

# EATING & DRINKING: WEEK 5

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## BEGIN WITH PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Gather together as a Connect Group in a comfortable setting (around a table, on the couch, the floor of a living room, etc.). Have somebody lead a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together.

## DEBRIEF LAST WEEK'S PRACTICE (15-20 MINUTES)

*Note: if you're short on time, skip this and go to the next section.*

If you are in a Connect Group of seven or more, divide into small groups of 3–4 people each. Spend a few minutes catching up on life. Then talk through the following debrief questions:

1. Did you listen to the teaching? What did you think?
2. What role has communion played in your life and growth with Jesus thus far?

## TRANSITION BACK TO ONE LARGE GROUP (5 MINUTES)

Ask a few questions about the last week's practice:

1. How are you guys feeling about this practice of Eating & Drinking with God?
2. What new ideas stood out to you as you heard about the unity experienced in Communion?

## READ THIS OVERVIEW

The Lord's supper, communion, the eucharist - whatever you call this meal, it is at the core of the way of Jesus. In the early church, there's no doubt it was the center of gravity in the weekly gathering. But a lot has changed over two millennia. Originally, it was a meal, not a bite of cracker and sip of wine. It was enjoyed around a table, not in a cathedral with pews. It was a joyful party more than a quiet, contemplative sacrament. And it was about communion with each other, not just communion with God. In fact, it was even a vehicle for social justice, as it gave food to the poor in the church and the city. In this practice, we explore repurposing our weekly meal with our Community as *Jesus'* meal, or "The Lord's supper." What would it look like to turn our Tuesday night dinner back into the "Agape" feast?

## TALK ABOUT THE COMING WEEK'S PRACTICE AS A CONNECT GROUP (10-30 MINUTES)

Here's the practice for the coming week:

- The basic idea this week is very simple: repurpose your meal together as communion.

- If you're reading this, the odds are you already eat a weekly meal with your Connect Group, so this is an easy step. For those of you not in a Connect Group with a weekly meal, we invite you to join one, and in the meantime, get together with your family or a group of friends or other followers of Jesus in your neighborhood, set a night for dinner, and practice communion. Since Paul writes of the dangers of eating and drinking in "an unworthy manner", it is encouraged you invite Pastor Adam to join your Connect Group when you are ready to share in communion as a full meal.

### **Exercise #1: Eat your meal as communion.**

- Here's a liturgy from the Didache, a gem of an archaeological find that was discovered in the 19th century, but dates back to the late first century, most likely in northern Israel. It's a church manual of sorts, a "how-to" book. They offer a liturgy to guide and guard the meal.
- It comes with two prayers to pray as you begin (one for the bread, another for the cup), and then one to pray after "you have had enough to eat" (meaning, after dinner is over).
- Feel free to have the leader read the following prayers, or read them out loud together:

"Regarding the Eucharist, you shall give thanks as follows.

*First, concerning the cup:* We give you thanks, our Father, for the holy vine of David, your child, which you made known to us through Jesus your child. To you be the glory forever.

*Next, concerning the broken bread:* We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge that you made known to us through Jesus your child. To you be glory forever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and gathered to become one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. For the glory and power are yours through Jesus Christ forever.

*And when you have had enough to eat, give thanks as follows:* We give thanks, holy Father, for your holy name which you have made reside in our hearts, and for the knowledge, faith and immortality/deathlessness that you made known to us through Jesus your child. To you be glory forever. You, O Master Almighty, created all things for the sake of your name, and gave both food and drink to humans for their refreshment, that they might give you thanks. And you graciously provided us with spiritual food and drink and eternal life through your child. Above all we thank you because you are powerful. To you be the glory forever. Remember your church, O Lord; save it from all evil and perfect it in your love. And gather it from the four winds into your kingdom, which you prepared for it. For yours is the power and glory forever. May grace come and this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of

David. If anyone is holy let them come (to the Eucharist); if anyone is not, let them repent. Maranatha! Amen.”

### **Exercise #2: Explore ideas for how to do this.**

- Here’s a conversation guide for your post-dinner time, designed to get you thinking about how to do this regularly (perhaps monthly to start).
- There’s no rulebook in the New Testament for how to practice communion; we have *a lot* of freedom.
- Generally, here’s a few best practices:
  1. Somebody plays the role of host at the table. In the early church, it was usually the head of a household or an elder (someone who functioned in the role of pastor). We recommend you invite Pastor Adam the first time you practice this.
  2. The leader calls the Connect Group to repent of any sin toward God (or each other) and reconcile any relational tension in the Connect Group *before* they come to the table.
  3. A prayer of thanks begins the meal, and a prayer of invitation to the Spirit to make his presence known.
  4. As you eat the meal, you eat with joy and gratitude and attempt to be present to the Spirit of Jesus, and each other. (i.e. Put away your phone, stop worrying about that to-do list, and focus on God and the person across the table.)
  5. In your meal planning, it’s ideal if the meal includes some kind of bread, and pairs with wine (or non-alcoholic juice). Some favorites are pita and falafel, or soup and bread, or wine and cheese.
  6. Make sure all material needs are met. You might want to go around the table and make sure everybody has enough food, enough money to make rent, etc. Are there any ways you can help meet one another’s needs?
  7. In closing there’s usually another prayer of thanks and/or a song.
- Spend some time as a Connect Group dreaming up ideas for how to repurpose a monthly meal as communion.

### **WORK THROUGH THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (10-15 MINUTES)**

1. Any thoughts, creative ideas, or feedback on this coming week’s practice?
2. How might communion around a table feel different?
3. What are ways to recognize and experience Jesus’ presence in this meal?

### **CLOSE IN PRAYER (10 MINUTES)**