



TASTING GRACE

DISCOVERING THE POWER OF FOOD
TO CONNECT US TO GOD,
ONE ANOTHER, AND OURSELVES

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A Companion Reader and Book Club Guide
for Deeper Study and Reflection

How To Use This Guide

I wrote this guide imagining a group of friends gathering at the table to break bread together while they talked about food and God and connection. I picture friends reading chapters of *Tasting Grace* and the corresponding discussion guide pages, and then meeting to share conversation over food. In this guide, I've included some suggested questions to ask one another in the section called "Table Talk" as well as a recipe idea under the section "Around the Table." The recipes listed can be found by visiting melissadarabian.net/bookclubrecipes

Perhaps you will find some inspiration to ask your own questions, and share your own recipes. And if you are looking for some more conversation starters, you can find them in the "RSVP" section at the end of every chapter in *Tasting Grace*.

When we share food, we share life, even when we don't realize it's happening. So, my hope is that this guide will do more than invite you to share your thoughts about a book chapter, or even the food you eat together. My hope is that you share your lives with one another, one simple meal at a time and that you let the table where you gather be witness to your rich stories. And for that, there are really no rules.

—Melissa



Chapter 1 Compassion

*Jesus used food to bring people together and to feed both bodies and souls.
God uses food to bring us together, and to unify us in common need and satisfaction.*

TABLE TALK

- * Describe a time when you were hungry—either physically or spiritually. What did you feel? Where did you turn for filling? If you found satisfaction, how?
- * Describe a time when you were satisfied both physically and spiritually with a meal? What did you eat? What did you feel? Who was with you? How did you think of God in that moment?

Hunger pangs rumble deep in the belly. They do not apologize for their volume or timing. Pangs do not ask for forgiveness for the way they interrupt the quiet with their growling reaction to the aroma of food just out of reach, or the thought of a favorite meal. They voice their displeasure with the reality of unmet needs.

“Feed me,” they say, “and I will no longer need to cry out.”

Compassion does the same thing. The word in the Old Testament is “rachamim” (pronounced rock-a-meme, with a bit of throat-clearing on the “rock”). Rachamim can literally be translated as “the womb.” Compassion, then, is the feeling of deep tenderness that a mother has toward the baby in her womb. As a mother longs and aches for the child of her womb to be taken care of, so God cares for those He has made.

Just as deep hunger pangs do not care if we are sitting in a meeting or participating in a moment of silence, so God calls us not to silence our compassion. He has never quieted His compassion toward us. He pours out every good and perfect gift from above (James 1:17).

Scripture says that creation groans with the longing for renewal—we groan, we rumble, we long from our very depths to be satisfied. Our stomachs will groan when we are hungry. Our spirits will rumble within us when we feel that we lack what we need. And our souls cry out—loudly—to be satisfied with the goodness of God.

AROUND THE TABLE

Create a meal out of God’s humble, but beautiful ingredients, focusing on foods that are affordable and accessible. Notice as you eat, how the food fills a longing in the center of your body.

Recipe to try: Red Lentils and Quinoa



Chapter 2 Comfort

God can use food to remind us that he is the ultimate redeemer. When we share food with one another, we get a glimpse into God's love.

TABLE TALK

*** Who can you sit with in their grief or pain? How can you mirror Jesus in weeping with those who weep and providing neither quick fixes nor attempts at erasing pain, but fellowship in suffering? What physical need can you be part of meeting for a hurting person?**

In our immediate-satisfaction society where “comfort” is a word used to brand everything from mattresses to chocolate ice cream, it’s easy to conflate the concept of comfort with material possessions, wealth, or instant gratification. But the biblical picture of comfort—and the comfort our souls cry out for—runs so much deeper.

Henri Nouwen writes, “One of the greatest gifts we can give others is ourselves. We offer consolation and comfort, especially in moments of crisis, when we say: ‘Do not be afraid, I know what you are living and I am living it with you. You are not alone.’ Thus, we become Christ-like shepherds.”

This, of course, is the comfort that Jesus Himself offers to us. He became a man and dwelled among us, experiencing the physical sensation of hunger and the spiritual longing for human friendship, just like we do. Comfort, Jesus shows us, does not come through quick fixes or numbing ourselves from the pain of grief. Rather, comfort arises from the low and deep and dark places as we welcome the presence of God and those who love Him into our sorrow. Comfort is sometimes just showing up.

AROUND THE TABLE

Consider having a meal tucked away in the freezer to give at a moment’s notice to a friend or neighbor in need of comfort. Make a double batch of a freezer-friendly meal with some friends. Enjoy the first batch together and freeze the second batch.

Recipe to try: Beef and Bechamel Lasagna



Chapter 3 Creation

God is the Creator of all, and we create, too. We don't have to be "creative" to be "creators." Especially in the kitchen, the pressure is off. We can lean into God's glorious ingredients, whether we do a little (slice a juicy peach and serve), or a lot (a deliciously labor-intensive recipe like Boeuf Bourguignon).

TABLE TALK

- * Whatever "wasteful beauty"—food will be consumed after all!—God may be calling you to create, what is one step you can take toward it this week? Where do you see God on your plate?
- * Reflect on your relationship to the term or practice of creativity over the course of your life. How might God want to encourage you in creativity, or redeem your perspective of it?

Because God is the Creator and we are made in God's image, each and every person is creative, too. Just as some of us have to put more effort into being hospitable, or generous, or just than others, so some of us will more easily practice creativity while others have to cultivate it intentionally. Wherever you find yourself on the spectrum of creativity, this much is true—the Creator God mirrored Himself in you, and you are commissioned to create.

Might God be calling you to mirror in Him a similar joy of making—whether from a 3-ingredient cookie recipe to be delivered to a neighbor or a 5-course meal stretched out over hours in your dining room?

AROUND THE TABLE

Make a meal where you showcase both a simple and a more complicated take on an ingredient. For example, slice a tomato and sprinkle with a pinch of kosher salt and some herbs. And make a more complicated tomato dish too. Notice where you see God's fingerprints in both dishes.

Recipe to try: Tomato Tart



Chapter 4 Authenticity

God has the long view, and we can trust him with the results, giving us permission to drop our masks and show up for life, embracing our true selves. Just as we love avocados for being their creamy luscious selves and we appreciate an apple for its crisp, fresh bite, we can celebrate that we are all different. We can trust that we are valuable and enough today, just as we are.

TABLE TALK

- * Who in your life can you share a meal with and help one another on the road toward greater authenticity in yourselves, your friendships, and your relationship with God?
- * What would it look like to show up in the kitchen to do the worthy work of cooking, without a recipe, and let God be in charge of the results?
- * How do you think about the relationship between the work you do and who you authentically are?

Here's one of the tricky things about creativity—it can be an outpouring of our genuine love for beauty and a reflection of God. It can also be a shield we hide our real selves behind, like a photographer who sometimes uses the camera to shield herself from participating in a gathering, or an actor who throws himself into his roles in order to avoid determining who he, himself, really is.

There isn't always a way to know which way a person is operating, even in ourselves, which is why grace is so important. Practicing grace for others, and ourselves, is a habit that is hard. But we can begin with grace in the kitchen.

AROUND THE TABLE

Consider making a dish based on whatever you have in the fridge and pantry right now. No recipe. Just taste as you go and listen for God in the ingredients. (And if you want a blueprint, try my **4-Step Chicken**.)



Chapter 5 Grace

Like many gifts, food and drink can be used in wrong ways. When we put creation above the Creator, we creep into darkness. God is more generous than we could ever imagine, and his grace truly is sufficient. From reading the story of manna in Exodus to witnessing a juicy plum grow on a tree, we can see God's grace in every bite of food we take.

TABLE TALK

- * What feelings arise in you as you think about the concept of grace?
- * What is a broken part of your heart that God wants to bring grace to today? Write, draw, list-make, or speak aloud a prayer asking God to help you receive His grace.

The theme of grace runs throughout Scripture—the story of a loving, perfect God giving of Himself in order to bring imperfect people into fellowship with the Trinity.

In Romans 3:23–24, we read, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

Hebrews 4:16 beckons us to “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

1 Peter 4:10 says, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”

God begins with extending His grace to us by redeeming us through the resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Because of that initial act of grace, we can now approach God’s throne of grace, not afraid of punishment, but content, as children running to a loving parent’s arms to have their needs met. And then, not only do we have an irrevocable, grace-filled relationship with God, but we are filled with grace ourselves and given the honor of stewarding God’s grace in the world.

Grace, of course, can be hard to accept. Our culture celebrates independence, hard work, and striving. To sit back and receive, and all the more to admit that we cannot do for ourselves that which needs to be done, can feel like failure. But we must refuse to be transformed to the patterns of the world and instead be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). It is in accepting God’s abundant and infinite grace that we are then able to assess the work He has for us to do, not from a place of striving or independence, but from a heart rich with grace and hands eager to build in a world that tears down.

AROUND THE TABLE

As a mom of four daughters, I’m always managing fresh ingredients to make sure to use them up before they go bad. When produce is about to go south, I redeem them by turning them into a soup or by freezing them. Make a dish, redeeming an ingredient that goes bad easily. An avocado can be turned into guacamole, or cut into cubes and frozen for smoothie, floppy carrots can be simmered with ginger and blended into soup. Or, fruit can be blended with yogurt and frozen for a yummy dessert.

Recipe to try: Mango-Banana Frozen Yogurt

Chapter 6 Patience

Food can, and should, slow us down. God could have made our food system a wait-free zone, right? But he didn't. He made us wait for beans to sprout, for orange trees to blossom and for stews to stew. What if the patience required in our food system isn't a flaw but a feature; a gift, even?

TABLE TALK

- * What are the areas of the food lifecycle that frustrate you the most? Is it waiting you're your garden to grow, or standing in line at the grocery store, or the time it takes to cook a meal? Or are you like me and washing the dishes feels like a waste of time? Where the Spirit may be guiding you to embrace greater patience through food?
- * How does the love, joy, and peace of God in your life help you to be patient?

In Galatians 5:22–23, we read, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

We know that God is love, and as our hearts marinade in this truth, we begin to exude love to others. Next comes the joy of knowing how beloved we are, which pours out on those around us. Then the Spirit adds peace to the mix, further forming us into the image of a Christ who did not fret about the things of the world but submitted himself to the will of God. And now we come to patience—the Spirit-given ability to suffer long, to persevere, to choose waiting in a world of hurry.

Patience, then is based in our trusting of God's love for us, and trusting his food system to slow us down just the right amount.

AROUND THE TABLE

Find a recipe that takes time. It doesn't necessarily have to be complicated—but a stew, for example, that simply cannot be rushed. Notice the benefits of a slow meal, such as the heavenly aromas that fill your home, and entice happy eaters.

Recipe to try: Succulent Braised Pork



Chapter 7 Connection

Food connects us to one another and to God. Our connection goes far beyond the table! We connect through the soil that grows our food, the traditions and recipes across geography, and even across time as we use family recipes from our past, and leave a legacy for our future.

TABLE TALK

- * Spend some time reflecting on your family history. What food memories connect to your past? How do you feel about them? Is there a family recipe that you love for its memories, but not for its actual taste?
- * How might food be part of the way you initiate connection with your family, friends, and acquaintances? When friends cook for you, what do you learn about them?

Our American culture values independence and self-sufficiency. While these values may have propelled us to produce some magnificent things, they have also carved out some holes inside of our souls. When we fail to recognize the pressure to go-go-go, as we discussed in the previous chapter, we may be setting ourselves up to look up from our busy lives one day and realize that we are lonely, isolated, and disconnected.

This, of course, is not the life God wants for us. We are pack animals! God created us to live, work, and play within the context of community. For my fellow introverts out there, this doesn't mean something is wrong with you because you like to spend time alone! Jesus Himself would often withdraw from the crowds in order to reflect and spend time communicating with God alone. What it does mean, though, is that human connection is not intended just for "for fun." We are created to dwell with one another on a much deeper level—sharing work, pleasure, joys, and sorrows in the context of a communal connection that reflects the communal nature of the Trinity.

AROUND THE TABLE

Share a meal featuring some of your favorite foods based on memories attached, not necessarily taste. When my kids were little, I made the only fish they loved: salmon cakes. I made them so often that I stopped actually loving them. But when I make them today, they bring a huge smile to my face and my heart.

Recipe to try: Salmon Cakes



Chapter 8 Nurturing

Feeding others give us a peek into how much God wants to nurture us through food. We are designed both to nurture others—whether they be our children, other family or friends—and to be nurtured, too. Food gives us that chance at every meal!

TABLE TALK

- * What foods made you feel nurtured growing up? What foods are your “comfort foods” now? What are your early memories of this comfort food?
- * How might honesty with God, yourself, and a trusted friend about your experiences with nurturing (or the lack of it) help you grow in a posture of nurturing toward others?
- * What are some of the practices you want to cultivate to nurture your kids, friends, and family as God longs to nurture his children?

How does the concept of nurturing strike you? For some of us, nurturing sounds warm and cozy, like a warm blanket wrapped around their shoulders. For others, nurturing sounds risky, like it may be a cover or a front for manipulation or impending abandonment. And still others may simply find the concept of nurturing to be foreign—something that was not offered to them in childhood and has never been lived out in front of them or for them.

Before we consider how to be agents of nurturing others, consider the role nurturing has played in your own life. If you were not given basic love and care as a child, know that your Heavenly Father’s heart breaks at that reality. He saw your heart and mind forming without an embodied understanding of nurture, and He longed to gather you “as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings” (Matthew 23:37). Even now, He wants to draw you close.

AROUND THE TABLE

Make a comfort dish. Savor it. Are there stories to share? How much life was lived with this dish playing a starring role? I have a million memories attached to a flank steak recipe, which nurtured me because I knew that my full-time-student mom could not afford steak. But she would make this one dish for our birthdays and special occasions. Ice cream is another nurturing dish for me—we always had a huge carton of the grocery store brand of ice cream in our freezer, and it was the one treat we could have almost daily. To this day, inexpensive vanilla ice cream makes me feel nurtured.

Recipe to try: Mom’s Flank Steak



Chapter 9 Stewardship

Stewards are entrusted servants, not owners. How we care for God's creation matters, and the decisions we make about food reflect our sense of stewardship. How we treat our earth, how we manage our financial resources, and how mindful we are of the life that our food system takes all speak to our sense of stewardship.

TABLE TALK

- * Have you ever thought about stewardship in terms of food? If so, how might God want to continue developing your thoughts and practices? If not, how might you begin to lay a foundation of approaching food not merely as a necessity or indulgence, but as a precious resource to steward?
- * How does our responsibility change according to our abilities? What are some basic principles of stewardship that do not change regardless of one's income level or access to resources?

Just as our voices that flow from our mouths have been given to us to steward, so has the practice of eating—that which flows into our mouths. Scripture tells us that the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. I wonder if we eat from the overflow of the heart as well. Our choices around food often indicate the deeper longings of our hearts. Do we crave convenience? Do we love a quick fix? Do we long for true nourishment? Do we recognize the role of sacrifice in living according to God's design?

We find ourselves to be quite distant from the original sources of the food we consume. The goal here is not to conjure guilt, but to become faithful and thoughtful stewards of the creation God has entrusted to us. As children of Adam and Eve, we share their commission to care for the earth. As we select ingredients or restaurants, as we marinate or microwave, may we do so as stewards of a world created by a God who cares for all that He has made and entrusted to us.

AROUND THE TABLE

We are so accustomed to getting cheap food that doesn't reflect all the external costs (such as environmental impact, soil health, long term societal health, etc.). Make a simple recipe using humanely-raised meat, such as farm raised bison for burgers. (Notice the price difference.) When our food reflects the true price of stewardship, we might be a little less inclined to be wasteful or mindless about our meal!

Recipe to try: Perfect Summer Burgers



Chapter 10 Humility

Foodie culture may be chipping away at God's food culture. If you are reading Tasting Grace, you are probably a fan of food! Take a peek at your social media feeds. What is society saying about food? What does God say about food?

TABLE TALK

- * What are the various voices that you hear about food regularly? Do you watch food TV programs, read food magazines, scroll social media, etc? List them and think about whether they are rooted in God, or the world.
- * Do you feel like the meals you serve have to reach a certain standard of perfection? If so, how might those standards be limiting your ability to appreciate ingredients in their simplicity? Can cultivating excellence, beauty, and humility all happen at once?

2 Corinthians 4:6–7 says, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”

What a paradox God calls us to! We possess within us breath and life from the all-powerful, glorious God. We are the beloved, broken homes God has chosen to fill with treasure.

While beauty and intricacy absolutely reflect God’s character, so does the simplest of meals when it is made from love, a desire to nourish, and a heart that eschews the shame of simplicity and rather approaches the throne of God’s grace with confidence (Hebrews 4:16). May God’s love for you and gifts to you invite you into a life of peaceful humility, which will surely radiate outward toward those you meet, love, and feed.

AROUND THE TABLE

Make a vat of easy soup or chili, and invite someone into your home. Why soup or chili? Because it’s not impressive but it is very tasty! Like humility—lovely but not glossy.

Recipe to try: Black Bean Chili



Chapter 11 Work

The modern food system separates us from God and the price is higher than we think. Society loves to tell us in endless subtle ways that time spent in the kitchen is wasted.

Shortcut recipes, food delivery in under 30 minutes, the ubiquitous drive-thru all whisper quietly: your time is too valuable to spend it cooking. Sure, life is busy, but the time we put into food is worthy work, and our food system honors our labor.

TABLE TALK

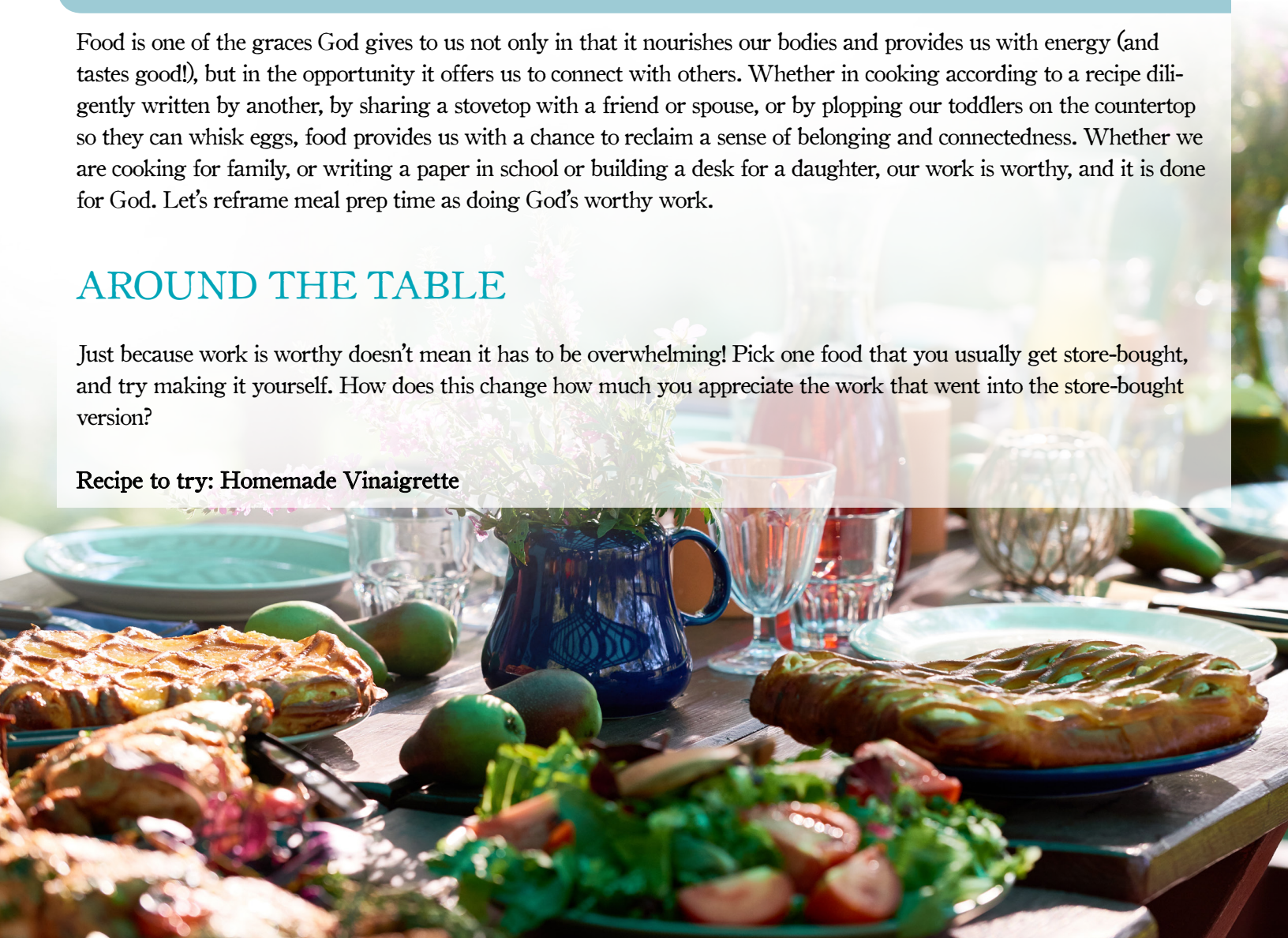
- * Reflect on a meal you ate in the last week. Think through the ingredients you consumed, who (if anyone) you shared the meal with, and who prepared it. Consider developing a practice of reflecting on one meal each week and giving thanks to God specifically for each ingredient, as well as every person involved in the process of creating the meal—from farmers and ranchers to your spouse, friend, or a restaurant chef (or yourself!).
- * Who in your life may want to start a journey of eating and cooking with an intentionality toward shared work? Perhaps a friend would want to cook a meal together once a month and enjoy it together. Think about inviting a few friends into one simple practice that will help you reclaim shared work around food, and shared gratitude around the table.

Food is one of the graces God gives to us not only in that it nourishes our bodies and provides us with energy (and tastes good!), but in the opportunity it offers us to connect with others. Whether in cooking according to a recipe diligently written by another, by sharing a stovetop with a friend or spouse, or by plopping our toddlers on the countertop so they can whisk eggs, food provides us with a chance to reclaim a sense of belonging and connectedness. Whether we are cooking for family, or writing a paper in school or building a desk for a daughter, our work is worthy, and it is done for God. Let's reframe meal prep time as doing God's worthy work.

AROUND THE TABLE

Just because work is worthy doesn't mean it has to be overwhelming! Pick one food that you usually get store-bought, and try making it yourself. How does this change how much you appreciate the work that went into the store-bought version?

Recipe to try: Homemade Vinaigrette



Chapter 12 Delight

God made the world delicious for a reason. We can trust his system to satisfy our palates with his food. Why would God make food so varied and delicious? Because: he is generous. He wants us to delight in his gifts, not recoil in guilt or head to the gym to work off the calories from a pear!

TABLE TALK

- * What five words would you use to describe your relationship with food?
- * What's one step you can take toward adding "delight" to your list?

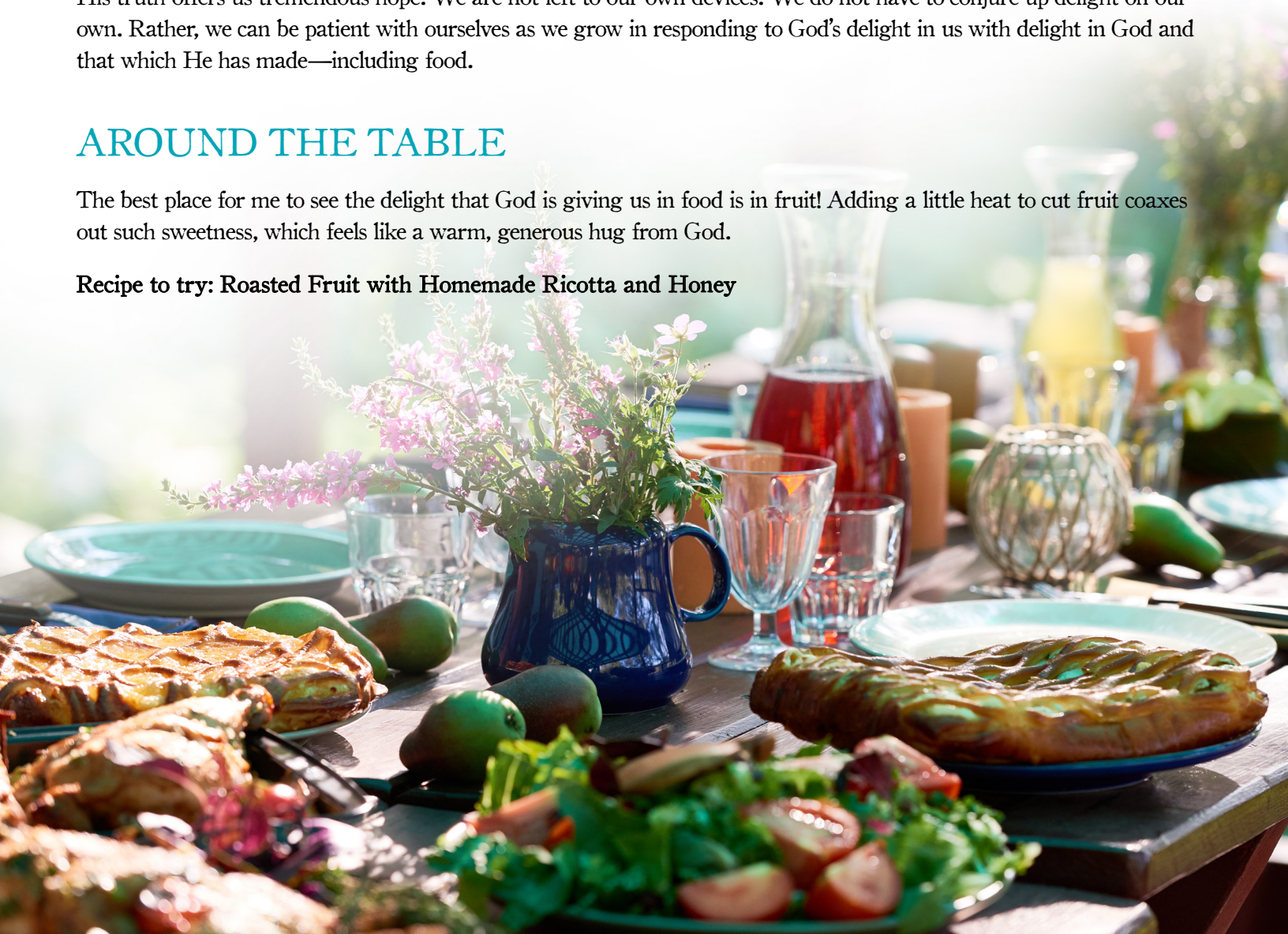
Before we are people who delight, we are people who are delighted in. Whether we grew up in homes where parents doted on us or we never heard someone say "I love you," God has always looked upon us with love and delight. He has grieved our losses and traumas and celebrated our joys.

His truth offers us tremendous hope. We are not left to our own devices. We do not have to conjure up delight on our own. Rather, we can be patient with ourselves as we grow in responding to God's delight in us with delight in God and that which He has made—including food.

AROUND THE TABLE

The best place for me to see the delight that God is giving us in food is in fruit! Adding a little heat to cut fruit coaxes out such sweetness, which feels like a warm, generous hug from God.

Recipe to try: Roasted Fruit with Homemade Ricotta and Honey



Chapter 13 Acceptance

The world wants us to love our bodies by changing them, but Jesus wants us to love ourselves unconditionally. What am I saying about God, my Creator, when I refuse to love his creation, my body, the way it is today?

TABLE TALK

- * What part of yourself do you struggle to accept as being enough today? Now, list a few ways in which that part of you has served you over the years.
- * Is there a food that you consider “off limits”? If Jesus were sitting at the table with you, what would he say about that food?
- * How might God want to shift your perspective toward yourself? How might food be part of that healing journey?

Similar to delight, our ability to accept ourselves in any true and meaningful way does not begin with mustering up our own thoughts or willpower, but in responding to the acceptance God has offered us in Jesus. The gospel, plain and simple, is the story of a perfect God who loves imperfect us, and meets us where we are.

God calls us to value ourselves according to his system, not the world's. Finding a way to love ourselves, even in our imperfections, is to see ourselves how God sees us. God's lens, not the world's, is the one we want to use. And if we ask for it, he will help us find it, not in admonition for falling short and taking on the world's values, but in generous love and the patience of a perfect parent.

AROUND THE TABLE

Make a dish that celebrates nature in more than one way. Maybe a salad that celebrates soil, topped with a creamy dressing that has sour cream (thank you, cows!) and dill. One of my favorites: Simple steamed broccoli dipped in homemade (or store bought!) mayo.

Recipe to try: Steamed Broccoli with Garlic Aioli



Chapter 14 Dependence

In the garden, we are the planters and waterers. God is the one who transforms the seed. Even when we think we are the agents of change, God is actually in charge! Our food system offers us a reminder that we are always at the mercy of a generous God who feeds us.

TABLE TALK

- * Have you ever grown anything? What did you learn about your role in growing food? Were you surprised by how much (or little) control you have over the growth process?
- * Who fed you growing up? Was food a source of safety or insecurity? Who fed the people who fed you? And who has depended on you for food?
- * Who in your life is a safe person to share a meal with and talk about the joy and difficulty of depending on God? What is one step you can take toward making that meal happen?

Our dependence is not something we do in our own strength. Rather, it is a response to the certainty that God is the loyal one who loves us.

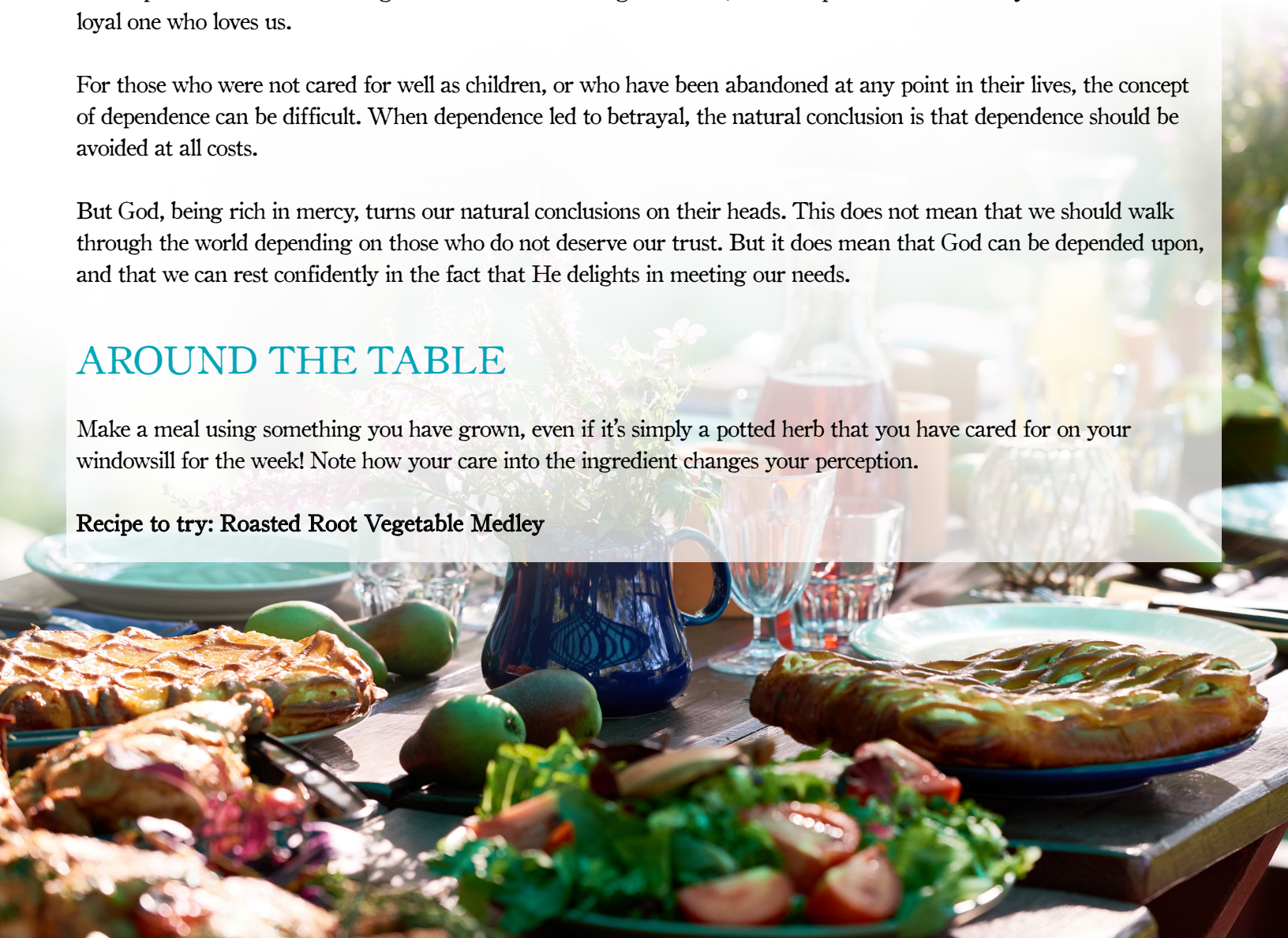
For those who were not cared for well as children, or who have been abandoned at any point in their lives, the concept of dependence can be difficult. When dependence led to betrayal, the natural conclusion is that dependence should be avoided at all costs.

But God, being rich in mercy, turns our natural conclusions on their heads. This does not mean that we should walk through the world depending on those who do not deserve our trust. But it does mean that God can be depended upon, and that we can rest confidently in the fact that He delights in meeting our needs.

AROUND THE TABLE

Make a meal using something you have grown, even if it's simply a potted herb that you have cared for on your windowsill for the week! Note how your care into the ingredient changes your perception.

Recipe to try: Roasted Root Vegetable Medley



Chapter 15 Hospitality

Biblical hospitality is service, not performance. It's incredibly easy to start out with a welcoming host heart and let it slide into a performance space, where the goal is impressing our guests. When we try to dazzle guests, we are celebrating the host more than we are welcoming others. Even the harmless "impress your friends!" call is creating a tiny pedestal for the host. Directionally, that tiny performance pedestal turns food into a wedge that separates rather than unites.

TABLE TALK

- * What insecurities do you have about hosting?
- * Consider that God is actually the greater host to us all anyway. How did the concept of God offering hospitality toward you change your insecurities about hospitality?
- * What is one step you could take this week toward demonstrating greater hospitality from a posture of delight, acceptance, and certainty that God has opened His home to you?
- * If you are a "natural host," then consider: are you always the host and the one to manage the menu and the table? What would it look like to celebrate being a guest at the tables of others too?

God extends His hospitality to us through the person of Jesus dwelling among us, and the Spirit quite literally taking up residence with us. He equips us to reach out and be hospitable to others with whatever we have to offer—whether an elaborate meal or a cup of cold water in Jesus's name. He also calls us to be the guest! Jesus was the guest at many meals, and there is joy and honor in both the host and guest role.

AROUND THE TABLE

Consider hosting someone in your home for a regular Tuesday night meal. No special menus that you searched up. Just a regular meal you make your family all the time. Note the elements of hospitality that are not related to dazzling menus or cooking skills.

Recipe to try: North African Meatballs



Chapter 16 Sacred

Our meal rituals reflect our lives, and are opportunities for growing into our true selves. Our dinner table is a chance to practice spiritual disciplines we carry out with us into the rest of our lives. Our children learn to have conversations at the table, we all practice pausing in gratitude when we say grace, we learn to do the worthy work of clearing the dishes at the end of a meal. The dinner table is witness to life.

TABLE TALK

- * What's one step you can take toward cultivating a posture of sacredness—not perfection or elegance, but sacredness—toward a meal this week?
- * Who are the people in your life who are especially sacred to you? If they live nearby, how could you share a meal together soon? If they live far away, how could you express your love to them?
- * What are some of the practices you want to remember from *Tasting Grace*?

“Sacred” is a word that some of us might associate with high church liturgies. Others may think of the opposites sacred vs. profane, while still others think of the sacred in terms of the sacrament of communion. None of these impressions are wrong, but sacredness dwells much closer to home for each of us than we may regularly recognize.

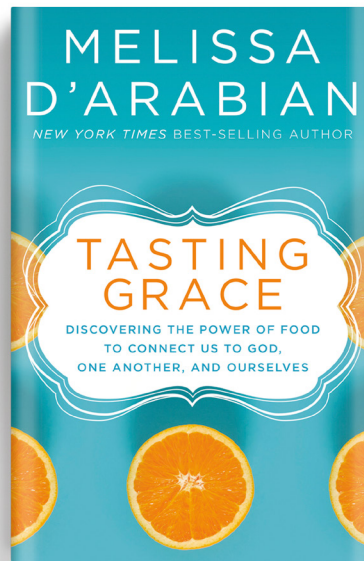
Here's a truth to carry with you: You are sacred to God, and in your sacredness, you can make the character of God known to others through your words, your deeds, your hugs, your meals cooked, your prayers, your recipes shared.

AROUND THE TABLE

Take a moment to acknowledge the miracle of each ingredient in your dish. If it's a quiche—then pause to think about the chickens that laid the eggs. And the rich soil that grew the sweet onions and garlic in the dish. How about the cow whose milk became the butter in the crust, and the wheat who was milled into flour. A moment of pause give us space to be thankful, and to connect, and to remind ourselves that in today's world, getting food on our plate seems far easier than it really is. Every bite of food—whether it be a simple salad, a chef-created elaborate farm-to-table meal, or a grab-and-go granola bar—has the power to connect us.

Recipe to try: Fennel-Onion Quiche





PRAISE for TASTING GRACE

“What a lovely reminder that the way we feed one another isn’t just convenient or quick-and-easy or designed to impress . . . it is holy.”

—JEN HATMAKER,

New York Times bestselling author of *For the Love* and *Of Mess and Moxie*
and host of the *For the Love* Podcast

“This book will help you taste food and savor life in ways you may not have thought possible.”

—NORMAN WIRZBA,

author of *Food and Faith*

“Just a few chapters in, Melissa had already unraveled my own latent, long-held belief that my relationship with food is some kind of wild stallion to be tamed rather than an invitation from God to understand how he loves his children. By the end of the book, I found myself looking at food with new eyes—as sustenance not just for my body but also for my soul.”

—AARTI SEQUEIRA,

chef, television personality, journalist, and author

Learn more at MelissadArabian.net



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