

## Practice – EATING

Selected Readings from: *Surprise The World (The Five Habits of Highly Missional People)* by Michael Frost  
Chapter 4: [Eat: The Second Habit](#)

..... eating has been a central Christian practice since the beginning of our movement. And not only eating sacramentally, as in the Eucharist, but eating missionally as a way to express love to all. More than that, eating with others can be perceived as a profoundly *theological* practice. It mirrors the character of the Triune God. ...

...I want you to foster the habit of eating with three people every week. But I want you to know that this isn't merely good missional strategy. It is a way to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

English pastor and author Tim Chester once posed the question, "How would you complete the following sentence: 'The Son of Man came . . .?'" There are three ways that the New Testament completes that sentence; while the first two are well known (and might have come to your mind when you read Chester's question), the third is surprising:

- "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, ESV).
- "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10, ESV).
- **"The Son of Man came eating and drinking" (Luke 7:34).**

While the first two oft-quoted verses tell us about Jesus' purpose in coming—to serve, to give his life as a ransom, to seek and save the lost—the third describes his method. How did Jesus come? He came eating and drinking.

...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.

It's always interested me that the one thing Jesus actually told us to do every time we meet together was to *eat*. It's not lost on me that his detractors regularly accused him of being a drunkard and a glutton (see Luke 7:34). Jesus was neither of those things, but obviously his preparedness to eat and drink with sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes gave his enemies plenty of ammunition. So, when he comes to give his first followers something to do to remember him by, what is it? Remember Luke 22:19: "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'" Yes, the "drunkard" and the "glutton" instructed his followers to eat and drink in remembrance of him. It's beautifully subversive.

The table ought to be the primary symbol of the Christian gathering. It represents hospitality, inclusivity, generosity, and grace. In many churches today, I suppose, the primary symbol might be the pulpit or the screen. These churches seem to believe that Jesus said, "Every time you meet together, listen to a sermon and sing." Now, I'm not against sermons or singing, but if we took

Jesus' directive seriously, we'd know that the table is a better metaphor for Christian worship. I love theologian (and professional chef) Simon Carey Holt's description of the table:

It is through the daily practice of the table that we live a life worth living. Through the table we know who we are, where we come from, what we value and believe. At the table we learn what it means to be family and how to live in responsible, loving relationships. Through the table we live our neighborliness and citizenship, express our allegiance to particular places and communities, and claim our sense of home and belonging. At the table we celebrate beauty and express solidarity with those who are broken and hungry.

The invitation to share a table is a profoundly meaningful one in every culture. So I'm calling you to foster the habit of eating with three people each week. You won't need to add a great deal into your often already busy schedule. You already eat three times a day. That's twenty-one meals a week. I'm simply asking that you bring another person to your table for three of those. Or if you want to cut corners, you could bring three people to your table for one of them. Your meal could be an elaborate dinner party, or it could be breakfast, or even just coffee and a donut. Just sit across a table from three people this week, and . . . talk.

The table is the great equalizer in relationships. When we eat together we discover the inherent humanity of all people. We share stories. And hopes. And fears. And disappointments. People open up to each other. And we ourselves can open up to share the same things—including our faith in Jesus.

*[The chapter then includes a wonderful review of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11; for copyright reasons we'd ask you to buy the book to read it... after the review of 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11, the bottom line is:]*

In other words, the habitual practice of the love-feast was to be an incubator in which Christians learned to accept the outsider, offer generosity to the poor, and have fellowship with those of so-called lower rank. As Paul concludes, "So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat *together*" (verse 33, italics added). The weekly rhythm of the communal feast was meant to help shape the Corinthians into radical socializers.

... "Conversion flowered from communion." What a beautiful expression. We see it in Jesus' attendance at a meal at the home of the tax collector Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). His communion with the sinful tax collector led to repentance and conversion. Likewise, we should be prepared to eat with sinners as a habitual missional practice.

... 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.

- *Bless three people this week—at least one of whom is not a member of your church.*
- *Eat with three people this week—at least one of whom is not a member of your church.*