

TOOL: Eat with Intention

Speak blessing • Daily



Introduction

Some of our strongest habits involve how we eat. Here are a couple statistics around how Americans eat.

- A study in 2015 shared that nearly half of all meals are eaten alone.
- A 2012 survey found that 65% of working Americans either eat lunch at their desks or don't eat lunch at all.
- From the magazine, *The Atlantic*, Americans eat one in every five meals in the car.
- A study from 2017 shared that the majority of American families report eating less than five meals together in a week.

The way in which we eat is dramatically different than generations before us. What does this say about our society? What is the big deal? Who cares if people are eating communally?

Meals and eating are not just a means to an end, they are a human experience and an opportunity for deep connection. One of Jesus' primary vehicles to bless others and display his good news was through eating with others. So often, his greatest lessons involved either the imagery of or the literal presence of drink or food. The woman at the well, feeding the 5,000, reinstating Peter over breakfast on a beach, his first miracle at the wedding in Cana, and of course, the example of the Last Supper. The table was a place of intimacy, common hunger and thirst, and a reminder of our deeper longings. This was a place where Jesus practiced how to bless others.

Consider how Jesus met a man named Matthew in Matthew 9:9-13:

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

What might this meal mean to Matthew? What about the impression it made on Matthew's friends? Why did Jesus intentionally choose to go to Matthew's house and not to a remote place, to the synagogue, or Jesus' own turf?

Jesus used the table to demonstrate relationship, mercy, and to bless others with the provision deeper than just another meal. Jesus used the table to be a place to speak blessing.

Pause and consider

- What was the last notable meal you had?
- Have you ever been the guest at a special meal? Where was it and who served the food? Was conversation a part of the experience?
- What are the barriers for you to dedicate more time and intention around sharing meals with others?
- Do those statistics ring true to your life? Which ones?
- Why do you think Jesus used the table (and still uses the table) to be a place to meet with us and to show us grace?

Practice

This week, consider some of the following invitations as a means to allow a meal to be a place to speak blessing.

- Invite a co-worker or neighbor to share a meal with you. As you do so, seek to be an active listener with them; blessing them with your presence and attention.
- Pack an extra meal for someone in need. Consider those who live in the margin of our society. Instead of just giving another handout, a couple bucks, or your leftovers, share a meal with them. Set aside the time to enter the level playing field of eating with one another, and consider opportunities to bless them with a promise from scripture.

- Organize a meal or happy hour with those in your neighborhood or people in the office. A crockpot of queso, a bottle of wine, or a takeout pizza can go a long way. Perhaps even, consider ways to encourage others during that shared meal.
- Sunday lunches: When you meet someone new during the service, invite them to lunch afterwards.

May we follow in Jesus's footsteps of using the table to be a place of belonging, grace and provision as we speak blessing to others.

Debrief your experience

After practicing with this tool, debrief your experience with your Praxis Group. Below are some questions to process together:

- Check in on life. (Where are you experiencing Christ's presence this week? What burdens are you carrying?)
- What did you learn from this practice?
- Describe your experience with this practice. (What feelings came up, what went well, what got in the way? How has it impacted your relationship with God?)
- What is the next step for you?