

Food is important not only because we need it to live, but also because we enjoy it and enjoy eating with others. A meal with the right person or group of can be an important social event. But not all foods are created equal. Some foods taste better than others. Other foods are better for us than others. The trick is finding good tasting food that is good for us.

That must be harder than we think. According to Andy Rooney of 60 Minutes fame, the top two selling non-fiction books of all time are cook books and diet books. We like to eat and eat too much or at least too much of the wrong things, so we buy cook books. Then when we want to lose weight, we buy diet books even if we don't follow them.

We can face the same kind of challenge when it comes to spiritual foods. Book stores now have huge sections of books on spirituality that is next to but separate from books on Christianity. Many people today don't want to be religious, but they will go on a spiritual search. What they are searching for may depend on their age and life circumstances. Some people search for meaning and purpose, others to be connected with God or other spiritual forces. Many people today want a spiritual experience. One thing that you'll discover if you look at these "spiritual" books, they will tell you what you have to do. They will give you a whole variety of meditations, chants, pilgrimages and rituals. They may send you in search of a special type of experience. But the responsibility all falls on your shoulders.

To be honest, books in the "Christianity" section can be equally confusing. Just because something is in that section doesn't mean that it is faithful to God's word or gives us good guidance for life. The Christian Church has been divided into a wide variety of denominations and non-denominations. There are also sects and cult that distort the truth of the faith. We don't need man made rules and rituals to tell us what to do, we need Jesus. He is the only one who can reconnect us with God, who can give us the right spiritual food, who can welcome us to the Lord's Table.

We need Jesus because He is life giving. Man made rules and rituals, demands to make ourselves good enough or to purge ourselves of things that are wrong, can only suck the life right out of us. But Jesus gives life. Jesus tells us that He is the bread of life (John 6:35), the resurrection and the life (John 11:25) and the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). Jesus gives life to us; He doesn't take it away from us. When we follow Him, He gives us meaning and purpose. He also connects us with God.

We need Jesus because He is intimate. When we encounter Jesus, we experience God. The unique thing about the Christian faith is that it is the Good News that God comes into our world to rescue us. Jesus is also called the Immanuel, or "God with us." He is the Good Shepherd who knows us and calls us by name (John 10:11-14). He promises to be with us every time two or more of us come together in His name. So Jesus is with us now, right here in this place. But He is also with us when we get in our cars and drive home. He is with us when we are at work, at

school or out with our friends. He is with us in the good times of life and in the tough times. The Bible tells us that nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:39).

There is one more thing: Jesus is Mysterious. I believe that God became a person in Jesus Christ, even if I can't understand it. I believe that God loves me in Christ, despite all of the stupid and rebellious things that I do. I believe that God comes to me in a very personal way in the Lord's Supper even though I don't know how that happens. I believe that the Holy Spirit has taken up residency in my heart even when I don't realize He is there. These are only a few of the reasons why we need Jesus.

The Good News is that Jesus knows our needs and invites us into His presence. Like the first Peter, James, John and Andrew, His first disciples, Jesus invites us to follow Him. He invites us to hang out with him, to go through life with him, to let him lead us and show us the way. One part of following means listening; paying attention to what He has to say. We can listen to Jesus by reading His words, by taking them to heart. If you want to know where Jesus wants to lead you, take some time to read the Gospel accounts of His life. They will tell you what He did and report the things that He said.

Don't just be a listener; interact with the Lord. He tells us that we can talk with him any time, day or night. He is waiting to hear from us. We can bring our praise as well as our problems to him. He wants to hear about our cares and concerns. Jesus is not looking for silent partners, so don't be afraid to talk with him. He is very approachable.

The easy thing for me to do right now would be to tell you how to do this. But I'm not going to do that because no two relationships are the same. If I told you that you had to pray three times a day in prescribed way, then your relationship with Jesus would be replaced with a set of rules and rituals. What works for some people doesn't work for others. I've been to way too many events where I've been told that I need to journal to improve my relationship with God. Guess what, I don't, won't and can't do it. I hate journaling. It might work for you, but it doesn't for me. I've been in other settings where they tell me that I have to go on a hunger fast to focus on God. That doesn't work, either. Ask my family what I get like when my blood sugar crashes. Oscar the Grouch has nothing on me. If journaling or fasting works for you, great!

The one thing I know about a relationship is that you have to work at it. You have to stay connected. That means you need to stay connected with God. That means finding time to read or listen to His Word and taking it to heart. It means listening and talking with God. It means giving Him thanks and praise. It means letting God take the lead in your life. Your challenge is find the best way to do that. One of the things that I do know, it is easier to walk with the Lord in faith when you are walking with others who can help, support and encourage you.

The bottom line is this; Jesus is good for us because He is God for us, God with us. And if God is for us, anything against us doesn't have a chance (Romans 8:31). Amen.