

EATING & DRINKING: WEEK 3

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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. When you sat down to create your "neighbor map", how well do you know your neighbors?
2. What ideas came to your mind to begin to know your neighbors better?

TRANSITION BACK TO ONE LARGE GROUP (15-20 MINUTES)

Have a conversation around the following questions:

1. This week's practice is based on John 13:1-20 (feel free to read as a group first). Outside of Connect Group, do you regularly share a meal with other followers of Jesus?
2. What benefits can you see in making a habit out of eating and drinking with the family of God?

READ THIS OVERVIEW

Central to life in the kingdom of God is eating and drinking together with other apprentices of Jesus, as family. It sounds like a very simple idea because it is, and it's something that we tragically have stopped doing over the millennia. Eating and drinking with other followers of Jesus is an idea - more than that, a Practice - that we need to recapture as the people of God because meals catalyze community and bind us together around Jesus. In Acts 2, we read that the church gathering itself was a meal. It doesn't say that they ate a meal before or after the main event; it says that the meal itself was the main event. A sign that the Holy Spirit is at work in a church, isn't just thousands of people coming to faith, or prophecy, or healing, or even miracles; it's this: people eat together like family. And when that happens, you know you're onto a move of God. In the second dimension of this Practice, Eating & Drinking with Family, we want to recapture the integral tradition of sharing a meal with other apprentices of Jesus, our brothers and sisters in the family of God.

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

The following week's practice is made up of three exercises.

Exercise #1: Share a meal with someone who follows Jesus.

The main exercise this week is simply to eat a meal with a fellow follower of Jesus. If you're already in a Connect Group, that's easy. Check. If you want go to the next level, get lunch (or make dinner, have a BBQ, go to brunch on Saturday, etc.) with a fellow follower of Jesus one-on-one, or family-on-family. As you eat together, welcome the Holy Spirit. Pay attention to the movements of your heart. And don't just eat, as Hebrews puts it, "Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." When you look for somebody to eat with this week, don't just look for people who are like you:

- Families, look for single people to invite in to your life together.
- Single people, look for families! Families are often scared to invite you over because they think you are too cool and can't handle the 3-year-old. But children idolize single people; and a lot of parents are lonely and can feel stuck at home raising children and running a busy life.
- Look for orphans. Or just people from out of state, with no family in town.
- Look for widows and widowers.
- Look for people traveling who need a place to stay.

And remember, as a follower of Jesus, when you come into a home you come as both host and guest. To give and receive. Next, we have two other exercises that are more imaginative.

Exercise #2: Reimagine your table as a place of family.

Spend a little time, notepad or journal out, and just dream a bit around this idea of church as family around a table. If you're in a Connect Group, dream about how to take your family life to the next level.

Exercise #3: Reimagine your home as a place of hospitality

Again, a lot of you are already doing this, but for some of us it's brand new territory. Especially if you grew up in a suburban setting. There's a difference between the Spanish catch phrase "Mi casa es su casa," and the Anglo saying, "A man's home is his castle." One of those sayings is a lot more like Jesus than the other! Those of us who grew up in what sociologists call a "cold culture," have to do a little work to re-imagine our home not as a place of escape, but as an outpost of love. Christine Pohl, in her fantastic book *Making Room*, writes about ten markers that make a home conducive to hospitality:

1. It's comfortable.
2. It's lived in.
3. It's a place where people are flourishing.
4. It's not necessarily beautifully decorated, but it is well cared for.
5. It's a place of safety and sanctuary, where people can retreat from the anxiety of the world.
6. It's not frenetic or stressful, but you walk in and feel a slower pace and a sense of peace.
7. It's a place where life is celebrated, where the discipline of celebration has become a habit of the heart.
8. Yet it's also a place where the pain, disappointment, and sadness of life is welcomed.
9. It's a place where the details of life point to the simple beauty of life – with things like good food, fresh cut flowers, music, a sitting area with a plant or painting. As Pohl says it, "Attention to these details expresses an appreciation for life which has more to do with taking time than with having money."
10. Finally, it's a marked by traditions, which guests are invited into, but not forced into. These traditions can include praying before a meal, reading Scripture, quiet time in the morning for prayer, sabbath, etc. As people spend time in your home, they should find that they slow down and experience the soul-healing rhythm of the way of Jesus.

So just take a little time to dream. Maybe you set up a "Christ room". Maybe you buy a Murphy bed, or host a Connect Group or Sunday night dinner. Maybe you adopt somebody into your family. Or, if you're single, maybe you adopt a family. Just take a little time to dream. And if all that feels like too much, just share a meal this week with a brother or sister.

WORK THROUGH THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (10-15 MINUTES)

1. Does the prospect of reimagining your table as a place of family and your home as a place of hospitality make your mind race with anxiety or dreams and ideas? If anxiety, why might that be? Is there something your Connect Group can do to help ease that?
2. Do you have any thoughts, creative ideas, or feedback on this coming week's Practice?

CLOSE IN PRAYER (10 MINUTES)