

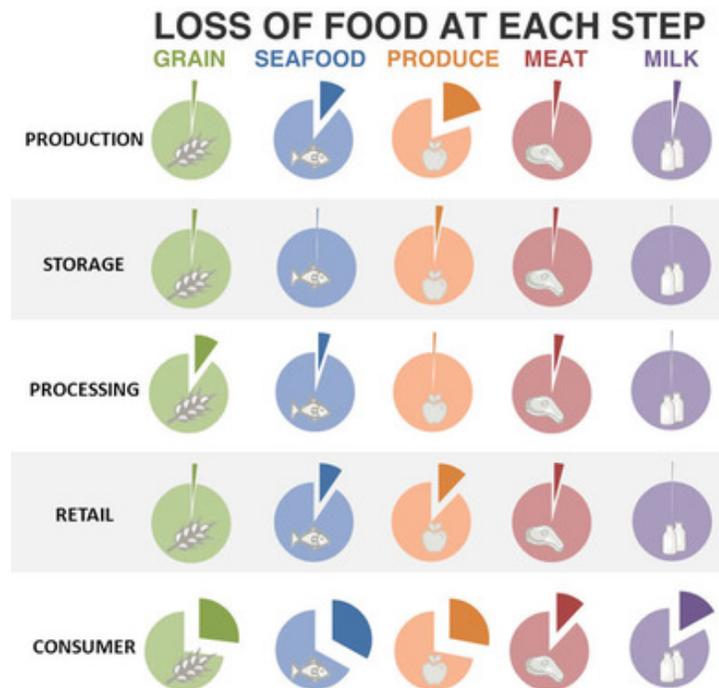
Out of Eden: A Christian Ethics Study Guide to Food and the Environment
Session 5
Food Waste: Are Greed and Gluttony Still Sins?

Part 1: The State of Food Waste in the U.S.

On YouTube, watch the 30 minute video *Tossed Out: Food Waste in America* from 2014.

Discussion Questions:

- How does food get wasted at each stage of bringing it from the farm to your table?



Source: Justin E. Burt, "Food Waste at Each Life Cycle," <http://www.justineburt.com/the-secret-life-of-sustainability/food-waste-at-each-life-cycle-stage>

- What are some things people are doing to reduce waste?

An Alternative Ethic: Let Natural Limits and Moral Limits Constrain Your Choices

‘What Farm-to-Table Got Wrong’

by Dan Barber, *New York Times*, May 17, 2014

(Dan Barber is an award-winning chef and co-owner of the Blue Hill and Blue Hill at Stone Barns restaurants and the author of *The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food*.)

POCANTICO HILLS, N.Y. — IT’S spring again. Hip deep in asparagus — and, soon enough, tomatoes and zucchini — farm-to-table advocates finally have something from the farm to put on the table. The crowds clamoring for just-dug produce at the farmers’ market and the local food co-op suggest that this movement is no longer just a foodie fad. Today, almost 80 percent of Americans say sustainability is a priority when purchasing food. The promise of this kind of majority is that eating local can reshape landscapes and drive lasting change.

Except it hasn’t. More than a decade into the movement, the promise has fallen short. For all its successes, farm-to-table has not, in any fundamental way, reworked the economic and political forces that dictate how our food is grown and raised. Big Food is getting bigger, not smaller. In the last five years, we’ve lost nearly 100,000 farms (mostly midsize ones). Today, 1.1 percent of farms in the United States account for nearly 45 percent of farm revenues. Despite being farm-to-table’s favorite targets, corn and soy account for more than 50 percent of our harvested acres for the first time ever. Between 2006 and 2011, over a million acres of native prairie were plowed up in the so-called Western Corn Belt to make way for these two crops, the most rapid loss of grasslands since we started using tractors to bust sod on the Great Plains in the 1920s.

How do we make sense of this odd duality: a food revolution on one hand, an entrenched status quo on the other? I got a hint of the answer a few years ago, while standing in a field in upstate New York. I was there because, many years before, I’d decided I wanted local flour for my restaurants. I chose Lakeview Organic, a grain farm operated by Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens. Klaas was growing a rare variety of emmer wheat (also known as farro), nearly extinct but for the efforts of a few farmers.

Milled and baked into whole wheat bread, the emmer was a revelation — intensely sweet and nutty. I spoke routinely about the importance of local grain and the resurrection of lost flavors. I was waving the farm-to-table flag and feeling pretty good about it, too. Visiting Klaas those years later, hoping to learn what made the emmer so delicious, I realized I was missing the point entirely. The secret to great-tasting wheat, Klaas told me, is that it’s not about the wheat. It’s about the soil.

In fact, on a tour of his farm, there was surprisingly little wheat to see. Instead, Klaas showed me fields of less-coveted grains and legumes like millet, barley and kidney beans, as well as cover crops like mustard and clover, all of which he plants in meticulously planned rotations. The rotations dictate the quality of the soil, which means they dictate the flavor of the harvests as well. They are the recipe for his delicious emmer.

Each planting in the sequence has a specific function. Klaas likes his field rotations to begin with a cover crop like the mustard plant. Cover crops are often grown to restore nutrients depleted from a previous harvest. Plowed into the soil after maturity, mustard offers the added benefit of reducing pest and disease problems for subsequent crops. Next Klaas will plant a legume, which does the neat trick of fixing nitrogen: grabbing it from the atmosphere and storing it in the plant’s roots. Soybeans are a good choice; or kidney beans, if the local processor is paying enough to make it worth his while; or cowpeas, which he harvests for animal feed. If there’s a dry spell, he’ll forgo beans altogether and pop in some hardy millet. Oats or rye is next; rye builds soil structure and suppresses weeds. Only then is Klaas’s soil locked and loaded with the requisite fertility needed for his wheat.

As much as I cling to tried and true recipes, Klaas doesn’t. Depending on what the soil is telling him, he may roll out an entirely different rotation. If there’s a buildup of fungal disease in the field, the next season he’ll plant a brassica like cabbage or broccoli, followed by buckwheat, and then barley. Barley is among Klaas’s favorite crops. In addition to cleansing the soil of pathogens, it can be planted along with a nitrogen fixer like clover, further benefiting the soil. Once again, the soil is ready for wheat.

Standing in Klaas’s fields, I saw how single-minded I had been. Yes, I was creating a market for local emmer wheat, but I wasn’t doing anything to support the recipe behind it. Championing Klaas’s wheat and only his wheat was

tantamount to treating his farm like a grocery store. I was cherry-picking what I most wanted for my menu without supporting the whole farm.

I am not the only one. In celebrating the All-Stars of the farmers' market — asparagus, heirloom tomatoes, emmer wheat — farm-to-table advocates are often guilty of ignoring a whole class of humbler crops that are required to produce the most delicious food. With limited American demand for local millet, rye and barley, 70 percent of Klaas's harvest was going into livestock feed for chickens, pigs and dairy cattle. In general, Klaas earned pennies on the dollar compared with what he'd make selling his crops for human consumption. And we were missing out as well, on nutritious foods that are staples of the best cuisines in the world. Diversifying our diet to include more local grains and legumes is a delicious first step to improving our food system. Millet and rye are an easy substitute for rice or pasta. But that addresses only the low-hanging fruit of Klaas's farm. More challenging is to think about how to honor the other underutilized parts of his rotations — classic cover crops like cowpeas and mustard, which fertilize the soil to ensure healthy harvests in the future.

Today, the best farmers are tying up valuable real estate for long periods of time (in an agonizingly short growing season) simply to benefit their soil. Imagine if Macy's reserved half of its shelf space at Christmas for charitable donations. A noble idea. But profitable? Not so much. By creating a market for these crops, we can provide more value for the farmer and for our own diets, while supporting the long-term health of the land. In Klaas's field, I bent down and ripped off a green shoot of Austrian winter peas. I took a bite. Inedible? No, delicious! Thirty acres of the most tender and sweet pea shoots I'd ever tasted. (Harvesting the leaves would somewhat reduce the amount plowed back into the soil, but the plant's soil benefits would remain.) In the distance I could make out a field of mustards. Klaas plants Tilney mustard, similar to the spicy green you find in a mesclun mix. I realized I wasn't just looking at a cover crop. I was looking at a salad bowl.

Back at the restaurant, I created a new dish called "Rotation Risotto," a collection of all of Klaas's lowly, soil-supporting grains and legumes, cooked and presented in the manner of a classic risotto. I used a purée of cowpea shoots and mustard greens to thicken the grains and replace the starchiness of rice. As one waiter described the idea, it was a "nose-to-tail approach to the farm" — an edible version of Klaas's farming strategy.

It's one thing for chefs to advocate cooking with the whole farm; it's another thing to make these uncelebrated crops staples in ordinary kitchens. Bridging that divide will require a new network of regional processors and distributors. Take beer, for example. The explosion in local microbreweries has meant a demand for local barley malt. A new malting facility near Klaas's farm recently opened in response. He now earns 30 percent more selling barley for malt than he did selling it for animal feed. For other farmers, it's a convincing incentive to diversify their grain crops. Investing in the right infrastructure means the difference between a farmer's growing crops for cows or for cafeterias. It will take the shape of more local mills (for grains), canneries (for beans) and processors (for greens). As heretical as this may sound, farm-to-table needs to embrace a few more middlemen.

Perhaps the problem with the farm-to-table movement is implicit in its name. Imagining the food chain as a field on one end and a plate of food at the other is not only reductive, it also puts us in the position of end users. It's a passive system — a grocery-aisle mentality — when really, as cooks and eaters, we need to engage in the nuts and bolts of true agricultural sustainability. Flavor can be our guide to reshaping our diets, and our landscapes, from the ground up.'

Discussion Question

- Let's say you decide to pick food not based on what you want to eat in the moment, but based on what's healthiest for the soil, and the environment, and our future children's health. What questions would you have to research in order to do that? For example, if you don't eat summer fruit (strawberries, blueberries, peaches) in the winter because of its high transportation cost, what fruit can you have in winter?

Part Two: Why Were Greed and Gluttony Sinful?

<p>‘Greed, for lack of a better word, is good! Greed is right! Greed works! Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed, in all of its forms... has marked the upward surge of mankind.’ (Gordon Gekko, <i>Wall Street</i>)</p> <p>‘Greed is good to most economists. It’s greed that makes people work harder, be more productive and helps the economy grow.’ (Rebecca M. Blank, Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, former Acting U.S. Secretary of Commerce)</p> <p>‘We have to accept that inequality is a way of achieving greater opportunity and prosperity for all.’ (Lord Griffiths, Vice Chairman of Goldman Sachs, 2009)</p>	<p>¹⁹ When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰ When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. ²¹ When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. ²² You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing. (Deuteronomy 24:19 – 22)</p> <p>¹ When you sit to dine with a ruler, note well what is before you, ² and put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony. ³ Do not crave his delicacies, for that food is deceptive. ⁴ Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. ⁵ Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle. (Proverbs 23:1 – 5)</p> <p>¹⁶ If you find honey, eat just enough— too much of it, and you will vomit. (Proverbs 25:16)</p> <p>⁶ Better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a rich man whose ways are perverse. ⁷ He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father. ⁸ He who increases his wealth by usury amasses it for another, who will be kind to the poor. (Proverbs 28:6 – 8)</p> <p>⁴⁹Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. (Ezekiel 16:49)</p> <p>¹⁹Their end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. (Philippians 3:19)</p>
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Historical and Cultural Background

- The quotations on the right have been selected to show the uniformity of opinion over a 1200+ years in the biblical tradition.
- *Deuteronomy* was composed around 1200 BCE, according to tradition. It is one of the first five books of the Bible – the ‘books of Moses’ or Torah– which are foundational documents, like a charter or constitution, to biblical Israel.
- The *Book of Proverbs* in the Hebrew Bible was compiled under the name of King Solomon, who reigned in the mid 900’s BCE. These witty sayings, or proverbs, were crafted by ancient Israelites based on their experience of faith, life, God’s law, and intellect.
- The *Book of Ezekiel* was named for a Jewish priest at around the time of the Babylonian invasion of 586 BCE. He drew a parallel between the fates of Jerusalem and the infamous city Sodom.
- *Philippians* was written by the Jewish Christian leader Paul who wrote many letters which are compiled in the New Testament. He wrote it from a Roman prison, 60 – 62 AD.

Discussion Questions

- According to the quotes on the left, greed and gluttony are virtues in an economic system where they can be harnessed. Have they been harnessed? Or have they overtaken the system? When is greed too much?
- In the various passages on the right, what are the reasons connected to the Bible's challenge to greed and gluttony?

Action Steps

- Farm to Store:
 - Support local farmers, shop at farmers' markets, etc. because it often cuts down on energy costs of transport, although know your location's specialties and ask about healthy soil practices¹
 - Support modern-day gleaning
- Store to Kitchen (40% of food waste):
 - Ask for 'ugly' produce at the stores and buy it
 - Shop at stores that make jams and soups with slightly old or bruised produce
 - Shop at stores that sell food through food rescue programs (e.g. *Daily Table* in Boston)
 - Ask stores to DonateNotDump; inform stores about the Bill Emerson Act of 1996
- Kitchen to Waste (15 – 20% of food waste in U.S.):
 - Plan your meals, respect the seasons of nature
 - Eat from the back of the fridge
 - Compost your scraps
 - Ask your cafeterias (companies, schools, hospitals, universities) to DonateNotDump

Close: Two Inspiring Stories – Society of St. Andrew, Daily Table

'The Society of St. Andrew was formed in 1979 as an intentional community of two families called to life and ministry together in Christ. It has grown into an ecumenical, non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to leading others into lives of Christian community and service. Our ministry prevents more than 30 million pounds of food going to waste each year. Society of St. Andrew food salvage programs have a positive impact on the environment by reducing landfill waste by as much as 30 million pounds a year. Instead of harming the environment, this food instead feeds hungry Americans.'²

'Daily Table receives shipments of excess food donations from groceries, suppliers, and food rescue organizations throughout Greater Boston, sometimes without much warning. Then, Samad and his team must find ways to make healthy food on the fly, using creative methods to prep, prepare, preserve, and serve inexpensive food for its low-income neighborhood store, all while ensuring as little as possible goes to waste (it's like the Food Network's hit show *Chopped*, only the one with the fewest leftovers wins). Adding to the challenge: All of their prepared meals must meet their strict nutritional guidelines. Remarkably, most meals cost from \$2 to \$4, allowing shoppers using food stamps to get the most for their money. Facing that mountain of carrots... they create a trio of recipes: They'll be mashed, mixed into carrot ginger soup, and shredded into slaw. Red snapper and radicchio are fresh and will be used in prepared meals, made from scratch on site by a team of chefs who mostly live within 2 miles of the store. Loaves of sourdough approaching their stale date will be made into bread crumbs and croutons. Overripe apples and strawberries are pureed into smoothies, while veggies past their prime go into stock for soups. The team relies on freezers to keep stockpiles that can be used days or weeks out. "Everything about Daily Table is not normal," Samad jokes. But he might be uniquely suited to handle the endeavor. He's a co-owner and former head chef of The Gleanery, a restaurant in Putney, Vermont, that uses the same food-rescue principles in its meals... Daily Table has seen a steady growth in its sales and members, selling 400 prepared meals a day. The market is hoping to expand to a second storefront by year's end.'³

¹ Dan Barber, 'What Farm to Table Got Wrong,' *New York Times*, May 17, 2014, which I reproduced above, and Dan Barber, *The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015)

² from their website, www.endhunger.org (last accessed August 21, 2016); Elizabeth Royte, 'One-Third of Food Is Lost or Wasted: What Can Be Done,' *National Geographic*, October 13, 2014 notes, 'At the grassroots level, gangs of Boy Scouts, Future Farmers of America, and church groups organized by the Society of St. Andrew inch through the nation's farm fields, gleaning more than 20 million pounds of produce a year for food pantries and kitchens.'

³ Janelle Nanos, 'Daily Table is on a Mission to Stop Food Waste and Feed the Hungry,' *Boston Globe*, May 13, 2016

Leader's Notes

Part 1: The State of Food Waste in the U.S.

Note: I did not footnote my sources at each line. Most of my information comes from:

- Peter Lehrner, 'A Recipe for Cutting Food Waste,' *TED Talks*, Mar 4, 2013: a 15 minute talk
- Justin E. Burt, Food Waste at Each Life Cycle, Resilience, Dec 6, 2013: great infographic
- NET Nebraska, Tossed Out: Food Waste in America, Sep 26, 2014: a 30 minute documentary
- Elizabeth Royte, 'One-Third of Food Is Lost or Wasted: What Can Be Done,' *National Geographic*, Oct 13, 2014
- Roff Smith, 'How Reducing Food Waste Could Ease Climate Change,' *National Geographic*, Jan 22, 2015

1. What's the magnitude of the problem?
 - a. Food waste has increased by 50% since 1974 (2009 study cited by John Oliver, *Food Waste*)
 - b. Pound for pound, more food waste goes into landfills than any other single source of waste.
 - i. Glass: 8 million tons
 - ii. Cardboard and paper: 24 million tons
 - iii. Food: 35 million tons; 20% of the landfill is food
 1. 100 Empire State Buildings worth of food
 2. In 1 day, could feed the Denver Metro Area for 10 weeks – more than 2 million people could eat from New Years to St. Patrick's Day
 3. Estimated at \$165 billion, which is more than the annual budgets for America's national parks, public libraries, veterans' health care, federal prisons, and the FDA combined!!
 4. Farming food that gets wasted contributes to senseless fossil fuel depletion, water depletion, deforestation, etc.
 - c. Meanwhile, so many Americans go hungry.
 - i. Some 41 – 50 million Americans have trouble buying food, maybe 1 of 7.
2. How does food get wasted at each stage of bringing it from the farm to your table?
 - a. From farm to store:
 - i. From the farm, 40% of all food gets thrown away and never makes it to your table. Stores believe customers won't buy 'ugly produce.' See the National Geographic cover.
 - ii. Food in warehouses expire
 - iii. Food in stores are thrown away – at least 10% of all food
 - b. From store to table:
 - i. Average American family throws out 15 – 20% of the food we buy. \$2000 on food you don't eat per year. We spend 10% of our disposable income on food.
 - ii. 25% of water consumed in the US is spent growing crops we don't eat
 - iii. 20% of fish caught are thrown out dead before it gets to the dock
 - iv. It's like air conditioning empty buildings
 - v. The average American throws out 25 pounds of food per person per month. That's about \$170 per month for a family of four. That's double than the amount of food we wasted a generation ago (30 – 40 years).
3. What are some things people are doing to reduce waste? Solutions:
 - a. Landfill: Methane is 20 – 25 times stronger than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas.
 - i. Lincoln, NE: Landfills can pipe methane to a gas burning depot. 3200 homes are powered by organic waste gas. But that's not a solution to the problem.
 - b. Landfill: 85% of the stuff that goes to the landfill is compostable.
 - i. ConAgra (a company in Omaha, NE) diverts 90% of its food waste to compost or animal feed
 - ii. At the Colorado School of Mines, Dr. Cornejo (Denver, CO) can turn organic waste into gorilla glass, the material your smart phone screen is made out of
 - iii. University of Iowa Hospitals (serving 10,000 meals/day) sends food scraps and compostable packages are sent to compost piles. Leftovers are shared with a local food bank.
 - iv. Iowa City partnered with the EPA to measure food waste among families.

- c. Farm: Manure is a form of food waste. You can use manure with food waste to make compost.
 - d. Store: Buy food that is close to or even past the expiration date. The only real safety date that applies is baby formula.
 - i. Relax cosmetic standards
 - ii. Mark down products
 - iii. Repurpose food within stores
 - 1. Fruits a little overripe can be made into jams and juices
 - 2. Veggies that are a little wilted can be turned into soup in the deli
 - iv. Donate foods to non-profits
 - 1. 13% of the excess food so far
 - 2. Local food rescue programs, or a food bank
 - v. Feed animals
 - vi. Compost, which is good but it only recovers 1% of the total energy that went into the food
 - e. Government policy: We can design programs and as a result, farmers and manufacturers changed their standards
 - i. Example: The average refrigerator is bigger, fancier, more efficient, and costs less – it uses 25% of the energy as they did 30 years ago
 - ii. Farm: 6 billion pounds of crops goes unharvested every year. Up to 30% of the food lies unharvested because of bad size or color, or pests (food loss is a different category than food waste).
 - 1. 5% of coffee beans are big or cracked or black or have holes in them, and are thrown away.
 - 2. Juices and jams can be made from misshapen fruit; England has a program called *From Rubies to Rubble* to make gourmet chutneys
 - 3. CA has a program called *From Farm to Family* to feed needy families – 100 million families are fed a year
 - iii. Supermarkets
 - 1. Wastes 10% of food, loses \$50 billion on food waste
 - 2. Jose Alvarez, CEO of Stop & Shop changed how the stores display the food. They put out less. The motto used to be ‘stack them high and see them fly.’ But that wasted a lot of food, or put too much weight on the bottom, and the bottom never sold. As a result, Stop & Shop saved \$100 million/year.
 - 3. Policy change needed: To feed animals
 - 4. Expiration dates: People get confused, so they throw things away. The UK and manufacturers standardized labels. No more display by, sell by, best by labels. That simple change meant consumer food waste went down.
 - iv. Schools: Sodexo piloted tray-less cafeterias in schools, so students didn’t load up a tray with food they wouldn’t eat. That simple move reduced food waste by 30%.
 - v. Sports Stadiums: The NY Yankees compost their waste instead of sending it to the landfill.
 - vi. In England, a program *Love Food Hate Waste* reduced food waste by almost 20%. A lot of it was just consumer awareness and promoted freezing food before it spoiled so you can eat it later, taking a doggie bag to restaurants so you can eat it later, etc. The UK has announced a food waste reduction goal of 50% by the year 2020.
4. What about the article ‘What Farm-to-Table Got Wrong’ by Dan Barber?
- a. This article shows the importance of understanding long term soil health and sustainability. The key idea is: What would it be like to learn to live within natural limits? If we were to eat NOT according to our tastes and appetite in the moment, but according to what the land produces for us in its most optimal sense, then that would definitely be a challenge for most of us. But most people for most of history had to think that way.
 - b. The exercise would depend on where you live exactly. The idea is to think of what resources are closest to you in their most natural form, too. If you live in a tropical climate, your diet might not change that much. If you live in a very seasonal climate, it would.
 - c. The exercise also shows our level of ignorance. Many of us, especially in urban areas, don’t know much about land and crops. It’s a little scary that we don’t know what we don’t know.

- d. To see a list of fruit and vegetables by season, see the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Seasonal Produce Guide: <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-through-seasons/seasonal-produce/>

Part Two: Why Were Greed and Gluttony Sinful?

- 5. According to the quotes on the left, greed is a virtue in an economic system where it can be harnessed.
 - a. What have you learned about when greed goes beyond limits?
 - i. When we like the feeling of having options
 - 1. Like going into the store and seeing lots of options. But most of those options are just combinations of corn and sugar.
 - ii. When we waste things that could be used
 - iii. When we don't consider our future children
 - b. When do we know when some greed is too much?
 - i. I don't know if we do know.
 - ii. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith said, 'The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in philosophy; that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness.'
 - iii. Economist Adam Smith said, 'To feel much for others and little for ourselves, to restrain our selfishness and exercise our benevolent affections, constitute the perfection of human nature.' That's important because Adam Smith is the economist who is credited with coining the phrase 'the invisible hand of the market' which makes good things happen even when everyone is pursuing their own self-interest. But he had a certain legal framework in mind, limiting capital and empowering labor, for example, along with a Christian culture.⁴ That's why he wrote *Theory of Moral Sentiments* before *The Wealth of Nations*. But we tend to forget that.
- 6. In the various passages on the right, what are the reasons connected to the Bible's challenge to greed and gluttony?
 - a. Deuteronomy 24:
 - i. Greed and gluttony lead you to neglect the poor
 - ii. The law of gleaning in Deuteronomy limits the farmer or harvester and gives the poor the right to benefit from God's creation. It shows that God still regarded the land and its blessings to be His (Lev.25:13). So He didn't allow people to claim it selfishly or individualistically. Note that 'alien' would be the equivalent of 'undocumented immigrant' today. God wanted Israel to care for immigrants.
 - iii. For Israel, which was a farm-based community, it was an act of trust in God to believe that He would provide for them.
 - b. Proverbs 23:
 - i. Greed and gluttony make you a pawn. Other people (e.g. 'the king' or other rich people) could manipulate you through your appetite.
 - ii. Illus: Check out this story, published in the *UK Daily Mail* from November 15, 2014. The title is, 'From half-time to harvest: How NFL center gave up \$37million football contract to farm cucumbers and sweet potatoes.' It's a touching story of faith and service to other people through food.

'An NFL center who was offered a \$35million contract to play for the St Louis Rams gave it all up to start a farm near his home. Jason Brown, 31, left football behind to grow sweet potatoes in his home county of Louisburg, North Carolina - despite being ranked one of the best players in the league. Brown decided his Christian faith would be better served by growing food for the needy than throwing balls on a pitch - and told his stunned agent he was turning down the

⁴ Larry Elliot, 'Plc: Prerogative of the Unaccountable Few: Adam Smith Argued for Free Trade and Self-Interest, But Not This Kind of Capitalism,' *The Guardian*, July 8, 2007; David J. Davis, 'Adam Smith, Communitarian,' *The American Conservative*, December 19, 2013, a book review of Jack Russell Weinstein's book *Adam Smith's Pluralism: Rationality, Education, and the Moral Sentiments* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013)

lucrative deal with the Rams in April 2012. He was told the move was ‘the biggest mistake of your life’ - but was adamant that returning to his rural homeland and taking up agriculture was the best decision he could make, CBS reported. Brown said God’s plan was for him to start farming - even though he had no idea how - and to distribute the food that he grew. So Brown bought a 1,000-acre farm and used YouTube tutorials - and advice from local farmers - to start cultivating cucumbers and sweet potatoes on his plot. ‘When you see them pop up out of the ground, man, it’s the most beautiful thing you could ever see’, he said. After years of work restoring the land - dubbed First Fruits Farm - to arable condition, Brown has just given away his first crop - 100,000lbs of sweet potatoes. Writing on his farm’s website, Brown said: ‘God revealed to me that he had something greater in store for me and that my family should move back to my home state of North Carolina and start a farm. ‘This really caught us by surprise because we knew nothing about farming. Yet, out of obedience, we started looking for available farmland. ‘This is when Tay [his wife] and I made a covenant with God and told Him that whatever place He blessed us with, we would name it FirstFruits Farm and that his people would receive the FirstFruits of whatever is produced from the land.’ Brown has said he aims to give away twice as much next year.’⁵

c. Proverbs 25:

- i. Your body can’t actually handle that much sweets, even though your taste buds crave it. Your appetite is not always a trustworthy source of information to your mind.
- ii. Vomiting food is a waste of it. You could enjoy things tomorrow if you eat less of it today.
- iii. Notice that honey is something that never spoils. They knew that. This is something nice that you could save.

d. Proverbs 28:

- i. Greed and gluttony lead you to take advantage of others.
- ii. Proverbs 28 is about using wealth to take advantage of others by lending them money to make a profit. I know this raises lots of questions because our entire economy is based off interest-rate lending. But it’s a problem for us, too.
- iii. The proverb is referring to ‘the law’ of Moses. Usury (lending money at interest) was prohibited (Ex.22:26 – 27; Lev.25:35 – 38, Dt.23:19; Ps.15:5; Prov.28:7 – 9; Ezk.18:10 – 18, 22:12; Hab.2:6 – 7; Neh.5:1 – 15) because compassion should not be profit-making, nor debt-accumulating for the recipient. Charging usury was considered theft of a person’s labor. There was no usury-driven finance in Israel. There could be equity sharing, and therefore sharing of responsibility and liability, but not debt-financing.
- iv. Also in Jewish law: Holding a person in debt more than seven years, or past the Jubilee year (whichever happens first), is prohibited (Lev.25:35 – 43; Dt.15:1 – 18). This means that God put a concrete and early limit to the leading cause of enslavement, debt-bondage, throughout the Ancient Near East. Israel was totally exceptional in this. Again, this is appropriate for a people delivered from slavery in Egypt. Thus, redemption from financial debt is often paralleled to redemption from Egypt.
- v. Just think about how our banks and credit card companies take advantage of us. Who profits off of student loan debt? Colleges and the government and *banks*. Who profits off our houses and mortgages being bigger and bigger? Real estate developers and *banks*. Who profits when you can’t pay your credit card company? They get to raise your interest rate to 20% or more!
- vi. Illus: Leader illustrate this principle.

e. Ezekiel 16

- i. It’s surprising to see the quote from Ezekiel about the city of Sodom. Many conservative Christians and conservatives in general think of Sodom and Gomorrah from Genesis 19

⁵ Kieran Corcoran, ‘From Half-Time to Harvest: How NFL Center Gave up \$37 Million Football Contract to Farm Cucumbers and Sweet Potatoes,’ *Mail Online*, November 15, 2014

as destroyed because of gay sex. Sodom is where we get the term ‘sodomy.’ Ezekiel remembers it differently. It’s about not caring for the poor. It seems like anal rape was used as a weapon of domination, which is part of its cruelty, and that was also a problem to God (Jude 1:7).

- ii. Illus: This comes from Thomas Cahill, an historian who writes for the popular audience, in his 1998 book *The Gifts of the Jews*. It’s quite readable, and conveys the same basic message as the more scholarly Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (1988):

‘In a cyclical world, there are neither beginnings nor ends. But for us, time had a beginning, whether it was the first words of God in the Book of Genesis, when ‘in the beginning God created heaven and earth,’ or the Big Bang of modern science, a concept that would not have been possible without the Jews. Time, which had a beginning, must also have an end. What will it be? In the Torah we learn that God is working his purposes in history and will effect its end, but in the Prophets we learn that our choices will also affect this end, **that our inner disposition toward our fellow human beings will make an enormous difference in the way this end appears to us**. Unbelievers may wish to stop for a moment and consider how completely God – this Jewish God of justice and compassion – undergirds all our values and that it is just possible that human effort without this God is doomed to certain failure. Humanity’s most extravagant dreams are articulated by the Jewish prophets. In Isaiah’s vision, true faith is no longer confined to one nation, but ‘all the nations’ stream to the House of YHWH ‘that he may teach us his ways’ and that we may learn to ‘beat [our] swords into plowshares.’ All who share this outrageous dream of universal brotherhood, peace, and justice, who dream the dreams and see the visions of the great prophets, must bring themselves to contemplate the possibility that without God there is no justice.’⁶

- f. Philippians 3
 - i. Greed and gluttony train your appetites and desires in the wrong direction.
 - ii. Ultimately, the Philippians quote makes it a question of eternal destiny!
 - iii. This is much like what we’ve covered: You start to really want food that looks pretty.
7. For encouragement, read the action items, and the last two items there about the Society of St. Andrew and Daily Table. Figure out what steps you want to take individually and/or as a group.

⁶ Thomas Cahill, *The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels* (Thorndike, ME: G.K. Hall & Co., 1998), p.265 – 266