

Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life

Thrive with us by following on Instagram and YouTube
@FlagNazChurch, @FlagNazYouth and FlagNaz.org



Eat Right

What *foods* (words, thoughts, feelings) do you eat that block your ability to experience the goodness of God?

With what good *foods* could you replace those that are poisoning your heart and mind?

How will you improve at loving in truth and action if you improve your *diet*?

Genesis 2:15-17 – ¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

I) Regional Fare...

Many regional diets based on local ingredients are associated with good health. The health benefits result from the holistic lifestyle, not just the diet. Generations learn and pass down knowledge of local plants and wildlife, where to find them, how to identify them. There is intimacy between us, God, His land, and its produce. God’s purpose for originally locating us in the garden is a total intertwining of Himself with the best of His creation. He invites us to rediscover this through His Son Jesus.

♦ **Fertile ground:** Today, we can enjoy regional diets from afar. Few think about the origins of the ingredients because they come to us. As do the recipes and cooking techniques. Yet we cannot enjoy the full regional lifestyle at a distance. For that, we must be in the land. Proximity allows observation and participation. We watch life spring from soil and sea, marveling at God’s ongoing creation. We see the response to the sun and rain. We tend, mend, groom, and prune. God wills that we experience this abundance and for this purpose He “took the man and put him in the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15).”

◆ **Place of purpose:** Many have become food tourists. These travel to enjoy authentic regional cuisine. In some cases, they briefly participate, learning how to prepare some dish or entering forests and gardens to forage ingredients. These recognize the innate goodness of unity with the land and God who brings life from it. The experience offers a glimpse into God's purpose for our lives in each place. He placed us in the garden "to till it and keep it (v15)." This purpose predates the curse on the land that "in toil you shall eat of it (Gen 3:17)." Tilling and keeping is not labor—it is a lifestyle integrating God, land, their collective abundance, and us. A life of worship.

II) Land of Plenty...

Unsurprisingly, many cultures develop regional fare heavy in plentiful ingredients. Locals pay close attention to the health properties of various plants and animals. Some promote general health, others offer healing for specific illnesses. We benefit fully from the regional cuisine as we embrace the local lifestyle. That includes learning what is edible, foods appropriate for different situations, how to integrate food into daily life to bring about our best. God did not abandon us to learn these on our own through trial and error. God wills that we rejoice in His good creation, not suffer through discovering what is good.

◆ **Clear instructions:** Caretakers of local traditions pride themselves in teaching their offspring their way of life. They teach about the land, the life that comes from it, how to live well as a part of this creation. They share stories that reveal how and when God brings forth certain foods, abundant places to forage or hunt, how to identify good food. Generations pass down knowledge essential to living well. In the beginning, God shared with us His perfect knowledge of that which is good. "And the Lord God commanded the man... (Gen 2:16)." He graciously instructed us how to live well.

◆ **Wide variety:** Coastal regions are plentiful in fish and seafood. Plains are rich in grains and livestock. Forests in fruits and berries. Each influences the delicacies of regional cuisine. We know where to travel or the type of restaurant at which to dine for a particular kind of food. God placed us in His garden full of "every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food (v9)." He commands us "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden (v16)." Not a few of the trees, but every tree. This suggests great variety in life—our getting to know each kind of tree, how to harvest its fruit, the delicious combinations, their seasons. This is not a restrictive command. It is freedom to design a

regional cuisine of endless possibilities. But not every possibility is good.

III) Avoid the Poison...

In lands of plenty there are also deadly things. Toxic mushrooms, berries, herbs, and fish. Inexperienced foragers risk misidentifying species and making people ill. Wellbeing associated with a regional diet requires the wisdom to know the healthy foods to use and the unhealthy foods to avoid. Not just the foods that are unhealthy, but also the places that are dangerous for hunting and gathering. God grants us this wisdom as we remain near Him and His land. When Jesus invites us to follow Him, He offers to be our guide into and within the land of plenty. As a guide, He teaches us about the land and how to live in it. His commands are wisdom leading us out of danger and into our best.

◆ **For your good:** Our ancestors who have enjoyed the good life offered by the land revere all its creatures. They point out those good for food and those better left alone. They do not label the dangerous bad, just inedible. They understand that all life has purpose. Perceiving everything as food is a self-centered perspective. The humble and curious seek to know how each being contributes to the health of the land and all in it. This was true in the garden, in which grew "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v9)." In His command, God told us "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat (v17)." God is loving and kind, sharing with us His wisdom of what is for our good and what will harm us.

◆ **That will kill you:** Learning from a local expert, they describe which species are full of deadly toxins. Those proud of their regional lifestyle want to share their joy in it, not suffer because of it. God's glory is in His creation and those who enjoy it. His will is that we live well and thrive. He explains, "for in the day that you eat of it you shall die (v17)." This knowledge is poison. We believe it is all we need to know to live well. It isn't. From it springs a lifestyle of judgment, pain, and suffering. The antidote is Jesus's blood which heals us from the deadly condition. Returning to the regional lifestyle of the garden restores us to full health. It starts with food for the heart and mind. "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Phil 4:8)." We can reset our lives and thrive by loving in truth and action. It begins with eating right.