

# Beloved Community Tables



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“Like the sacramental use of water, bread, and wine, friendship takes what’s common in human experience and turns it into something holy.” -Eugene Peterson



# The Table is a Mystery Revealed

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- 01 Sacred:** The table is a holy place where shared meals become a spiritual practice that shapes our lives to become more like Jesus. Over time, we are nourished physically and spiritually, disciplined in our faith, and molded into servants living in true community.
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- 02 Important:** Eating together is essential for family bonding, health, and mutual sacrifice. The “one another” commands in scripture remind us that we cannot practice our faith in isolation. We are often accustomed to attending events, but we must remember the significance of the table as a place where true communion and fellowship are practiced. The table fosters deeper connections and spiritual growth that cannot be achieved alone.
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- 03 Transformative:** Modern culture has shifted from communal meals to individual, entertainment-focused eating. However, the table remains a transformative and countercultural space that shapes us through spiritual practices. It encourages us to slow down, humble ourselves, serve others, and engage with people at different stages of life. At the table, we learn to love and listen, which will feel distinctly different from the patterns of this world because it is.
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# Mystery of the Meal

# Steward the Mystery

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**01 Principle: Spending time preparing for hospitality is a sacred act and a meaningful investment by the host. The daily effort of preparing and sharing meals plays a crucial role in creating a welcoming and nurturing table.**

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**02 Application: As a table host, you commit to putting effort and planning into stewardship of the meal. It requires communication, hosting, preparation, and consistency. When the table is set it is amazing how much Christ is revealed in your home and at your table.**

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**03 Scripture: "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." (Acts 2:46)**

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# See the Mystery

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- 01 Principle:** Recognize the mystery in the mundane aspects of the meal—food, drink, candles, faces of people, decoration, and acts of service.
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- 02 Application:** As a host, commit to pointing out Christ in every aspect of the meal. Ensure that you are not so distracted that you miss the divine presence of God. People often overlook the sacred in the ordinary; your role is to pause and highlight all God is doing.
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- 03 Scripture:** “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)
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# Share the Mystery

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**01 Principle: Invite and share the experience with others.**

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**02 Application: As a table host, strive to balance close connections with open seats. Ensure that your tables do not become closed groups. Neighbors and newcomers should be invited, and the group should avoid becoming insular. Work to ensure that your table is open and welcoming to everyone. We recognize this is a delicate conversation, but in grace, be willing to share with others.**

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**03 Scripture: "So go into the highways and byways, and invite everyone you find to the wedding feast." (Matthew 22:9)**

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# Manners of the Meal



# Christ is the Head of the Table

1. **Principle:** Acknowledge Christ as the head of the table, guiding all interactions.
2. **Application:** Begin each meal with a prayer, inviting Christ to be present and lead your gathering.
3. **Scripture:** “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20)

# Be Present at the Table

- **Principle:** Encourage everyone to be fully present at the table.
- **Application:** Silence entertainment and cell phones to focus on conversation and fellowship.
- **Scripture:** “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)

# Everyone is Equal at the Table

1. **Principle:** Ensure everyone is treated equally, reflecting self-sacrifice and mutual respect.
2. **Application:** Avoid favoritism; give equal portions and service. Strive to serve and love everyone despite different needs.
3. **Scripture:** “When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing?” (1 Corinthians 11:20–22)

# Consider one another at the Table

1. **Principle:** Show respect and consideration for everyone's needs.
2. **Application:** Accommodate dietary restrictions, convictions, and time constraints. Show radical hospitality to all.
3. **Scripture:** "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves." (Romans 15:1)

# Participate at the Table

1. **Principle:** Encourage everyone to contribute to the meal experience.
2. **Application:** Ensure everyone has a role to play, whether it's through setup, cleanup, or small tasks.
3. **Scripture:** "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." (1 Peter 4:10)

# Everyone a Servant at the Table

1. **Principle:** Foster a spirit of service among all participants.
2. **Application:** Encourage acts of service and selflessness, reflecting Christ's love.
3. **Scripture:** "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

# Table Host Responsibilities

# Preparation and Communication

## Advanced Notice

1

**Principle:** Inform participants about the meal in advance for planning purposes.

2

**Application:** Provide details ahead of time to help participants prepare.

3

**Scripture:** "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." (1 Corinthians 14:40)

## Inclusion

1

**Principle:** Make accommodations for dietary needs, manage time, and financial contributions.

2

**Application:** Be mindful of everyone's circumstances.

3

**Scripture:** "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

# Facilitating Participation

## Breakdown Tasks

1

**Principle:** Simplify contributions to make them less intimidating and more accessible.

2

**Application:** Ensure everyone can participate in some way.

3

**Scripture:** "So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:5)

## Set Environment

1

**Principle:** Be aware of and make space for different temperaments and social comfort levels.

2

**Application:** Foster an environment where everyone feels comfortable.

3

**Scripture:** "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." (Romans 15:7)

# Addressing Individual Needs

## Sensitivity

1

**Principle:** Adjust discussions and prayers based on participants' needs and traumas.

2

**Application:** Be sensitive to the emotional and spiritual needs of participants.

3

**Scripture:** "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." (Romans 12:15)

## Personal Attention

1

**Principle:** Deal with personal issues one-on-one to avoid misunderstandings.

2

**Application:** Address concerns privately when necessary.

3

**Scripture:** "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you." (Matthew 18:15)

# Creating Traditions

## Rituals

1

**Principle:** Establish traditions like lighting a candle or shared tasks to foster a sense of community.

2

**Application:** Create meaningful rituals to enhance the sense of belonging.

3

**Scripture:** "Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." (Deuteronomy 11:19)

## Family Atmosphere

1

**Principle:** Include all ages in the meal, promoting intergenerational interaction.

2

**Application:** Ensure that everyone, regardless of age, feels included.

3

**Scripture:** "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

# Building and Maintaining Community



# Setting Expectations

## Welcoming Atmosphere

1. **Principle:** Make new participants feel comfortable and set clear expectations.
2. **Application:** Ensure newcomers know what to expect and feel at ease.
3. **Scripture:** “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” (Romans 15:7)

## Commitment and Vulnerability

1. **Principle:** Encourage consistent attendance to maintain emotional dynamics and intimacy.
2. **Application:** Foster a sense of commitment and openness.
3. **Scripture:** “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25)



# Expanding the Community

## Keeping room at the Table

1. **Principle:** Always make space for new participants, especially those seeking connection.
2. **Application:** Be open to welcoming new people.
3. **Scripture:** “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)

## Balancing Size

1. **Principle:** Manage group size to maintain intimacy while being open to new members.
2. **Application:** Seek pastoral help and conversations to manage this balance.
3. **Scripture:** “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20)



# Recognizing and Sharing the Impact

# Power of Shared Meals

**Principle:** Acknowledge that these meals are a powerful display of love and can be life-changing.

1. **Application:** Share stories of life change and “God stories” to promote and encourage.
2. **Scripture:** “They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.” (Acts 2:46-47)

## Mutual Benefit

1. **Principle:** Recognize that both hosts and guests benefit from the shared experience.
2. **Application:** Emphasize the mutual enrichment that comes from gathering together.
3. **Scripture:** “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17)

