



# The Bible on Health as a Hunger Issue

Food is the main way we maintain ourselves as living creatures. It is essential to our daily living and functioning. Food is directly tied to our health and well-being.

## Introduction

We are biological beings, and our bodies cannot live—life cannot exist—without something to fuel them—food. A lack of food—hunger—can spell death. And so food and the nourishment it provides—the building blocks of life—are essential to the functioning of the biological “machines” of our bodies. Food supports health. Good food promotes good health.

Adequate food and good nutrition are important at all stages of our lives. But they are especially important to pregnant women and newborns. Studies show that providing good nutrition to babies in the 1,000 days from pregnancy to age 2 gives them a solid start in life and help them with their cognitive and physical development.

In our own country and abroad, many children suffer from nutritional deficiencies, sometimes referred to as “hidden hunger.” Children may not “look hungry,” but their immune systems can be weakened. They are at higher risk of diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Children who suffer food insecurity also have more headaches, stomachaches, anemia, ear infections, asthma, and colds. The stress of hunger can lead to greater risk of depression and anxiety.



Joseph Moller/Bread for the World

For the elderly and other vulnerable groups, the lack of nutritious food can also cause health complications. That is especially true for people with diabetes and high blood pressure. For many prescription drugs to work effectively, individuals must have an adequate diet.



## Scriptural Reflection

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in faith.” These words from Colossians 2:6 remind us of the faith that is active in love for our neighbors. We

demonstrate that love when we work to see that all people—in our own country and overseas—have the food they need to live a healthy, active life.

Every person is created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27)

and thus has a sacred dignity and immeasurable worth. We are infinitely precious to God, who provides for our sustenance and nourishment through a bountiful creation (Genesis 1:29-30 and Psalm 72:16-17). Human sin causes the unbalanced distribution of resources. As a result, too many people do not have access to basic necessities, including the nutritious food so critical to good health.

Physical nourishment is a recurring theme in the Scriptures. God delivers those who are poor and needy and “who have no helper” (Psalm 72:12-14). Providing for widows, orphans, sojourners, and other vulnerable people is service that God desires (Isaiah 58).

In the Gospels, Jesus’ compassion moves him to transform five loaves of bread and two fish into a nourishing feast for thousands (Matthew 14:13-21 and 15:32-6:10; Mark 8:1-9; Luke 9:10-17). In Mark 14:3, Jesus breaks bread with Simon the leper.

But Jesus didn’t just feed people. He also healed them of sickness. In this ministry, we see God’s vision that all people might be of sound body and mind. Jesus casts out evil spirits (Mark 1:21-34), healing people who were plagued by discontent and discomfort. Jesus heals blindness (Mark 8: 22-25), leprosy (Luke 17:11-9), hemorrhaging (Luke 8:43-44), and physical disability (Luke 13:10-13).

## What you can do

1. Pray for people who struggle to get regular meals and families who struggle to put good, nutritious food on their tables daily.
2. Learn about and support international efforts to provide nutrition to mothers and children during the critical 1,000 days between pregnancy and a child’s 2nd birthday.
3. Write letters to your members of Congress. Urge them to protect and strengthen safety-net programs operated by the federal government that provide food and nutrition to vulnerable groups.

## Prayer

O God, our hope is in Christ Jesus, who fed and healed people who came to him. We pray for people who suffer in body and mind, especially for children who lack the nutrition they need to grow, learn, and be healthy. May our country’s leaders see the wisdom of directing resources toward measures that assure access to both good nutrition and health care. Grant us strength and courage as we challenge Congress to work for the well-being of all in our own country. And lift our spirits as we support better nutrition for those in other countries. In Christ, who is our Bread of Life, we pray. Amen.

## WHAT IS BREAD FOR THE WORLD?

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation’s decision makers to end hunger and poverty at home and abroad. God’s grace in Jesus Christ moves us to reach out to our neighbors, whether they live next door, in another state, or on another continent. With letters, emails, phone calls, and visits, we urge Congress and the administration to change the policies and conditions that allow hunger to persist.

The individuals and churches involved in Bread for the World represent a broad range of Christian traditions. We embrace and reflect the growing diversity of culture, ethnicity, and religious practices. The empowerment of women and those most affected by hunger give depth and breadth to our witness to God’s love and care for all.

In our efforts to create hope and opportunity for people who are hungry, we find insight and inspiration from the Scriptures. For many Bread members, the sacraments, the ancient creeds, and the liturgy are sources of strength and joy as we seek to share God’s abundance with those who struggle with hunger and poverty.

## JOIN US

Bread’s work is made possible by contributions from tens of thousands of individuals and thousands of churches across the country. We invite you to join us by visiting [www.bread.org/join](http://www.bread.org/join) or calling 800/822-7323.

Also, join us in praying for an end to hunger—and receive suggested prayers every other week—by visiting [www.bread.org/prayer](http://www.bread.org/prayer).