
Surprise the World! Chapter 4: Eat

I will eat with three people this week—at least one of whom is not a member of our church.

Scripture

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. —Luke 7:34, NIV

Regarding this next item, I'm not at all pleased. I am getting the picture that when you meet together it brings out your worst side instead of your best! First, I get this report on your divisiveness, competing with and criticizing each other. I'm reluctant to believe it, but there it is. The best that can be said for it is that the testing process will bring truth into the open and confirm it. And then I find that you bring your divisions to worship—you come together, and instead of eating the Lord's Supper, you bring in a lot of food from the outside and make pigs of yourselves. Some are left out, and go home hungry. Others have to be carried out, too drunk to walk. I can't believe it! Don't you have your own homes to eat and drink in? Why would you stoop to desecrating God's church? Why would you actually shame God's poor? I never would have believed you would stoop to this. And I'm not going to stand by and say nothing. —1 Corinthians 11:17-22, MSG

Chapter Summary

How would you finish this statement: 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

...to seek and to save the lost. —Luke 19:10

...eating and drinking. —Luke 7:34

Speaking of how Jesus uses the title "Son of Man," originally taken from Daniel 7:13-14,

"That Jesus attributes this apocalyptic (and somewhat esoteric) title to himself might at first sound spectacular, but he then goes on to describe this Son of Man not coming in glory on the clouds of heaven, accompanied by an army of angels, but simply eating and drinking."

—Page 45

The one thing Jesus told us to do every time we get together is eat. His readiness to eat with sinners and tax collectors gave his enemies ammunition.

"Sharing meals together on a regular basis is one of the most sacred practices we can engage in as believers. Missional hospitality is a tremendous opportunity to extend the kingdom of God. We can literally eat our way into the kingdom of God!" —Ford & Hirsch, quoted on Pages 47-48

There are ways not to do this. The Corinthians are rebuked by Paul for eating their meals together (which would have included the Lord's Supper) while still maintaining a ranking system, with some at a place of honor and others seated at less honorable tables, getting nothing to eat. They ate in cliques. His words to them in 1 Corinthians 11:23-28 are not about examining oneself for personal sin, but for sin against the body of Christ in the way they ate the meal.

The habitual practice of eating together was meant to teach Christians how to welcome the outsider and fellowship with those of lower social standing. For us, inviting the poor, the non-Christian, the person who is different from us, to our table is Christlike. And we can respond in kind if invited to eat a meal with a non-Christian without affirming their values.

Frost tells the story of a Baptist pastor who would not go to his neighbor's margarita parties. Frost asked him how many times his neighbor had asked him anything about his faith, and how many times he'd shared anything with his neighbor. "Never." After accepting a challenge to go to the next party, the pastor shocked his neighbor and had more spiritual conversations about faith than he'd had in a while.

"Don't judge the lifestyles or eating (or drinking) habits of your host. See the opportunity as a gold mine for missional relationship building. Don't lose sight of the good goal of conversion, but follow Jesus' model of communion first and see what flowers from it." —Page 55

Questions

Use whichever questions you like. Some are taken from the book; other questions can be found starting on page 109.

1. Describe the traditional way 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 has been taught. How is this different from what Paul meant?
2. How does the Corinthian problem play itself out in our eating habits today? Who do we tend to include around our tables? Exclude?
3. Luke 7:34 comes right before a story of Jesus eating at the home of a Pharisee (Lk. 7:36-50). Take a minute to read this story. What did the Pharisees need to learn? Why was it easier for the host to judge Jesus (v. 39) than to catch the significance of what the woman was doing?
4. "Eating with others can be perceived as a profoundly theological practice." Does this ring true to you? What do the meals you've shared with others tell you about God and His kingdom?
5. "The table is the great equalizer in relationships." How so?
6. How would you respond if you were invited to a party and you knew you'd be the only Christian there?
7. If you could plan the perfect meal to invite someone to, what would it look like?
8. What roadblocks are in the way of making this a habit?

Prayer

Some families have a memorized prayer they use before meals. Try this prayer out now and as you eat meals this week.

Son of Man, bless this food.
Bless those who have produced it
and those with whom we will share it;
We will not be "gluttons" and "drunkards,"
but are okay if we are mistaken as such
because we are eating with you,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Challenge

Eat with three people this week: One from our church, one not from our church, and a third person.

