

We Eat Together

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Date: 08 September 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Well, amen. Have you been blessed by the service so far this morning? I know I have as well.

Look down in the seat next to you. You might be blessed a little bit more. There's candy, okay? The GA is the Girls in Action on Wednesday night. It's part of our kids' ministry. Just left that as a little treat for you. So anybody like sour gummy worms?

Right there. First one up. There you go. I don't have any more. It's not that kind of service, all right? I'm not Santa Claus. Let's go to the Book of Acts, please. We're continuing on with our sermon series on community, talking about how we can learn some lessons from the early church back in the Book of Acts.

By the way, if your kids haven't gone back to Children's Church, you can do that. Slip out any time here. They're ready for them back there. This is our third sermon in this series, and we kind of started out a couple weeks ago talking about how we study truth together.

Four primary ingredients we've been starting out. Two weeks ago, we covered the first one. Last week, the second one. We're looking at the third one today. We'll conclude it next Sunday.

[1 : 1 6] And these are four key ingredients we find from Acts chapter 2 in our study of how the early church, kind of the first church that was established by Jesus, how it thrived, how it took off, how it really grew into the missional organization and almost organism that was alive, living, breathing, and powerfully moving across the world.

How did all of that happen? And how many centuries later can our church be the same kind of church as those early churches in the Book of Acts?

So, we study truth together. That's one of the key ingredients that they did. And our takeaway from that Sunday was, will I commit to grow with my church community in studying truth together?

Together. Our dGroups are launching this week. All right? Today's the day that we've been looking forward to for quite some time in the launch of our discipleship groups that are meeting throughout the week.

And that's going to be one of the key ingredients of our groups is studying truth together. Last Sunday, we talked about koinonia, that fascinating Greek word that means fellowship.

[2 : 3 4] All right? And we talked about what that looks like in Christian community. What does fellowship look like? And our takeaway last Sunday was, will I commit to partner with my church community in fellowship together?

Today, we are going to look at the third ingredient. And I'm not going to let the cat out of the bag yet, but we'll get there in just a moment. Reminds you of this quote, the church is the church only when it exists for others.

Let's try to read it together, can we? The church is the church only when it exists for others. Because the church is not about us. It's about God.

And God's heart is for those who are not yet in his kingdom. He wants all of his children brought in. So the church is for, it's not about me. It's about my brothers and sisters in Christ.

And it's about those outside these walls who God wants to bring in to our fellowship, bring in to our community. So we have to remember that that is a principle that God wants us to understand.

[3 : 37] Acts 2.42, can I trouble you to stand one more time? I'll promise I'll leave you seated after that. Let's stand together as we read God's word together. Acts 2.42, I'm reading from the New Living Translation.

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to sharing in meals, including the Lord's Supper, and to prayer.

A deep sense of awe came over them all. And the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. All the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had.

Amazing picture, isn't it? They sold their properties and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity.

All the while, praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day, here's the result. The Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

[4 : 41] And we pray together. God, I pray right now that you would move mightily in our church. That you would turn our hearts. God, just a moment ago, we sang the words, Christ, be magnified in me.

From the altar of my life, that means we've got to sacrifice it. We've got to lay it down on the altar and let you be magnified. Let you be preeminent. Let you be number one, first and foremost.

And when we do that, God, we reap all that is you. We reap all your goodness. We get to enjoy all of your love and your mercy and your grace and your hope.

And we unlock all the blessings that you so desperately want to give us. I pray that you would be magnified in our lives and in our church. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You may be seated.

Thank you for standing. So, before we dive into this third ingredient of what healthy church community looks like, I want to wish all of you a happy National Date Nut Bread Day.

[5 : 47] And I'm a little offended that nobody wished me that before the service this morning. Thank you, Jackson. You're a good man.

I don't care what they say about you. You're a good guy. I'm messing. But listen, I had to look that up, all right? I was looking up on the national food calendar. Yes, there is such a thing.

What is Sunday, September 8th, going to be? And I don't know if you're aware, but there's a little bit of controversy because some people would say that December 22nd is National Date Nut Bread Day.

I'm more of a September 8th guy. But if you're a September 22nd person, that's all right. We should still be able to get along, okay? But I'm right. And today is National Date Nut Bread Day.

Do you think that our country is a little bit obsessed with food? Yeah, we are. We really are, man. America is the land of plenty.

[6 : 49] Let's look at this picture for a minute. Anybody know who these people are? Any of them? Yeah? Yeah. So you're obsessed with food too because it means you watch it on TV. You don't just eat it.

It entertains you on the screen. That's right. You got Gordon Ramsay up there. You got the first celebrity. Okay. The first celebrity chef that I remember is down here in the right-hand corner.

What's her name? Julia Child. Look at y'all. Anybody under the age of 30 didn't say that, but that's all right. Julia Child. You said it? Look at you.

Good job. You've been educated well, son. All right. Julia Child kind of laid the pathway for these cooking shows on TV. You got Rachel Ray over there, and you got Reed Drummond right up here in Oklahoma.

Of course, you got Gordon Ramsay, and he's probably my least favorite because he's kind of mean. But that's all right. And then you've got Emeril Lagasse. He was my favorite growing up. He always would throw seasoning on his food and say, bam, it was awesome.

[7 : 48] And then you've got Guy Fieri, who is now just, he is his own person. So he's a unique character. Listen, there are so many others we could have put up on that screen, but I was just trying to pull some up there and make the point that food is not just sustenance in our culture, right?

We don't just eat to live more often than not. We live to eat. And it has become a world unto itself.

That's right. It's a hobby. It's an occupation. Now it's not just I want to make food for my family or even I want to make food for a restaurant.

It's, you know, I want to cook food on TV and entertain millions with my cooking. Truth is, there's power in food. There's power in a good meal.

You don't believe that. Look at this quote by Oscar Wilde. After a good dinner, one can forgive anybody, even one's own relatives. Sometimes we see that around the holidays.

[8 : 56] When you're hungry and angry, it's a really bad combination. It comes out to being hangry, right? Nobody wants to be there.

There is a lot of power in food. There's a lot of ways to turn your mind around, ways to turn your emotions around, ways to help you think a little more clearly.

I know there's a lot of science behind that. I don't know all the science behind it, but that's okay. We don't have to get bogged down in that. But I want to share this quote by you by a chef named Heston Blumenthal.

It says, to me, food is as much about the moment, the occasion, the location, and the company as it is about the taste. That's an interesting thought.

And the truth is, food has kind of always been that way. You go back throughout human history, back to the Romans and the Greeks, and all societies primarily have centered so much of their culture and their community around food.

[10 : 02] So it's interesting that God created mankind in his image. And throughout human history, for as long as we've been around, we have been a people that would like to feast, would like to gather around food.

When we have meetings, we usually make something for the meeting. And Jesus did not fight that. Fact is, he embraced it.

He modeled it. We get to learn a lot from how Jesus was with food. So let's look back at our text verse this morning. Acts 2 42.

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. Two weeks ago, we studied truth together, right? And to fellowship. Last week, we fellowshiped together.

And to sharing in meals. So today, we eat together. Now, I don't mean we're going to eat together right now, okay?

[11 : 07] I'm sorry. I didn't provide snacks. The GAs were looking out for y'all, and they put food out there for you, okay? So if you need to get a little snack while we're eating, I won't judge you. While we're studying here, I won't judge you.

That's all right. Yeah, we can eat together right now. But listen to this. Eating together unites us in our common need. Eating together unites us in our common need.

The funny thing is, no matter where we are around the world, people eat. People need to eat.

No matter what side of life you're from, the wrong side of the tracks or the right side of the tracks. No matter what your socioeconomic background is or how much money you have in your bank account. No matter what race you are or how you're looked at or who your friends are.

We all have this common need to eat. So eating together unites us in our common need. That this is something that we all share in common, this need for physical sustenance.

[12 : 10] So truth is, people like oftentimes the same foods. I watched this thing on Food Network TV about chefs, famous celebrity chefs and their favorite foods they like to eat.

And you know what most of them said? I don't want to go home and cook a gourmet meal because I do that for work. I want to pull through McDonald's and get a Big Mac.

I want to go through Taco Bell and get a whatever thing is going to give you indigestion later. But rich and poor alike eat oftentimes the same foods because they like the same foods.

You go to cultures all around this world. I've had the opportunity to travel to all 50 states and even 20-something countries around the world growing up. And I saw that street foods in all these different countries are enjoyed and prized and prioritized by everyone.

It's like, man, no matter who you are, if you're visiting someone rich or someone poor, they all say, oh, you got to go down to this food stand over here and try this delicacy. They love it. They take pride in it.

[13 : 25] We may have little else in common, but here in Texas, we like our Tex-Mex. We like our barbecue. We like our steak.

We like our burgers, our chili, basically any other way that mankind has invented to digest red meat. If there's any vegans in here, I apologize for that, okay?

You know you're in the minority. You live in Texas, all right? That's all right. Nothing against you. But we are bound together by this. And we're bound together by our common need for food.

So let's look at what the scriptures have to say. Isaiah 55, verses 1 and 2. Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink, even if you have no money. Take your choice of wine and milk.

It's all free. Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food.

[14 : 22] Isn't that interesting that he's casting it in these terms of our physical need for food? Of course, the prophet Isaiah is talking about the words of God. He's talking about going to God for our strength.

But he's appealing to our need and our sense of hunger and filling that need inside us physically. And he's saying, just like you can fill this need, you can come and drink of the well of God, even if you have no money.

And he will give you the satisfaction that you crave. Once again, he's appealing to their physical hunger, their desire for sustenance.

You know, man, they didn't have it great in Egypt, did they? The children of Israel, they were under oppression, and then God liberated from that. And he took them on this 40-year wandering in the desert. But all the while, he kept this promised land in front of them and said, hey, listen, just hang with me.

I'm going to take you on the journey you've got to go on. But the promised land is going to hold for you the sustenance you desire, the satisfaction you desire. And he cast it in the terms of food.

[15 : 36] Because that's where we live. It's the world we live in. Some of us have lived there a little too much. Okay? I'm one to talk. I'm right there with you.

But I will have you know that since I started training for my 5K, I'm down 25 pounds. Okay? Yes. Sorry. That was blatantly asking for a clap.

And I apologize. But I had to let you know how I'm doing. All right? I haven't forgotten it. I haven't quit training. I actually went out and ran outside this morning. I've done a little more in the gym while the weather's been so hot.

But, yeah, I actually went outside. Wasn't it nice this morning? Like 50-something degrees when we woke up? Okay. I'll do with that any September in Texas. That'll work.

Eating together lowers our defenses. Eating together unites us in our common need, but it also lowers our defenses. Isn't that interesting? Think about that for a minute. Sometimes you can be in maybe a little bit of an argument with your husband or wife or something, and you're both hungry, and you know that's probably part of it.

[16 : 42] And then you go eat. And then afterwards, what were we fighting about? Why does it matter so much? Whether it's a really good night's sleep you crave or a really good meal you crave, sometimes it's just a physical need that makes everything seem worse.

But once you're fed, once you're satisfied, it lowers some of those defenses, and it's like, hey, we can probably work this out. Food is maybe the only universal thing that really has the power to bring everyone together.

No matter what culture, everywhere around the world, people eat together. One of those chefs from that picture just a minute ago, Guy Fieri, said that. And I thought it was really applicable to what we're learning today.

Food is the universal language. It is this force that can bring us together, because one of the reasons for that is it does lower our defenses. It reminds us we all need this.

We all want this. And this can help us. And it helps us to lay down our weapons and eat together. So, Jesus practiced eating together.

[17 : 51] We're not just here to look on the screen and see what chefs had to say about food, all right? They're kind of in the business, so you think they're going to be slanted a little bit toward that. But Jesus himself practiced this.

And this is what we're going to study this morning. Jesus specifically is recorded eating together with others no fewer than 14 times throughout the New Testament.

Many other times, it's probably implied that he ate together. For instance, when he went to Zacchaeus' house, it's probably understood that they ate together, but I'm not counting that in the 14 times.

But we see specific instances of Jesus breaking bread and eating with others no fewer than 14 times. Some of his most astonishing miracles and meaningful instruction came around the table, around food.

So, Jesus didn't do that accidentally. And that information is not included in our holy scriptures accidentally. God could have just told us the instruction.

[19 : 01] He could have just told us about the miracles without including the fact that they were eating together. But he wanted us to know that. Because there's something special about sharing food, isn't there?

In our discipleship groups that are about to start, first one starts tonight. And we've got two on Tuesday. We've got one on Wednesday. We've got one on Monday night, tomorrow night. Throughout the week, we have discipleship groups that are going to be gathering together.

And we've prioritized eating together. Doesn't have to be a full meal. Could just be a snack. But we will eat together every time.

Listen, that can be difficult to coordinate. But we think it's worth it. Think it's worth it because, number one, Jesus did it. And number two, it unites us together.

And number three, it lowers our defenses. And as we eat, we talk about our week. The week that passed. The week that's coming up. Time after time.

[20 : 06] Meeting after meeting. We're beginning to grow together as we eat together. So, Jesus practiced this with his disciples.

With others. The Bible says with publicans and sinners. Those who were the least of society. Those who were looked down on by others. Jesus put his reputation on the line.

And went and not only spoke to them. He sat with them. He went in their homes. He ate with them. He fellowshiped with them. He practiced community with them.

Luke chapter 9 and verse 16. It's just one of those instances. Taking the five loaves and the two fish. Looking up to heaven. Jesus gave thanks and broke them.

Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. Jesus understood that it was going to be difficult to teach the valuable gospel message of God's kingdom to these thousands of people gathered there without first meeting their physical need.

[21 : 12] Y'all, there is a principle there that you and I have to understand. You can't just beat people over the head with the Bible. You got to meet their physical needs first.

Sometimes their physical needs may be too much for us to be able to meet. But that should never be an excuse for not meeting any need.

There is a story that I heard a long time ago about an old man who went down to the beach and he saw a little boy out there picking up starfish that had washed ashore and throwing them back into the ocean.

Very good. He's heard that one before. I like it. The old man was like, Son, you're never going to save all these starfish.

He said, No, I'm not. But I can save this one. And I can save this one. And that is the point that we must carry through with us. I heard a preacher put it this way. Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone.

[22 : 12] Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone. We're not the Father in heaven. We can't meet every need. But God places people in our path that we may be able to meet their need.

Jesus didn't feed the whole world while he was down here on this earth. But he fed these 5,000. And time and time again, he didn't heal all of the physical problems in the world.

But he healed the ones who came to him. He met the needs of the ones who crossed his path. Can you and I honestly say that we meet the needs that we can? Whether they're physical or they're spiritual.

Maybe they're emotional. Maybe they're mental. Maybe there are people with problems in your life that God could use you powerfully to help them.

But we've got to open up our heart and be willing. Say, God, use me. Just like you helped people, I know that now I'm here on this earth as your hands and feet.

[23 : 15] And I want you to help me, work through me, and help others. So Jesus practiced this. Time and time again, we could show scripture after scripture of Jesus using food to help others, to open up their ears, to lower their defenses, to make them more receptive to what he had to say.

And that's why we prioritize this way of fellowship, eating together. Plus, number two, heaven promises that someday we're going to be eating together. Someday we're going to be eating together.

Anybody know what that's called? The marriage supper of the Lamb. You can read about it in the book of Revelation. We don't have to spend a lot of time diving into what that looks like or what's going to be served, okay? I know what's going to be served.

But if I say what I want there, it probably won't be the same as what you want. But God promises that everything will be beyond anything that we can comprehend in its majesty, its glory, how wonderful and great it is in heaven someday.

So whatever we're going to do in heaven, whatever we're going to eat in heaven, it's going to be the best, all right? I think personally it's going to be fajitas, but you may not want that.

[24 : 33] If you do, we all need to pray for you, all right? But that's okay. The reality is God promises us this wonderful supper in heaven.

Why would he do that if he didn't know that food was so important to us and apparently important to him? So we're going to eat together.

But the thing about that is Jesus is always the center. No matter what example you can find in the Bible of eating together, of Jesus using food, Jesus was always the main attraction.

He was always the center, the uniting host. That should characterize, that should describe our times of eating together as a body, as a community.

Jesus should always be the center, the uniting host. Revelation 3.20 says this, look, I stand at the door and I knock. If you hear my voice and you open the door, I will come in and what does it say?

[25 : 43] We will share a meal together as friends. I love that paraphrase of what the Bible verse says because it really makes it clear for us what he's trying to get across here.

He's saying, I'm knocking at the door, open the door, I will come in and we will fellowship. We will have community. We will be friends together.

Y'all, I promise you, some of us, Jesus is knocking on the door of our heart right now. We've got to let him in. He wants to come in and share a meal with us, so to speak. He wants to be our friend.

He wants to have a real meaningful relationship with you. What happens when you just see people from time to time around the community and you say hi to them and then maybe in conversation somebody brings up that person and you say, oh yeah, I know who you're talking about.

They seem like a nice guy or she seems like a nice girl. Oh, do you know her? Well, I mean, I know her to say hi to, you know. We're not that close, but they seem like a nice person.

[26 : 48] But what happens when you have dinner with that person? Do you just sit there in stony silence and eat your food? Be awkward, right? If you do, there probably won't be a second invite to dinner, right?

Wow, that was weird. They just looked at us the whole time as they ate their enchiladas. But no, you talk. You talk, you share stories.

Where are you guys from originally? Oh, you're from around here? That's awesome. How'd you meet? Where'd you go to school? You find the things you have in common. Do you like the Cowboys?

Good. Because if you didn't, you'd have to leave right now. By the way, for all those who are wondering, the Cowboys re-signed Dak Prescott. He is the quarterback once again. Trying to get that out.

In case you were checking your phone, it happened. Just let it go. You can read about it after church. Look, there are so many things that you and I can have in common. But we find those out oftentimes over meals, sitting down and talking.

[27 : 50] That's the picture Jesus is painting. I'm standing at the door of your heart. Y'all, he's not talking to lost people here. Now, he wants them to invite him in as well. But the reality is, Jesus wants us, his children, to open the door to him.

He said, I already know you. You need to get to know me. And I want to reveal myself to you. And he uses this example of sharing a meal together as friends.

How powerful is that? We can't miss that. So, that's why we're emphasizing that in our discipleship groups. It's amazing to me sometimes how people evaluate groups, small groups, by kind of similarly to how they evaluate a lot of other things in life by what they personally get out of it.

Now, careful, don't get offended here, okay? They'll say, well, you know, small groups just aren't really my thing. They don't really work for me. But you're kind of missing the point here.

In a small group, you give yourself away. That's what Jesus is telling us. I want to give myself away. I want to open myself up to you.

[29 : 09] And that's what we do in the groups. We open ourselves up to each other because we love each other. or at least we say we do because we love God and we love God's people and we love the people outside this church, in this community.

And so if we do, then we open ourselves up. In a small group, you got to give yourself away. The writer in Acts did not list what these groups got out of it.

they listed what they gave. They listed how they served one another. How they opened themselves up to one another.

That was the takeaway from these early D groups that became the most powerful church movement that we've ever seen. And we've been trying to get back to it ever since.

So Acts goes on and on and on about how extensively how carefully the church cared for one another. How they gave to each other.

[30 : 19] Their generosity that they found in Jesus Christ was then modeled for each other. Should be a regular occurrence that you care for someone in this church.

Should be a regular occurrence that we care for one another. That should be common in our community and it should be most common right here in this group of people. Isaiah 25 Matthew 25 Revelation 19 all reference this coming feast in heaven where God will prepare this wonderful sumptuous meal for his people.

So you and I are going to eat together. We're going to fellowship together. We're going to have community together whether you like it or not. Whether it's your thing or not it's gonna happen in heaven someday.

So why not get into this heavenly habit right now. So it would have been really awesome if we'd had a big old meal ready for you in the fellowship hall as soon as this church was over. WSC before church said so we eating together today or what?

And I was like well the GAs took care of that for us. here's the takeaway. Will I commit to unite with my church be part of this community by eating together?

[31 : 41] Two weeks ago we said will I commit to grow with my church by studying truth together? Last week we said will I commit to partner with my church in fellowship?

This week we're saying will I commit to unite with my church community by eating together? We're going to do that in groups. We do that here at the Lord's Supper. We do that when we have our meals together sometimes in the fellowship hall back there.

But beyond that y'all you can get together outside of those times. God wants us to do that. He wants you to invite people over to your house. Get to know them. Build strong bonds and relationships in this church and it doesn't always have to be the people in your Sunday school class.

It doesn't always have to be the people that you already hang out with. Sometimes God wants you to reach across the aisle so to speak and find somebody that you don't know as well and say hey I want to get to know you better.

God's brought us into this church at the same time together so that must be for a reason. I want to break down any potential walls between us and understand life from your perspective.

[32 : 46] You understand life from my perspective and then we see what God has taught us and how God is growing us and man iron sharpens iron. Right? We grow together but sometimes it takes an invitation to dinner.

Let's pray together. God I pray that right now we would extend that same invite to others. You have invited us to your dinner. You've invited us to learn everything about you.

You've given us what you call the bread of life. You've given us what you call the water of life. You've promised us this sumptuous feast in heaven someday and you've encouraged us to fellowship together by eating together just like you did when you were here.

I pray that you would use this to inspire us to take active steps toward building community with one another in this church and that the result of that the fruit of that would be people see a group of Christians united like never before.

In community like never before and continually inviting others in to that community. And then maybe God can add to our number just like he did back in the book of Acts.

[34 : 02] Maybe more people will be drawn to a relationship with Jesus not just by how much scripture we can quote them.

That's important. But following your example saying hey let's let's go for a meal. Let's get together for lunch. Let's have coffee.

Let's sit down come over my house for dinner and make an effort to meet them where they are where God met us.

And then maybe he'll use us to make a powerful impact in their life. But God first I want to extend an invitation to those who maybe have never yet invited you in.

With our heads bowed is there anybody in the room that would say I need to start the relationship with Jesus today for myself. Not asking how long you've been in church. I'm not asking how much you put in the offering plate.

[35 : 01] That has nothing to do with anything. I'm not asking if you've been baptized or not. I'm asking if you have a personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus. And if you say I don't have that and I want to talk about it would you slip your hand up and I'll pray for you.

Say I want to become God's child. I want to have a relationship with him. Thank you. What about the rest of us? Say maybe God has put something on my heart. Maybe somebody I could reach out to.

Build a bridge to. Maybe have over for dinner or something like that. Say there's somebody that God wants me to reach out to and start a relationship with or strengthen a relationship with. Would you slip your hand up? I'll pray for you as well.

Thank you. Thank you. All over the room. Thank you. God you know exactly who those people are. Those faces. You know what the needs are. The complications. I pray that you would work in our midst right now.

Give people the boldness. Sometimes if you're not a naturally a people person it's hard to step out and make the first move. But God by your spirit draw us together. Unite us.

[36 : 01] Steve prayed earlier before the offering. Unite our church God. Build this strong community.