

More with your Meals

Luke 7:34; October 30, 2016

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I've got one big request before we start today: since we're going to be talking about meals today, you're going to have to be laser focused and disciplined with your mind or your mind is going to drift more towards what's for lunch than for what God wants to say to you today.

Most of us eat at least three meals a day and 21 meals a week and many of these meals can be really frustrating:

- “Mom and dad, we're out of cereal. There's no more milk. There's nothing to eat.”
- Anyone just enjoy preparing lunches for your kids to take to school in the mornings?
“No, you can't just pack chips, cookies and candy for lunch.”
- No time for a lunch break today. You're eating at your desk and pounding away to meet that deadline that's hanging over your head.
- “Honey, what's for dinner tonight?” (silence)

Transition: As frustrating as meals can be, what if they became for you the context for extraordinary displays of God's grace and kindness to those in your life. What if instead of frustration, meals became opportunities for God's mission to be fulfilled.

The Point: God can use the ordinary of your meals for extraordinary displays of his grace.

Transition: In order to gain a proper perspective related to meals, we're going to spend some time in the Gospel of Luke looking at how Jesus used meals to accomplish the mission God had for him. If God is going to turn your ordinary meals into extraordinary displays of his grace, you must align your meals after the example of Jesus in three strategic ways...

1. Align your Intentionality.

Read Luke 7:34

“The Son of man has come...”

- There are three such similar statements in the NT:
 - “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).
 - “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).
 - “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking...” (Luke 7:34).
- Tim Chester, in his book, *A Meal with Jesus*, has observed how the first two of these are statements of purpose: why did Jesus come. But the third one is a statement of method: how did Jesus come.

“A glutton and a drunkard”

- They called Jesus a “glutton” and a “drunkard.”
- Glutton: someone who eats too much.
- Drunkard: someone who drinks too much.
- Chester notes, “Jesus was seriously into eating and drinking—so much so that his enemies accused him of doing it to excess. . . . Jesus spent his time eating and drinking—a lot of his time. He was a party animal. His mission strategy was a long meal, stretching into the evening. He did evangelism and discipleship round a table with some grilled fish, a loaf of bread, and a pitcher of wine” (Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 13).
- For Jesus, meals weren’t just a mundane and ordinary occasion to grab a bite to eat. They were seized upon opportunities to display the radical grace of God.

Why should we be intentional with our meals?

- **Everyone eats**
 - Once of the biggest barriers that I hear from people for why they don’t engage in more evangelism and discipleship opportunities is that they’re so busy. Check this: you have 21 built in opportunities for evangelism and discipleship already built into your schedule, a’ll you’ve got to do is tap the potential.
 - Think about it, you can engage in evangelism and discipleship without really adding anything to your schedule. It’s not addition, it’s intersection. It’s making your meals missional.
 - How intentional have you been with your meals in the past month? What’s one step you could take this week to grow you intentionality around doing more with your meals?
- **Meals connect us with others**
 - Meals turn strangers into friends and even family.
- **Meals express inclusion**
 - In a few weeks, we’re going to deliver a meal to some families in need in Medford (and this is a great Serve Medford opportunity), but we’re really only going half way. What would it communicate to these people if instead of dropping off a meal, we invited them to our homes? That would display inclusion.
- **Meals create compelling opportunities**
 - Let’s get this straight: meals won’t save anyone. People are saved through hearing and responding to the gospel message. But meals do create the context for God to work.
 - One author, Simon Carey Holt, summarizes it this way: “At base, hospitality is about providing a space for God’s Spirit to move. Setting a table, cooking a meal, washing the dishes is the ministry of facilitation: providing a context in which people feel loved and welcome and where God’s Spirit can be at work in their lives. Hospitality is a very ordinary business, but in its ordinariness is it’s real worth” (Simon Carey Holt)
 - Could it be that hospitality is the church’s greatest tool for reaching those in our city who don’t Jesus?

2. Align your Guest List.

“Ok, I’ve got that you that meals are great opportunities for evangelism and discipleship but who should I be having meals with?”

Review Luke 7:34

“A friend of tax collectors and sinners”

- Jesus was critiqued not simply for his partying, but for who he was partying with. Chester notes, “The problem wasn’t the party but the guest list. He was spending intimate time with those far from God. He was befriending tax collectors and sinners.”
- Tax collectors: they worked for the Romans and therefore they were viewed as traitors not only to the nation of Israel but also traitors to God and his kingdom. Many of them were greedy and amassed personal wealth by demanding excessive tax payments. They were viewed as enemies of God.
- Jesus’ time with them and “sinners” is really what ticked the religious leaders of the day off.
- This wasn’t an isolated critique but one that occurred over and over in Jesus’ ministry.

Read Luke 5:27-32

- I love Chester’s reflection on these verses. He notes, “The Pharisees are asking Jesus to behave like a doctor who avoids sick people. Such a doctor clearly couldn’t do his work. Jesus the Savior can’t do his work unless he’s with sinful people” (Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 26).

Read Luke 15:1-2

- The Parable of the Lost Sheep
- The Parable of the Lost Coin
- The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Read Luke 14:12-14

- The message is clear: Jesus came for everyone including the loser, the marginalized, those who’ve wrecked their lives, ordinary people, you name it. The only people left out of the kingdom of God are people who think they don’t need God: the self-righteous. Jesus’ party invitations read: “Come just as you are.”

Transition: On the other hand, Chester highlights that the invitations of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day read, “You’ve got to get changed; you’ve got to get cleaned up.”

Read Luke 11:37-41

- The problem with the Pharisees is that their guest list doesn’t reflect the invitation of the gospel.
- The Pharisees had created boundaries that hindered them from having such meals with tax collectors and sinners. Only the rich had time to measure up to all of the ritual cleansing required.

- We can do the same thing! What boundaries have you erected that would hinder you from having meals with certain people? Are there expectations of dress, behavior, literacy, punctuality, and social and financial status?
- Here's the point: if your life isn't shaped by the gospel, then neither will your guest list.
- Chester notes, "Involvement with people, especially the marginalized, must begin with a sense of God's grace. But not just God's grace to them, but his grace to *me*" (Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 45).
- Are there certain prejudices, expectations and attitudes that you need to repent of today?
- How can we do our work of pointing sinners to the Savior if we don't spend time with them? If we're going to understand the people in our city better, we've got to spend time with them. What better way to get to know them and understand them than to talk to them, hang out with them and eat with them.

Who should be on your guest list?

- Evangelistic Networking: family, neighbors, co-workers/classmates, friends.
- Disciple-making: A teenager, a college student, a young professional, someone from your Group, a new person from church, a regular attender or member.
- Write down the person now whom God puts on your mind and heart. When will you invite them over?

When should you be having meals?

- Breakfast (meet up with someone on the way to work for coffee or breakfast).
- Lunch (meet up with a co-worker or classmate).
- Dinner
- Church Occasions: CG, Ladies Brunch, Coffee and Convo
- Personal Occasions: birthdays, anniversaries, new jobs, exams, house warming.
- Sporting Occasions: the Super Bowl, the World Series,
- Seasonal Occasions: July 4th, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, Easter

3. Align your Hospitality.

How can you display the gospel through your hospitality?

A few simple tips:

- *Shape your actions by the gospel.*
 - Serve others out of a strong sense of your own brokenness and need for the gospel (cf. Luke 7:36-50). Does your hospitality reflect the characteristics of Jesus or the Pharisees?
- *Keep it simple (it doesn't have to be extravagant).*
 - True hospitality seeks not to impress others but to serve others. "Hospitality only becomes a burden when we're driven to prove ourselves or impress others" (Chester, 95).
 - A lot of people feel more comfortable in the chaos of family meals than the formality of a dinner party.

- *Prioritize developing relationships*
 - Have a passion for people. Be attentive to them.
 - Show a genuine interest in their life (college, single, family, work)
 - What are you passionate about?
 - What do you love?
 - What do you like to read and/or watch on TV?
- *Talk about Jesus in a natural way.*
 - Be open about your faith (have a passion for Jesus).
 - Share brokenness in your own life and how your faith is helping you.
 - Listen for the brokenness in others and be ready to share about God's Design (3 Circles).
- Pray like crazy (before, during and after)
 - Follow the leading of the Spirit for where the conversation goes and for future opportunities to share about Jesus.

What are your greatest barriers God transforming the ordinary of your meals into extraordinary displays of his grace?

- It's too costly
 - Food costs money.
 - Hospitality takes time (scheduling, inviting, cooking, cleaning: before and after)
 - Things get dirty or even broken (stains on the run and couch)
- It's too scary
 - People are invading our space and thus we're putting ourselves on display.
 - Everything will be evaluated: our cooking, cleaning, decor and parenting.
 - You may also end up eating at places you don't feel comfortable or eating food that you may not particularly like.
- I'm too busy

Jesus provides our motivation and he's our model. He laid down his life and we're called to follow and do the same. Jesus' mission isn't complicated but it's not easy either. Jesus' mission requires sacrifice. Find your identity in Jesus and not in people. Let Jesus rule and reign over your time (what do you need to say no to - maximize your time). Let Jesus rule and reign over your possessions.

Dream: what if your home became known as the house in your neighborhood where you could find a good party or a place of rest, converse, share a struggle or receive some prayer? What if your home became the place where people came after a bad day, when they lost a job, the they were looking for advice or crying over a broken relationship? We should be known for having a reputation of throwing the best parties.

Jesus was labeled, "A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" What's your label? Let's strive to earn the label "friend of sinners" like our Savior.

Three meals a day. 21 meals a week. Potential frustration but amazing opportunity.