown inside a wrap, on a bun, or over a bed of lettuce. The meal, whether wolfed down behind a desk or behind the wheel, may be tasty but not memorable. Yet a blessing awaits whenever we carve out an appointed time to gather together and become fully present with God and one another. When we hold hands and give thanks and remember those who planted, harvested, and prepared the meal, we reconnect with ourselves and each other as humans made in the image of God.

Pause for a moment and ask, "What am I hungry for?" No, I don't mean nacho cheese Doritos or Häagen-Dazs peppermint bark bars. What are you *really* hungry for? When you gather around a table with those you most love and are most loved by, with those you know best and who know you best, what do you hope will be served? A savory entrée and a satisfying dessert, sure, but what are the unseen menu items you're hoping will appear as you're together?

Sometimes, in times of scarcity, we can be literally starving. But other times, our deepest hungers may seem more metaphorical or existential. Around the table, we discover something about longing. We recognize our need for someone to look us in the eye and truly see us, for someone to lean in and listen to us, for someone to nod and acknowledge that we're not alone. We may need someone to laugh at our jokes, tell us when we have spinach trapped in our teeth, or ask, "How are you *really* doing?"

When we gather to eat, God wants to nourish more than our bodies: he wants to nourish our souls with transcendent joy and supernatural community and divine presence. When we feed our physical appetites in community, we open our hearts for God to feed something deeper as well. He has connected our bodies and bellies to our spirits and souls. That, it seems, is the way God has designed us. God created us to give and receive, not just in our bodies but in our spirits.

The psalmist invites: "Taste and see that the LORD is good." Through these two sensory expressions, we are invited to become more attentive to God and the everyday aromatic, savory, and tactile expressions of his love.

Maybe you've never considered the Bible a book about food. I hadn't for most of my life. A tool to recognize God's voice in your life? Sure. An encouraging guide to awaken to the wonder of God?

Of course. A road map for a more joyful relationship with God? Definitely. But a foodie road map? Not a chance. An opportunity to think about the deep hungers of my life? Nope.

Once I realized the spiritual significance of food in the Bible, I decided to zero in on six foods that God uses to reveal and heal our deepest hungers. Since I'm not a food expert, only an aspiring foodie, I wanted to spend time with people who know these foods intimately, whose lives and livelihoods intertwine with these delicacies and could help me recognize Christ in their craft.

As always, God answered my prayer in the most unexpected ways. This expedition took me fishing in the Sea of Galilee, plucking figs in the farm belt of California, and baking fresh matzo at Yale University. I descended 420 feet into a Utah salt mine, harvested olives along the Croatian coast, and graduated from a Steakology 101 course in Texas.

What you hold in your hands is an invitation to take this adventure with me. This book is a spiritual travel and food guide designed to ensure you never read the Bible the same way again . . . you never approach the table the same way again . . . you never see food the same way again.

In hunger and fullness, may we draw closer to the one who fashioned us. More than a journey of food, this is a journey of faith, one designed to nourish our bellies and heal our souls. Let us taste and see God's goodness together. Let us follow our hunger and see what's cooking.

The table is set, drinks are poured, the meal is ready.

Pull up a chair.

Bon appétit and let's eat.

2

A Flaky Filet of Fish

TASTE AND SEE GOD'S POWER

I'm 6,941 miles from home on the southern rim of the Sea of Galilee, slogging through the marsh in rubber waders that I borrowed from a stranger. Israeli fishermen lay a gillnet in waist-deep water before me. They shout at each other in what I assume is Hebrew, but what my ears fail to hear, my eyes understand clearly. They have determined to fill their boats with St. Peter's fish. I am the only woman in the bunch—a female Bible teacher from America, no less—and one of the men is stripped down to his underwear.

How did I get myself in this mess?

The month prior, I had decided to throw myself into a study of food in the Bible, and my expedition would be incomplete without an exploration of fish. I prayed a (big) prayer that I'd meet the right people at the right time, and soon one divine encounter led to another. Thanks to my friend Christine, I connected with an Israeli man named Ido (pronounced Eee-dough). He grew up in Tiberias,

on the edge of the Galilee in Israel, and now works as a jack-of-all-trades for his family's restaurants and boat tours.

"If I travel to Tiberias, will you take me fishing on the Galilee?" I asked after explaining how I got his number.

"Of course," he assured with a thick Israeli accent. Ido had a community of friends who were lifelong fishermen, and they would take us on their boats.

Now I had a decision to make: I could play it safe and learn about fish somewhere closer to home. Or I could take a risk and fly halfway around the world by myself (I'm not known for my street smarts) to meet a man that I didn't know (I flunked out of kickboxing) in a country that's a powder keg of geopolitical tension (my husband tends to worry).

Leif raised every possible concern, but in the end said he would support my decision to go. (He knew what he was signing up for when he said, "I do.") That was all my inner-adventurer needed to hear. Two clicks on the trackpad, and my itinerary was set.

As we counted down the days until takeoff, Leif and I could feel our shared anxiety rise. I'm stepping into a scenario in which anything can happen and, as much as I crave adventure, I confess I don't like being out of control. So I arm myself with a plan of all I want to accomplish, and on the morning of my departure, with nerves afire, Leif wraps me in his arms and whispers, "God, make a way so your power and presence may be seen by all."

After multiple plane changes between Salt Lake City and Tel Aviv, I rent a car and soon pull into Lido Beach on the shores of the Galilee. Built around a shady harbor, the Lido compound hosts a fleet of boats and two restaurants, the Pagoda and the famed

Decks, which attract everyone from dignitaries to Jewish families celebrating bat and bar mitzvahs.

A six-foot-four man wearing a black T-shirt and jeans emerges from behind a gate carrying a mug of tea in each hand. With bluish eyes, a shaved head, and deep laugh lines, he is a dead ringer for Bruce Willis.

Ido carries himself with an affable gait and gregarious grin. Knowing the sharing of food is an act of friendship in Middle Eastern culture, I accept the piping cup of licorice tea as Ido leads me on a tour of his family's property. He highlights everything he has made by hand—custom chairs and tables, guardrails and concrete decks, even the grills in the kitchen. He's a high-energy Jewish Renaissance man.

He ushers me toward the docks, where he points out his latest project: a fiberglass replica of the Ancient Galilee Boat, also known as "The Jesus Boat," to take pilgrims on tours. Discovered four miles away from Lido in 1986, the wooden vessel dates to the first century AD and provides insights into the watercraft used during Jesus's lifetime.

Twenty-seven feet in length and seven-and-a-half feet wide, its flat bottom and shallow draft allow the vessel to inch close for inshore fishing. The boat, with its four staggered rowers and a mast for sailing, could adapt to the ever-changing weather conditions on the lake. A cooking pot and lamp found inside the vessel confirm the fishermen worked late into the night and prepared meals aboard their boats just as they do today.

I remember the scene in Mark's Gospel when a sudden squall catches the disciples off-guard. The waves crash over the boat until it's nearly swamped. Yet, amazingly, Jesus dozes on a cushion in the aft. When I see the shape and dimensions of the original discovery, as well as Ido's re-creation, I grasp both the credibility and the absurdity of the scene.

The Sea of Galilee is relatively shallow, just 200 feet at its deepest point. The result is that wind stirs up the water more readily because the energy cannot be absorbed as quickly as with deeper lakes. As a result, the waves on the lake are abnormally close together. Vessels, especially of this size, would be tossed with more severity during a storm. The scene of Jesus snoozing seems outrageous with a backdrop of disciples straining at the oars, gusts of wind screaming, gallons of saline breaking over the bow. Yet Christ slumbers in peace.

Even more shocking: Jesus's power to calm a raging sea that's thirty-three miles in diameter with the words, "Quiet! Be still."

Though I find the Ancient Galilee Boat fascinating, I haven't traveled halfway around the world to study vessels as much as fish.

"When can we go fishing?" I ask eagerly.

"Yah, yah, we go," Ido hushes. "But first I must buy wood. You come?"

Since Passover is days away, Ido has many projects to complete before the city shuts down. Without much choice, I scrunch in the cab of the truck alongside his workers and son.

The next thing I know, I'm standing in the middle of a field more than an hour's drive away as Ido negotiates the purchase of an enormous trunk of a Jerusalem pine. Somewhere in the foreign conversation with the sellers I hear the English phrase, "Feinberg Wood Industries." Later, Ido explains that he introduced me as a wood dealer from America to negotiate a better price for the special table he's building in the restaurant. When I question his business ethics, he laughs and says it's all just play.

We don't go fishing that day . . . or the next three days. Every morning I ask about fishing and Ido answers, "But first I must . . ."

Then we leave on another work-related errand that involves buying, selling, and most important, negotiating. Ido assures me that his friends rank among the best fishermen on the lake. They will take us. This was not the fishing-palooza trip I envisioned—at all—and I wondered what God had in store for me instead.

At the end of the fourth day, after we headed away from the lake yet again, Ido has introduced me as a filmmaker from Los Angeles, a journalist for *National Geographic*, and an owner-operator of a glamping company. I am living on "Israeli time" and "Ido time," which means everything takes ten times as long.

Each day feels like I'm trapped in a Choose Your Own Adventure escapade, except Ido makes all the decisions. I follow behind like a kite tail whipped about in the wind.

The situation grates against my plans and well-worn desire to be in charge. Picking something as simple as your destination plays well into the illusion that destiny is yours to control; however, this trip has stripped me of making choices. A part of me is tempted to pack my bags and return home in frustration. Yet I sense that if I relinquish control and stop trying to set the agenda, maybe I'll make space for God to move.

I force myself to receive each day as a gift rather than manage it like a to-do list. It's a tussle, sometimes hour by hour, and with time, my experience begins to shift.

The unexpected detours of our adventures include stops at a goat farm, an olive orchard, a Bedouin's cattle herd, and fields of fig trees, vines, and wheat. As I relent to the uncharted tour, I am able to pay closer attention to each experience. I learn something insightful at each stop and start to trust in this non-plan plan. In the evenings, the entire family gathers around the table—Ido's wife, Yael; his four children, Erez, Peleg, Ella, and Gefen; his mother, Vered; and his

grandmother, Esther, who, like all Jewish grandmothers, shovels more food on my plate every time I look away.

As we eat together, Ido recounts the day's adventures. The events which are curious and comical to me appear normal to everyone else. Ido's wife, Yael, provides the only hints of oversight to the beautiful chaos. We clap when five-year-old Ella, who has long lost interest in food, plays dress-up with yet another outfit. And we watch two-year-old Gefen return to the table every few minutes with a new toy. Listening to young Jewish children call their father "Abba" is especially moving. I find myself enmeshed in the daily food, cooking, and life of a Jewish family in ways I never imagined.

But I don't lose sight that I've come here for fish. So late into the evenings, I study the Hebrew Bible to reel in fresh insights.

HOW FISH SWIM THROUGH THE BIBLE

The Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, teems with fish. They arrive on the fifth day of creation when God stocks the seas with marine creatures. Soon after, Adam goes on a naming spree of the livestock and birds and wild animals, but alas, the fish don't make the list. Some suggest with lightheartedness that's why only one word exists for fish in the Hebrew Bible—*dag*—which covers all species.

The Egyptians pioneered the art of fishing. Though planted in the desert, they engineered an extensive labyrinth of aqueducts along the Nile, which allowed them to serve catfish, mullet, carp, and moonfish. Yet Pharaoh's refusal to heed Moses's warning to release the Israelites ruins their supply. God displays his power when the waters turn bloody red and the stench of hundreds of thousands of fish carcasses bitters the air.

Pharaoh agrees to liberate the Israelites, but he proves to be a

double-crosser. Shortly after their evacuation, the Egyptian army chases God's people into the Red Sea—their only path of escape. As soon as they make it safely to the other side, the parted waters crash down on the Egyptians. Their bloated bodies soon wash up on the shores, likely after fish nibbled on a few toes.

The Israelites' gratitude wanes and they soon find themselves underwhelmed, flooding God's ears with complaint. They miss Egyptian food—especially those fresh fish sticks.

In faithfulness, grace, and love, God leads them to the Promised Land, which includes a fisherman's paradise along the banks of the Galilee and the shores of the Mediterranean. Yet Moses knows their wandering hearts and issues a stern warning in the desert: wherever you go, don't worship any fish.

While such a command sounds strange to modern ears, one of the strongest factions in the land, the Philistines, worship a fish-god known as Dagon. When the Philistines capture the ark of the Lord from the Israelites during the period of the judges, they carry it into Dagon's temple. Their idol appears face down the next day. They set him upright. Dagon's head and appendages break off by the next morning. They set him upright again. Soon tumors appear all over their bodies. After so many displays of God's power, the Philistines cry out to let God's ark go.

The story is a reminder that worshipping false gods will make you the chicken of the sea.

Fish are beloved by the Israelites because the addition of a sardine or fish sauce is a treat that breaks up the monotony of the bread, bread, bread and more bread in the ancient diet.

As a literal sign of their culinary preferences, "The Fish Gate" becomes one of the famed entrances into Jerusalem. Much like the

Pike Place Market in Seattle, the name signifies its geographic location, specifically its proximity to fish peddlers selling their daily catches. Six days a week, the fishermen sell their fish transported from the Mediterranean and the Galilee.

The Scripture notes multiple occasions when God's people fill their bellies with fish, but then there's that time when a fish is filled with one of God's prophets! Jonah starts in the bowels of a ship and ends up in the bowels of a big fish. Three stinky days later, Jonah parks on the beach, covered in fish sneeze. The prophet plucks seaweed from his beard, then delivers what may be the shortest, most effective sermon in history: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." With those words, all the Ninevites fast, wear sackcloth, and return to God.

Table Discovery: Rather than shop for a specific type of fish the next time you go to the market, ask the clerk for the freshest fish available. Recipes that call for tilapia can be substituted with other mild tasting fish like cod or snapper. Look for firm filets without discoloration. If you're purchasing a whole fish, look for clear eyes and tight scales on the skin.

Other prophets, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and Zephaniah, all use fish imagery in communicating God's heart to his people. The frequent mentions suggest they're well-acquainted with the occupation of fishermen.

Yet it's Ezekiel who makes one of the strangest prophecies when he describes a great abundance of fish from an unlikely source: where the water from Jerusalem meets the Dead Sea. Everyone knows the Dead Sea is famous for being, well, dead. Nothing lives in it. So how is this possible?

In the midst of exile, the prophet describes a time when life will flow from Jerusalem once again. The temple will no longer be a place of corruption but a source of life. The miracle is the fresh water flowing from the temple creating an environment

for abundance. Turns out when fresh water meets salt water, an estuary of brackish water forms. The level of salinity changes, creating a place where fish gather and thrive. The prophet proclaims that nothing is impossible when the power of God is involved.

With so many fish swimming throughout the ancient text, I can't wait to dive into the Gospels. But first I need to ensure I haven't traveled this far to return home without a catch.

THE SECRET TO CATCHING A ST. PETER'S FISH

By day five, Ido can sense my restlessness.

"Today, we go fishing," he announces.

I only half-believe him. But that afternoon we drive to the southern shore of the Galilee. I climb aboard a beaten, pale-blue fiberglass skiff with a small engine and two narrow rectangular oars. Sun-worn tarps cover a pile of nets in the center of the boat.

As we pull away from the jetty, Ido points to splashes on the shore. Large fish appear stacked atop each other against the bank.

"Catfish mating season," Ido says. "We don't eat them. Know why?"

I shake my head.

"We're Jewish."

Only then do I remember the parable in which Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a net let down in a lake. Once full, the fishermen pull their catch to shore and separate the good fish from the bad. Thanks to Ido, I now know the bad fish are the catfish. Because they lack scales, they are considered unclean. That's why

they're the biggest fish in the sea. If you're a catfish lover, world-class fishing awaits on the shores of the Galilee.

After a short boat ride, we meet up with another skiff. Shlomo, known as "Momo," is the owner and operator of a pair of boats with a crew of four, including himself. All the men wear a white T-shirt and matching navy-blue fishing waders. Their leathery skin and muscular frames are chiseled by their profession as they work six days a week, while resting on the Sabbath.

Neither Momo nor his crew speak English, so Ido translates. Momo has fished these waters for thirty-seven years and claims to know every inch of the Sea of Galilee. I don't doubt him. He explains that the fish migrate toward the south of the sea in the winter and to the north in the summer.

A hundred yards from shore, Momo signals for his men to drop a net. The engine stops, and we wait for stillness to set in. The waters calm, and I recognize why he's chosen this precise location. I peer over the edge and notice a large log that attracts fish to its shadows.

Momo's right-hand man lifts a tarp to uncover a trammel net, known as an *ambaten* in Hebrew. He releases the layered net, with metal weights on the bottom and red floaters on the top, to form a vertical wall in the water. Meanwhile, Momo uses the oars to row the boat one hundred yards across and then inward five times to create a spiral formation.

Once in the center, the secondary boat sculls around us. A crewman uses a toilet plunger to shock the water with loud sounds. The ruckus compels the fish to dive to the bottom, where they entangle in the net. The same method, the slapping of oars, has been used on the Galilee for thousands of years.

Then we sit in silence. Momo scans the surface. A bobble on a

floater signifies a trapped fish. He points to a second with a half-grin. Momo announces, "Ya!" and the crewmen retrieve the net. The crew cheers when the first St. Peter's fish, a kind of tilapia, flops inside a cooler.

The one-pound silver fish has a long dorsal fin resembling a comb. The Hebrew name for St. Peter's fish is *amnon,* meaning "nurse fish" because the parents store their eggs in their mouths for two to three weeks until the eggs hatch, then watch over them afterward—an unusual, nurturing act for a cold-blooded creature.

The fish gets its nickname from a popular story in Matthew. The disciples arrive in the fishing village of Capernaum. A tax collector approaches Peter, because, at the time, every Jewish adult male must pay two drachma as a temple tax equivalent to a day's wage. To test Jesus's loyalty, the Pharisees ask Peter whether Jesus pays the tax. Peter insists Jesus is an upstanding taxpayer.

When Peter arrives home, Jesus greets him with a question: "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?"

"From others," Peter answers.

"Then the children are exempt," Jesus says. "But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

Not only do the wind and the waves cater to Jesus's command, but the fish also.

Much like Jonah emerging from a fish's mouth, this stunning act displays God's power over creation. Not only do the wind and the waves cater to Jesus's command, but the fish also.

The supernatural story is remembered whenever restaurant guests order a baked, broiled, or fried "St. Peter's fish." The only problem, from the perspective of local fishermen: this isn't the breed of fish Peter caught.

The St. Peter's fish feeds only on plankton, so catching the famous fish requires nets, not hooks. The fish Peter most likely pulled from the waters is the carp-like barbel, famed for the barbs on the corners of its mouth and commonly caught with a line.

The amnon probably earned the name St. Peter's fish because it's the best-tasting fish in the sea. The name change was simply good for tourism, and that's why it remains a must-eat meal for visitors to the region.

When Momo's crewmen finish retrieving the net, a handful of fish flop in the cooler. Ido appears thrilled by the variety—a pair of St. Peter's fish and three different species of barbels. But Momo shakes his head in disappointment. The barbels earn forty cents a pound *if* you can find someone to buy them, whereas the St. Peter's fish bring in two to four dollars a pound. When your livelihood depends on the sea and you and your employees labor for an hour to catch only two sellable fish, it's a net loss.

But Momo refuses to give up.

He rows the boat toward the marshy shore, climbs out of the vessel, and walks in chest-deep water toward land, his eyes sweeping the surface for fish. From the rocky beach, he squints toward us, calling out in Hebrew.

The fishermen spring into action. They climb into the water with floating coolers filled with nets. In an act of kindness, one of the crewmen loans me his fishing waders. There's not an extra pair for Ido. He strips down to his skivvies that look like Israeli lederhosen.

We march through the waters as the nets are lowered and linked to create a half-mile wall between the beach and the deeper water. Once the nets are set, a crewman plunges into the water to drive the fish into the wall.

I offer to take the plunger but am told there's too much at stake. I try not to get in their way, snapping as many photos as I can without dropping my phone to its watery grave.

So that's how I end up 6,941 miles away from home, slogging through watery marsh with four men who don't speak a lick of English—and a fifth in his underwear.

Two hours later, when Momo and his men retrieve the nets, they haul in 150 pounds of St. Peter's fish, well above and beyond the tiny catch they snagged earlier. That's when I realize that the one on the beach recognizes something we cannot from the boats.

And from a heavenly vantage point, God always sees what we cannot.

How often I forget this in my spiritual life. When we rely on our own power, our eyes set on the goal. When we relinquish control, we become free to fix our eyes on God. Sometimes I become so obsessed with what's before me, on the five meager fish in my cooler—or on a trip that isn't following my original plan—that I fail to shift my gaze to the One who sees all things, who holds all things together, who remains all-powerful.

This tendency becomes more acute when, like the fishing crew with a near-empty catch, I'm exhausted and frustrated and disappointed. In those moments I need the One who calls to the disciples from the shore. The One whose perspective is more expansive, whose ways are higher, whose plan is better, whose power is limitless.

Yet my spiritual eyes are only beginning to open to all God is revealing.

By the time we return to the harbor, Ido convinces Momo to give us the five fish from the original catch. I wait for Ido to drum up my next exaggerated career, but this time he tells the truth—I'm an author exploring food and the Bible. They seem just fine with that.

Later that evening, we gather around the family table once again enjoying the food and one another. I'm grateful for the fish and especially the fishing expedition. Mama Vered peppers me with questions about the experience. She's proud of Ido for bringing home dinner.

The barbels, the less tasty choice, become a popular Jewish dish known as gefilte fish, which tastes like a slab of fishy meatloaf. I'm grateful I only took a small chunk. But this is one of Grandmother Esther's favorite foods from childhood, so she goes back for seconds and thirds. I haven't seen her eat this much any other night.

The prized St. Peter's fish is served in a more familiar fashion. It's broiled and served with an oversized, charred sweet potato. The fish's thin skin peels away to reveal a flaky white filet, and the bones separate with ease. The gentle flavor comes alive with a twist of fresh lemon as the meat melts in my mouth.

If you're ever given the choice between the two dishes, I recommend the St. Peter's fish every time.

THE FISHING STORY YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW

My time with Momo and his crew on the boat proves invaluable, yet I glean as much from sitting on the shore, watching men cast nets along the docks and rocks, observing the changing weather patterns, and interacting with those who fish when they return to the harbor.

Before visiting Israel, the Sea of Galilee, also known as the Sea of Tiberias and Lake of Gennesaret in the Gospels, always sounded enormous to me. One rare lazy afternoon during my visit, I drive its perimeter in an hour. Afterward, Ido gushes that he knows "a fox of a driver" who can do it in twenty-seven minutes.

Jesus could have settled anywhere after leaving Nazareth. Yet he claims the shores of this harp-shaped lake as home. Here he launches his earthly ministry amid the boats and harbors. He handpicks fishermen as his first disciples. Jesus asks his followers to give their most valuable possessions: their livelihoods. Their boats, once used for profitable businesses, transform into floating pulpits and provide much-needed transportation. The nets now do more than form a wall for fish; they break down walls in people's hearts. The linen netting becomes an instrument for expanding people's understanding of the power of God.

Table Discovery: If you live in a land-locked area and don't have access to fresh fish, then shop for flash frozen fish that's processed on the boat where it's caught. The vacuum-packed fish stores well in the freezer until you're ready to eat. For the best flavor, defrost the fish on the day you plan to enjoy it.

One of the questions I most enjoy asking fishermen is about their best catch ever. Momo recalls an afternoon when his crew set their nets near Lido and worked all day. By evening, they brought in 2.1 tons of fish—the most he's ever seen. Ido describes hauling in a 670-pound tuna from the depths of the Mediterranean with his handmade gaff. Fishermen, by nature, are people whose big fish tales spread fast. No wonder so many fish miracles fill the Gospels.

Yet it's our doctor friend, Luke, who paints the most detailed pictures of how Jesus interrupted life on the shores of the Galilee.

After a long night's work, a fishing crew returns to the harbor in the mornings. Without access to modern, clear, synthetic netting,

they depend on a cotton-based linen for net-making. The white strands are easily detectable to the fish in daylight hours, so the men always venture out at night. In Luke's story, the men return at dawn without any fish.

For fishermen, the return to port doesn't end when the boat docks. They must still wash, mend, and dry the nets to prevent mildew. Then they wrap them in a sheltering cloth to prevent sun damage.

In this instance, Jesus approaches and the fishing boats sit empty. The crewmen busy themselves repairing and washing the nets on shore. Jesus climbs into an unoccupied vessel and asks Simon Peter to push out the boat. Then he instructs, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

Remember, the disciples have already worked all night. They know it's a waste of time and energy to set a linen dragnet during the day.

"But because you say so, I will let down the nets," Simon Peter obliges.

One of the empty gourds, commonly used as floaters in antiquity, bobbles in the water. The men perk with excitement. Soon all the floaters dance. Peter flashes the signal to retrieve the net. Fish wiggle in the webbing until they create frays. Some lucky fish scoot away.

Simon Peter calls out to his partners, the sons of Zebedee, for extra hands. Soon both vessels become so weighed down with the enormous catch, they take on water. They return to shore with the most lucrative haul of their entire lives. Simon Peter can't believe his eyes. The unlimited power of God displays itself in the nets, and even more in the person before him. He falls at Jesus's knees and begs for his life. "Master, leave. I'm a sinner and can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself."

Jesus refuses to budge and assures Peter that in the wake of his power there's nothing to fear: he's not going anywhere. Once ashore, Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John leave everything and follow Jesus.

We read this famous fishing story today with the advantage of knowing that those boats and nets will serve a purpose again. But in the moment, the disciples believe they're leaving them forever. They give up their transportation, their livelihoods, their futures, not to mention the biggest catch of their lives. They've just won the fishing lottery, but they leave it behind for something far better. Scripture doesn't tell us who cashed in that astounding catch. But the disciples' sacrifices become the very things Jesus uses to display his power and glory. This is the first miracle the disciples witness in their boats. The Son of God unleashes his power in the midst of their daily routine, their daily work, their daily chores.

Because this mighty act occurs far from us on a map, we can start to think God prefers to move in faraway places. We can fall into the belief that God performs his greatest works in other locations, in other people, in other situations. We forget that Jesus wants to show up in our lives—here, now, today.

The disciples' stories remind us this isn't a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence. Throughout their travels with Jesus, they encounter so many remarkable displays of God's power they can't write them all down.

So it's no surprise that Jesus makes his grand exit in a similar fashion as his entrance. After his death and resurrection, the original fishermen return to their familiar livelihoods.

In the final chapter of John's Gospel, Peter and the Zebedee brothers fish all night but catch nothing. Once again, Jesus comes to people disappointed in their work. Jesus calls from the shores of the Galilee to his friends who don't recognize him. He instructs them to throw

their nets into the water, this time on the right side of the boat, perhaps because they're already in deep water.

The gourds dance, the nets overflow, and a few fish scuttle away.

The Gospel of John describes that after the fishermen haul their nets to shore, Jesus greets them with breakfast on the beach. One can imagine the allure of fresh baked bread and fish broiled over charcoal wafting through the air. Jesus asks the disciples to bring some of their catch, not because he doesn't have enough, but because he has something else in mind.

I always thought the early-morning breakfast lesson was that even though God has everything, we are still invited to be participatory givers. While this remains true, after my time on the Galilee, I see it anew.

The disciples haul their seine nets ashore but still have hours of work ahead to disentangle all the fish, wash, mend, and dry their nets. Yet they leave their nets for an opportunity to break bread with the Bread of Life.

Only one disciple responds to Jesus's request for more fish. The last time this disciple saw Jesus, he stood near a charcoal fire, too—and proceeded to deny Jesus three times.

Proud as ever, Peter refuses to repeat the same mistake.

"So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn."

When Peter returns to the boats, he doesn't disentangle fish from the nets already on shore. Instead, he climbs into the boat and likely reaches for a new net—a cast net, which is the only kind of

net that can be handled by one man. He tosses it in the water and hauls in more than a gross of large fish, and among them his namesake, the St. Peter's Fish.

Mendel Nun, a fishing expert in this region, suggests there were multiple catches on that day. The first catch with the disciples and the second catch with Peter. Catching that many fish with different methods layers miracle on miracle.

Peter experiences Jesus's voltage in his life again through the abundant catch. These miracles provide the set-up for Peter's warm embrace and recommissioning by Christ.

Just as the disciples' first miraculous catch ushers them into an unforgettable journey with Christ, so too these catches launch them into uncharted adventure as faithful followers.

SURROUNDED BY MORE MIRACLES THAN YOU REALIZE?

On my final morning in Israel, I climb out of bed in darkness and make my way to the docks as the sun rises over the hillside. The birds, with their high shrills and steady chirps, form a choir in a nearby tree. Seagulls circle the harbor and pause mid-flight to make the occasional dive. A dog's bark echoes in the distance.

I realize that I had to uncurl my fingers from the trip I envisioned to make space for the adventure God had preplanned all along. I don't like being out of control—who does, really?—yet accepting our powerlessness is a sacred discipline.

When I relinquished, God flooded in and made himself known. I suspect he wants to do that a lot more than I allow. He longs to display his power and might in our lives, but he won't kick us off the throne if we're committed to wearing the crown of control.

The Sea of Galilee exudes a calmness that stills my soul. My eyes wander along the emerald coast. This is more than a spot where water meets land: it's where heaven intersected earth; where Jesus displayed the power of God to mere mortals.

To the north, Jesus once fed five thousand with five bricks of barley and a pair of sardines. A few miles away he repeated the miracle for four thousand.

A little further and Peter caught the carp that provided the temple tax.

My eyes scan the lake where Jesus calmed wicked storms, not once but twice. And upon these waters, Jesus strolled with ease.

I'm surrounded by grand displays of God's power. This landscape is marked by the miraculous in every direction.

This is easy to recognize when you're beside the Galilee, overlooking the waters where Jesus lived. But the experience isn't limited to people with the time and resources to make the trek to Israel.

Christ wants us to see these vistas in our daily lives. He wants us to awaken to all the places God unleashes mightiness—in our past and present, so we can look forward to a faith-filled future.

The provision supplied. The storms calmed. The relationships restored.

I catch this panorama in the ways God has sustained Leif and me. I remember the faces of those God has brought into my life to quell the pangs of loneliness. I look back to the many moves in my life and see how Jesus met and grew me through each one. I also remember the dark seasons, such as when the storm of financial ruin struck our lives; though it took years to repay, God provided

all along the way. Then a cancer diagnosis that broke my body and my will, but even in that, God breathed new life.

If you look at your life through this panoramic lens, you'll recognize the powerful displays of God's presence through it all.

But if you stop looking to Jesus as your powerhouse, you may start thinking God is overlooking you, ignoring you, or worse yet, punishing you. If you close your eyes too long to God's presence, you may convince yourself that somehow God has rejected you, or worse, has abandoned you altogether. You'll grow deaf to the One who calls from the shore, the One who wants to fill your nets with the impossible and unimaginable.

Yet if you search your everyday life for the presence of Christ, you'll begin to see the extra provision, extra might, extra grace that he's slipping you. The way he provides an unexpected compliment from a friend. Or a familiar face that you weren't expecting in a crowded place. Or a breathtaking sunset. These displays of God's power are good and beautiful, like the fish the disciples caught. But the greatest miracle remains the One who sent them.

It's holy irony that the first letters of the Greek words "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior" form the word *ichthys,* meaning "fish" in Greek.

That's one reason early believers, amid persecution, chose the fish as their secret symbol. The common image didn't raise any suspicions yet carried the memories of Christ's power and calling to become "fishers of men." Archaeologists have discovered pictures of fish carved in the stone and painted on the walls where early Christ-followers gathered and prayed in secret.

It's even said that when a believer met a stranger in the road, the Christ-follower might draw an arc of a simple fish in the dirt. If the

stranger drew the other arc to complete the fish, both knew they were in safe company.

For them and for us, the fish reminds us to live on high alert for the power of Christ to invade our daily lives in something as basic and everyday as our food.

The sun rises higher, and I know my time is coming to a close. I drag my finger through the sand of the shore, forming a fish. *Thank you, God, for your power,* I whisper.

When it's time to depart, I give Ido a bear hug to thank him for his hospitality. He seems sad to see me leave.

"I hope you got what you came for, Margaret," he offers.

"I got all I needed and so much more," I reply. "Only God could have orchestrated such an adventure."

And so it is with us all.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a simple activity to share around the table after a meal with friends, family, and soon-to-be friends.

For this chapter's activity, find an outline of the Sea of Galilee that you can photocopy, one per person. (If you'd like to download a free printable map to photocopy, simply visit www.margaretfeinberg.com/tasteandsee.) Now imagine you're sitting on the bank, looking around the coast at the miracles that Jesus has done in your life. People you met. Jobs you landed. Provision you needed. Healing you desired. Grace you experienced. On the map, note places around the lake where Jesus has displayed his power in your life. Then share some of these miracles with one another.

MOM'S ALMOND-CRUSTED TILAPIA

I grew up on a boat, and this fall-apart-in-your-mouth fish recipe will become a family favorite. Best served with roasted veggies or steamed rice.

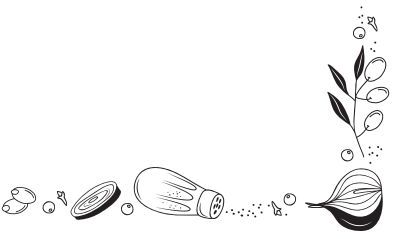
PREP: 10 minutes **COOK:** 4 minutes **COOL:** none

4 tilapia filets
1 egg beaten with 1 teaspoon water
1/2 cup ground almonds
1/2 cup panko
1/4 cup grated Parmesan
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon butter
lemon and parsley for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix almonds, panko, parmesan, and garlic salt in small bowl.
2. Dip filets in egg mix. Press coating onto fish.
3. Sauté in olive oil and butter on one side until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Turn and cook another 2 minutes.
4. Garnish with lemon and parsley and enjoy.

Serves 2–4.



LEIF'S BAKED HALIBUT

My husband, Leif, is from Sitka, Alaska, and has cooked fish countless ways. This tasty recipe is best served with fresh vegetables, salad, and rice or baked potato.

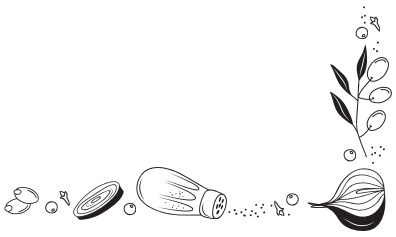
PREP: 10 minutes **COOK:** 25 minutes **COOL:** 2 minutes

1-pound halibut filet, divided into four pieces
1/4 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup Dijon mustard
1/2 cup grated cheddar cheese
salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Rinse fish, then salt and pepper both sides of the filets.
3. Mix mayonnaise and mustard.
4. Spray baking pan with oil. Place fish skin side down. Spread the mayonnaise and mustard mixture over the top of the fish. Sprinkle cheese evenly over the four pieces of fish.
5. Bake between 18–23 minutes until cheese melts and starts to brown. Fish should flake easily with a fork.

Serves 2–3.



LEIF'S SPICY SMOKED SALMON DIP

This tasty dip is best served with a variety of your favorite fresh veggies and bagel chips, made into a sandwich, or just eaten with a fork.

PREP: 10 minutes (more depending on veggies served with the dip)
COOK: none
COOL: none
8 ounces of cream cheese
4 ounces of smoked salmon (not canned in oil)

1/2 cup of plain Greek yogurt
1 tablespoon of fresh lemon juice
3 green onion sliced (reserve the whites for another use)
1/2 diced jalapeño or Sriracha sauce to taste
salt and pepper to taste
bread, crackers, or veggies to serve

DIRECTIONS

1. Using an electric mixer, blend the cream cheese until smooth.
2. Add the remaining ingredients and mix using a fork until well blended.
3. Taste and then season with salt and pepper and additional jalapeño or Sriracha.
4. Chill and then serve with bread, crackers, or veggies.

Makes 1 1/2 pints.

WES'S GRILLED FISH TACOS WITH BAJA SLAW

Fish tacos are a great addition to your weekly menu. They provide a fun and nutritious way to introduce kids to fish and consume healthy Omega-3s.

PREP: 45 minutes **COOK:** 15 minutes **COOL:** none

FISH:

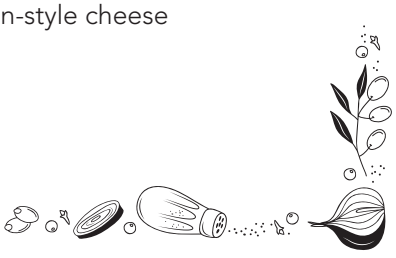
1 pound of favorite fish (tilapia, snapper, or whatever is fresh or flash frozen)
2 tablespoons taco seasoning
2 tablespoons olive oil

BAJA SLAW:

3 cups shredded cabbage
1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup of sour cream
2 tablespoons Sriracha
1 tablespoon lime juice
1 tablespoon taco seasoning

TACO TOPPINGS:

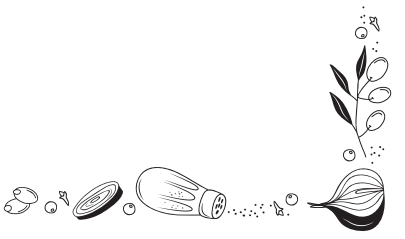
1 8-ounce jar pico de gallo
salt and pepper to taste
Package of 6-inch corn tortillas
1 lime cut into 4 wedges
8 ounces shredded Mexican-style cheese



DIRECTIONS

1. To prepare the fish, pat dry with a paper towel and cut the filets into strips approximately 1 inch wide and 5 inches long. Add 2 tablespoons of your favorite taco seasoning and 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Mix gently to evenly coat all sides of the strips. Let sit for 15 minutes.
2. While the fish is resting, prepare the Baja Slaw and preheat your grill to medium heat. Mix all ingredients for the Baja Slaw into a bowl, cover, and let sit in the refrigerator until ready to serve.
3. Place fish on aluminum foil on grill. Cook each side 4–5 minutes on medium heat until the fish is moist and flakey.
4. Heat tortillas on the stove top with a squeeze of lime.
5. Build your tacos with tortillas, slaw, cheese, lime, and extra Sriracha.

Serves 4.



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Chapter 1: An Invitation to a Culinary Adventure

12 "you are understood": As cited online in multiple variations.

18 wild almonds: Numbers 17:8.

18 wilderness of Sin: The Hebrew term "Sin" is unrelated to the English term, though it pops from the text like a droplet of scalding oil. Sin is one of seven wildernesses mentioned with the Israelites' journey from Egypt to Canaan. Scholars estimate that the Israelites arrived at Sin around the time they had likely exhausted all their food supplies and were desperate for food and drink.

18 or as infants: Scientists believe that our desires for particular foods begin in utero during the first trimester as gustatory and olfactory systems develop. Amniotic fluid and breast milk contain molecules from the mother's diet. Foods flavors learned in both the womb and early infancy provide a foundation for food preferences for life. Infants prefer sweet and umami flavors. They reject bitter and sour tastes, perhaps showing a preference for high-calorie, protein-dense foods and an avoidance of potentially toxic or poisonous foods. These preferences can be modified through supportive environment, food availability, and relationships. But research reveals that what we eat growing up—all the way back to the womb—matters. This is interesting in light of the food cravings of the Israelites growing up in Egypt.

19 seventy date palm trees: Exodus 15:27.

21 in for supper: Revelation 3:20.

22 but in our spirits: Thanks to Andrew McGowan for his insightful interview on December 21, 2017. I highly recommend his book, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016)*.

22 "the LORD is good": Psalm 34:8.

Chapter 2: A Flaky Filet of Fish

27 bat and bar mitzvahs: A few days after my departure, Ido sent me a picture of the prime minister of Israel enjoying a meal and afternoon speed boat ride with him on the lake.

27 Jewish Renaissance man: The Decks Restaurant (open in summer) and the Pagoda (open year-round) serve scrumptious food. One of my favorites is the steak which is served over Jerusalem pine and olive charcoal. The sushi is fantastic, too. When you visit, look at the legs of the tables, where you'll find that some are marked with a tuna. This is Ido's signature for the pieces he's built.

27 as they do today: A later visit to the original Yigal Allon Museum in Kibbutz Ginosar, where the boat is displayed near its discovery, confirmed that the boat is only 4.3 feet high. The dimensions make the vessel all the more susceptible to the furious storms that whip up waves on the Galilee. Also, I debated for some time whether to use the word *fishers* or *fishermen* in this chapter since women are incredible fishers, too. Leif reminded me that growing up in Alaska, almost all the women he knew preferred to be called "fishermen" over "fisherwomen" or even "fishers," though women's preferences in twenty-first century Alaska probably has little bearing on first century Israel. For an insightful article on this check out: https://parade.com/544561/rachelweingarten/alaskas-female-fishermen-yes-thats-really-a-thing-on-gender-labels-finding-zen-and-weathering-lifes-storms/.

27 it's nearly swamped: Mark 4:37.

28 "Quiet! Be still.": Mark 4:39.

30 bitters the air: Exodus 7:18. Tyler R. Yoder. *Fishers of Fish and Fishers of Men: Fishing Imagery in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 12–19.

31 fresh fish sticks: Numbers 11:5. Supposedly all these "farmed fish" in Egypt gave the people worms, and so the Israelites likely brought a lot of parasites with them out of Egypt. God led them to the bitter waters of Marah where the people drank what one interpreter supposed is lyme-infused water that would have killed all the parasites in their intestines; hence God's promise that they would not suffer from the diseases of the Egyptians (Exodus 15:22–27). Even though the Israelites craved this Egyptian delicacy, it was in fact killing them.

31 don't worship any fish: Deuteronomy 4:16–18.

31 let God's ark go: 1 Samuel 5:1–7.

32 and the Galilee: King Manasseh constructed the gate (2 Chronicles 33:14) and the sons of Hassenaah rebuilt it (Nehemiah 3:3). The market closed on the Sabbath, but some Jews tried to circumvent the restriction by purchasing from Phoenician fisherman. Nehemiah called them out on this. Also, this is the gate through which Zephaniah predicts that a loud cry will be heard on the Day of the Lord.

32 scales on the skin: https://www.southernliving.com/food/how-to/tips-how-to-cook-fish.

32 "will be overthrown": Jonah 3:4.

32 heart to his people: Isaiah 50:2; Jeremiah 16:16; Amos 4:2; and Zephaniah 1:3.

32 meets the Dead Sea: Ezekiel 47:10.

33 God is involved: Living creatures will teem as the purifying power of God flows like a fountain.

33 good fish from the bad: Matthew 13:48.

33 considered unclean: Leviticus 11:9–10.

35 "for my tax and yours": Matthew 17:24–27.

36 caught with a line: Mendel Nun, *The Sea of Galilee and Its Fishermen in the New Testament* (Israel: Kibbutz Ein Gev, 1989), 45–46.

37 from the shore: John 21:4–6.

39 sounded enormous to me: You'll find it called the Sea of Tiberias as well as the Sea or Lake of Ginosar (or Gennesaret). All of these are referring to the same body of water. The Old Testament uses the name Sea of Kinneret, which means "harp" because of the harp shape of the lake, in referring to its land allotment of the twelve tribes of Israel as well as the borders of the Promised Land.

40 "nets for a catch": Luke 5:4.

40 Simon Peter obliges: Luke 5:5.

40 "Leave me to myself.": Luke 5:8 MSG.

41 follow Jesus: Luke 5:11.

41 write them all down: John 21:25.

41 disappointed in their work: Wilhelm H. Wuellner observes, "The first call is substantively the same as the second call after Easter. Jesus the caller, and himself the called, together with the disciples, the called and themselves the callers are the symbol of the New Israel, the community of the called and the calling, the fished and the fishing, who thus manifest the truth of God as power." Wilhelm H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of "Fisher of Men"* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 172.

42 "net was not torn": John 21:11. People have debated the meaning of the 153 fish, but no single theory has won widespread support. The more likely reason, I believe, is simply that it represents just how many fish were actually caught. Then and today fishermen love to count their catches.

43 miracle on miracle: Nun, *The Sea of Galilee and Its Fishermen in the New Testament*, 43. It's worth noting Peter's catch pales in comparison with the two already overloaded boats.

44 strolled with ease: To see and print a copy of a map of Galilee, visit www.margaretfeinberg.com/tasteandsee.

45 God breathed new life: For more details on the cancer journey, read the *Fight Back with Joy* book and Bible study.

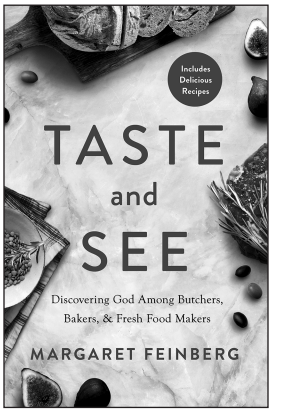
45 "fish" in Greek:
I = Jesus
Ch = Christ
Th = God
Y = Son
S = Savior

46 in safe company: https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2008/august/what-is-origin-of-christian-fish-symbol.html.

Taste and See

Discovering God among Butchers, Bakers, and Fresh Food Makers

Margaret Feinberg



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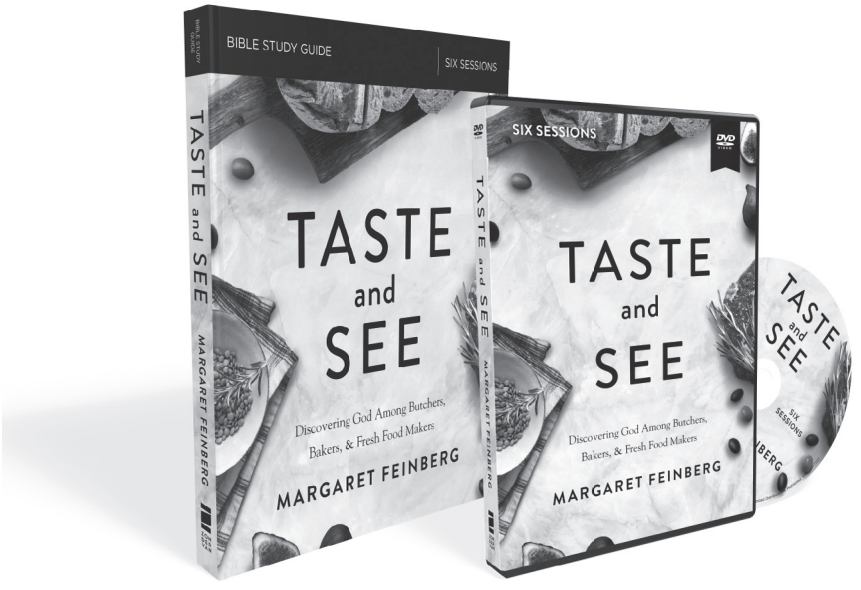

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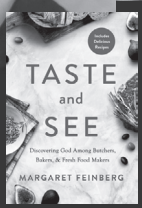

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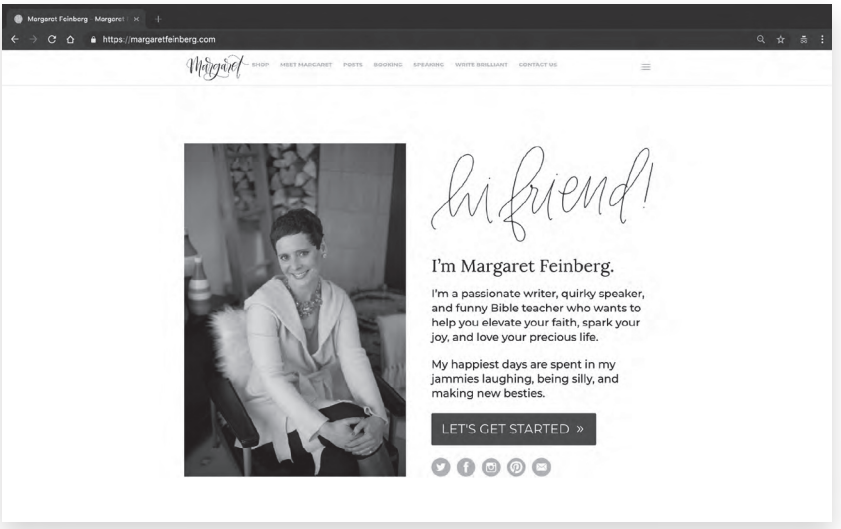

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