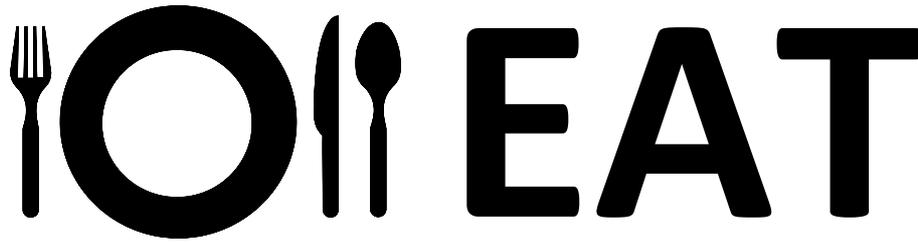


Grace Table Discussion 5



Gather: invite someone, make a stranger a friend, break isolation.

Relate: turn off the TV, sit together, face each other, listen.

Accept: let the table be a place of acceptance and not judgement.

Consecrate: thank God, don't be ashamed to acknowledge the Giver.

Eat: shared meals grow trust, unite enemies, and define us.

SWEET & SAVOURY TEMPLE BREAD

This recipe from www.cookingwiththebible.com attempts to approximate the sort of bread that someone like Zechariah may have brought to the temple...

- 2½ cups wholemeal flour
- 1 cup white flour
- ½ cup rolled oats
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- 60 grams butter, softened
- 1 cup buttermilk or natural yogurt
- 1 cup raisins, chopped
- 4 sprigs fresh rosemary, leaves only

Preheat oven to 210°F.

Mix all dry ingredients in a large bowl. Rub in the butter with your fingertips. Slowly add the buttermilk or yogurt and the raisins and chopped rosemary until a nice kneading consistency is achieved. If you overdo it, then add more oats or flour. *You must not knead this dough.*

Quickly make two round loaves. Put them on an oiled tray and with the back of a long knife mark lines across the tops. Divide each loaf into 6 sections. Bake for 20–30 minutes until moist but firm.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What are some of your or your family's traditional or special foods?
- What do these foods say about your origin or who you are?
- Have you ever been to a business dinner or a formal dinner? What was it like? What games go on behind the eating?

MEALS DESIGNED FOR CONVERSATION?

In the ancient world people used meals to talk! In Greek society a 'meal to talk' was called a 'symposium'. The big thinkers would invite people to discuss their latest ideas. They would recline on low couches and be served many courses. The meal was designed to talk about *cool stuff*, which to them was called 'philosophy'. The Romans called it *convivium*. These Greek and Roman meals often included loads of alcohol and some very bad behaviour, but not always. The interesting idea was that meal was a specially designed venue for deep conversation. I sometimes wonder whether this culture (minus the bad behaviour) is something Aussies could learn from?

In today's story Jesus has been invited to eat at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees. His host would have been one of the religious elite of the day (like a modern Bishop?). They ate together to talk (like a symposium but without the bad behaviour). Their meal was designed as a venue to discuss spiritual life and theology. To be invited was a big thing.

Discuss: How can you design a meal for deep conversation?

FOUR POWER GAMES PLAYED WITH MEALS!

Behind the meals in Luke's Gospel are a number of common power games. If you don't know the power games, you may have trouble understanding what's going on in these stories. We will explore four power games and how Jesus broke them in a single meal in Luke 14:1-24...

But first, just sit quietly with the Bible for a moment and visualise the scene...

Luke 14:1

One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully...

How does this make you feel? What does it look like in your mind? What feelings arise?

#1 LIKE EATS WITH LIKE

Just watch any high school at lunch time! Kids eat with kids. Adults have their own table. Cool people eat with cool people. In the time of Jesus, religious people would not eat with those who they regarded as sinners, sick, or impure. They did not want any *uncleanness* to rub off on them. Like eats with like - they did not want to become unclean by eating with the unclean people.

Do we play this power game in Australia? When and how?

Read the story and sit with it quietly for a moment...

Luke 14:1-6

One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?" And they could not reply to these things.

What did you notice?

How does Jesus break the power game?

What's good news here for us?

#2 WHERE YOU SIT SHOWS WHERE YOU FIT

In the time of Jesus their tables were usually U shaped, or a semi-circle. Status was shown by how close to the host you got to sit. Similarly, in the middle ages men got to sit at the table, while women and children ate standing up. Who dominated that culture? These days you can fulfil your family obligation by inviting awkward uncle Rumpole to Christmas dinner, but sit him down the end with the kids – you have just 'put him in his place'. That is the game called 'where you sit shows where you fit.'

Do we play this power game in Australia? When and how?

Read the story and sit with it quietly for a moment...

Luke 14:7-11

Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honour, saying to them, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honour... For everyone who exalts themselves will be humbled, and whoever humbles themselves will be exalted."

What did you notice?

How does Jesus break the power game?

How does this story show who Jesus is?

#3 INVITING THOSE WHO CAN GIVE SOMETHING BACK

In Christ's time people felt that if you were invited to a meal then you owed something back. So you would invite people of equal or better social means and riches, because they could invite you back. You would not invite those of lower means or social standing – because they couldn't return the favour. In fact for the poor to be invited to the table of the rich was frightening, because they would wonder what was expected back and if they could afford to return the favour. You could use a meal to get something because it implied the guests were now in your debt.

Do we play this power game in Australia? When and how?

Read the story and sit with it quietly for a moment...

Luke 14:12-14

He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

What did you notice?

What does it mean 'you will be repaid at the resurrection'? (Hint it's not giving to get!!!)

#4 WHAT I SERVE SHOWS WHAT I REALLY THINK OF YOU

The amount of effort I go to, shows how much I respect you. The Roman Emperor Elagabalus invited his enemies to a meal and served them live parrot, rotten fish guts and fake food made of stone. What he served showed what he really thought of them! Of course, what you are served also depends on what your host can afford. But if you really care you make some effort.

Do we play this power game in Australia? When and how?

Read the story and sit with it quietly for a moment...

Luke 14:16-24

A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses...

'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.'

What did you notice?

Notice what God provides for us 'a great banquet' (literally a mega-feast!). Like Psalm 23:6. What's good news here for us?

A TABLE GRACE BY MOTHER TERESA

*Make us worthy, Lord, to serve our fellow human beings,
throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger.*

*Give them through our hands this day their daily bread,
and by our understanding love, give peace and joy.*