

**Intro:** Garrison Pastor Matthew 9.

Building out our discipleship framework. Now, this series is a part of a larger whole that we started back in Fall 2020 that we've called Rhythms and Formation. Each fall we've looked at the question, What does it mean to follow Jesus in the everyday stuff of life? How we've talked about it: Be with Jesus, Become like Jesus, and now—Do What Jesus Did.

Tim relaid the foundation for us last week. This week we're diving into our first practice.

### **Eating and Drinking.**

Now, what we're going into today might strike us as a strange place to start. When you think 'do what Jesus did' - you may think "cast out demons, heal the sick, preach the gospel"- which is true, we're going to get into all of that in the coming weeks. But you may not think "eat and drink with people far from God...

It's actually not that strange when we look at the way Jesus talks about Himself in the Gospels. Something interesting is Jesus repeats a certain phrase 3 times in Luke that reveals a lot about Himself. His heart, His desire revealed through His words and actions.

3 times Jesus says something that goes like 'The Son of man came...'(son of man is a title Jesus used that has a bunch of theological implications. It is a reference to Jesus' humanity, being both God and man. But it's also a reference to Messianic prophecy in Daniel 7, where the coming Messiah is described as a son of man.)

- The son of man came to seek and save the lost.--God cares about saving people far from Himself and separated by sin.
- The son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life for the ransom of many.--God comes in humility, emptying Himself and giving away His life to save us.
- The son of man came, *eating and drinking*. Huh?

One of these is not like the other. The first two are pretty expected. Last one not so much.

Tim Chester wrote a book called Meals with Jesus and his explanation on this is super helpful. He says, the first two statements, are why Jesus came. It's his **mission**. The last statement is his **method**.

Not his only method. But one of the primary methods of ministering to people far from God was sitting at the table with them. One meal at a time. It was a rhythm in His life.

Eating and drinking over meals was one of Jesus' primary methods of ministry on earth. It's what He did... alot. Over and over again.

Jesus is described as a 'glutton and a drunkard'. Which He wasn't. But think about it, how often do you have to be going to parties and eating with others for that to be mistaken about you?

A lot. In fact just in the Gospel of Luke alone, there are over 50 references to Jesus + food. In Matthew there's over 90. Here's just a few from Luke.

Chapter 5: Dinner at Levi's house aka Matthew. Tax collectors and sinners.

Chapter 7: Dinner at Simon the Pharisees house. Anointed.

Chapter 9. Feeds the 5000.

Chapter 10. Mary and Martha preparing a meal

Chapter 11. 'Dinner with the Pharisees'-- Rebukes them.

Chapter 14. 'When you throw a party, invite the poor'. At a meal and teaches.

Chapter 15. Prodigal sons. Ends in a banquet. A feast

Chapter 16. Parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Rich man eats like a king, Lazarus eating scraps.

Chapter 19. Dinner at Zaccheus' house

Chapter 22. The Last Supper- Passover/ communion.

Chapter 24. Road to Emmaus--right after resurrection, breaks bread with two followers. Then goes to the disciples--do you have any food?

A few more that we see in the Gospels:

- First public act of ministry. Water into wine at a wedding.
- Reintroducing Himself and reinstating Peter to ministry, He stands on the beach grilling fish for his disciples. Which is a biblical case that cooking meat outside is close to the heart of God.

Robert Karris, wrote a book called Eating your Way through the Gospel of Luke - "In Luke's Gospel Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal."

Another said "If you're reading the Gospel of Luke and not getting hungry, you're not paying attention." Love that.

### **The rhythm of eating and drinking.**

Now, this is a large way Jesus spent His time. But you may ask the question, why? Lets look at Matthew 9, and we'll see just that.

*10 And as Jesus<sup>2</sup> reclined at table in the house, behold, many<sup>9</sup> tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.*

First thing we need to see here. These meals are much different than what we're used to.

It says 'Jesus reclined at table.' We might just read over that and think, oh, he's just sitting down at a table just like we would at my house'. Not so much. In many Middle Eastern cultures, like in Pakistan, Lebanon, or Iran, it is customary to lounge or recline, with the person leaning on one side with their legs slightly bent facing the table or serving area (on the floor) on fluffy pillows or benches designed for lounging while being served a meal.

So you're almost in a laying down position. But that's not the only difference. To recline at table means you're there for hours. This isn't a rushed meal.

For me, one of my biggest and self pet peeves is when I show up to dinner anywhere and have to wait for it to be made. It's terrible, I'm working on it. So this would be terrible for me. Because they're reclined, eating slowly for up to 4 or 5 hours, some scholars say.

**Jesus doesn't spend his life rushing from one thing to another, he's spending unhurried and focused time with these people.**

Keep going. **behold,**

Any time you see the word behold in your Bibles you need to start paying attention. In the Greek it's a word to separate sentences and prepare for what's coming next. BEHOLD. LOOK! Pay attention to what's next!

**many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.**

Behold. Look! He's eating dinner with sinners. He reclined at table with sinners. In our culture this sounds very mean to say it this way - When this word is used in the gospels as sort of a people grouping, it's referring to. for those who the society declared "unclean, far from God, outcasts and rejects."

Depending on your background or familiarity with Jesus, these people would be the exact opposite. you'd expect Jesus to be around.

See, Jesus was thought to be at minimum, a great and upcoming rabbi, but by many, the Messiah. In Jewish tradition, to have a high standing in the eyes of God meant you maintained a level of purity. There were a number of ways that you'd have to do this. One, would be things like sacrifices. To worship God, you'd have to make certain sacrifices throughout the year to be forgiven and made pure in God's sight.

You'd see the rabbis and priests having to wash themselves and their clothing regularly to maintain their purity. You'd have to avoid certain settings like gravesites. And you'd have to avoid certain people. And sinners would fall right into that category. Because they are impure, unclean, unable to approach God. So the fear of those who do maintain their purity is that they'd be made unclean by coming into contact with someone like this. So they'd avoid them. Now it's

ironic because pharisees didn't understand we're all sinners. But that was their posture nonetheless

**But here's Jesus, at table with sinners. The unclean. He was relaxed, spending time, eating 4-5 hour meals with tax collectors and sinners.**

The worst of the worst. Like we said last week, tax collectors are like traitors to society. Local people from the culture set up by the Romans to take money from the people they've conquered. Often, they'd take even more money to extort people. Sellouts to the Roman government.

And sinners. Outcasts. People in that culture that no one would want to be seen with. And people took notice of this.

*11 And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, <sup>b</sup>“Why does your teacher eat with <sup>a</sup>tax collectors and sinners?”*

The religious leaders see Jesus spending all this time with sinners and tax collectors and they don't like it. Doesn't he know that they can make Him unclean? He's supposed to be a rabbi, or the Messiah. That's not what He should be doing.

So they go behind his back and ask the disciples. But Jesus overhears and gives us a beautiful insight to His heart for us.

*12 But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 Go and learn <sup>l</sup>what this means: <sup>l</sup>‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For <sup>k</sup>I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

**God's heart is for the sinner.** Jesus came for the sick, those in need of saving, far from God, to reconcile us to God.

And something we've got to see here is that you cannot separate Jesus' words in v12-13 from his actions in v 11. Like we said earlier, v12-13 is the mission, v11 is one of the methods.

Jesus' sharing meals and spending time with sinners is one of the means by which He shows His love for those far from God. See, it's not just about the food and drink. Or the time. It's about what He's doing with the food, with the drink and with the time.

**He's loving those far from God one meal at a time.**

Come back to me. Be in relationship with me. I love you!

Imagine what that would be like. People in this hyper religious society, knowing they're unworthy. Shamed by the religious elites. They believe it to be true. Knowing they're not good

enough. Knowing they're far from God. Wondering what God really thinks of them. Assuming He hates them and wants nothing to do with them.

And there's Jesus, going to them. At the table. Inviting Himself over. Meeting them where they're at. Putting His reputation on the line to be near them right? He's a glutton and a drunkard. No, He's a lover of sinners and after their hearts.

This is what Jesus is doing in this story and in story after story, as He's eating and drinking with those far from God—>

**He's loving those far from God.**

**AND**

**He's showing us what it looks like to be on mission.**

Yes, Jesus' rhythm of eating and drinking with those far from God shows us part of what it looks like to be on mission. Which goes right back to our question. Why this? Why's He spend His time eating and drinking? Why's this part of the method of mission?

**Because in order to be on mission with people far from God you have to know them.** And to know them, you have to spend time with them. A lot of time.

He spends hours at the table, over and over again. He spends copious amount time with people far from God. He knows them and He's known by them. You could say it's the first step of being on mission. Getting time with people. Sharing a meal.

So I think big concepts in the Christian world, and even our church setting is stuff like 'evangelism, mission, who are you building with? Have you shared the gospel?' All really good things. How do we reach people?

Sometimes we personally feel stuck on that question. Like who do we go to, who do we talk to? How do we talk to them? Sometimes we spin the wheels, come up with crazy ideas for how we're going to connect with people. Sometimes we chicken out and just feel lost in what to do.

I think many times what's going on is we're jumping to step 3 or 4. And we miss step 1. Just spending time with people. Grabbing coffee. Grabbing a drink. Going out to eat or inviting someone over. Learn their stories, asking questions. Where'd they go to school? Why'd they move to Charlotte? Why didn't they move away from Charlotte? Where do they live? Where do they want to live?

It's the first step. And you might think, huh, that doesn't sound extraordinary at all. Yeah that's the point. It's ordinary time spent with people far from God.

## And isn't it incredible that following Jesus would include something as ordinary as eating and drinking?

**Erica.** I have a good friend Erica that is really good at this. We work together. Have for year and a half or so. She's a mom of three, works hard at her job and is sneakily amazing at having conversations about God with people that don't know Him. So I picked up this pattern about a year ago. We'd be out at some dinner or lunch with coworkers and just somehow the topic of God comes up. And the convos were always really good. Very respectful, lots of good questions on both sides. And I'd usually just be like, that's random, look at that, cool how that came up. But then I started paying attention. It was Erica. Always asking questions that led to that discussion. I was shocked at how easy it was for Erica to broach the topic. But then I realized, it's not weird for the topic of God to come up because Erica has spent countless hours with these people. They go out to eat all the time, she's had them over to her house, she's been to their houses. And because of that, she has the relationship to know what questions to ask and how to do it. And there's trust both ways to actually have the conversations.

Simply, she's just friends with people that don't know God. And she makes time to be around them. And yeah, she brings up God, is that scary? Yeah. We'll get into all of that in the next two weeks. But she takes the first step. Get time with people.

And that's what leads to the bigger questions and conversations. Hey, I've heard you mention you mention your parents believed in God, what about you? Hey you said you used to go to church, why not now? You have to know people and care who they are. That's what begins to open those doors.

It's simple, ordinary time spent around others. I love how Simon Cary Holt puts it.

*"It's good to be reminded that the table is a very ordinary place, a place so routine and everyday that it's easily overlooked as a place of ministry...At its base, hospitality is about providing a space for God's Spirit to move. Setting a table, cooking a meal, washing the dishes is the ministry of facilitation: providing a context in which people feel loved and welcome and where God's Spirit can be at work in their lives. Hospitality is a very ordinary business, but in its ordinariness is its real worth...whatever it looks like, your own table is a sacred place."*

Doesn't that just free us up? Listen, we said this a couple weeks ago, Christians are all called to mission. Remember the quote? A church that isn't on mission is just a bunch of disobedient Christian hanging out. And the reality is I think we can all feel this sort of pressure that we're just bad at it. And ah, dang it, I'm failing. Not on mission.

On top of that, I think we all feel this sense that there's growing hostility towards Christians. Some for good reason and some because we live in a sinful world that's bent away from God. And I think we've all got some hesitance to step in because we're worried what others will think about what we believe.

And the issue becomes that some of us are really worried about the convo, and we're so worried about the convo, we don't put ourselves in the settings to have the convos.

Listen, Jesus can and will show up. Maybe it'll take more time than we expect. Maybe it'll be awkward and we won't know all the answers. But we've got to take the first step.

Just like Jesus, we let God use ordinary meals with ordinary people far from Him, in hopes that He would save them.

So what I'd like to do for the rest of our time is just give a very practical way how we can practice this together. The simple practical tip for this week is to have a plan. Have a plan for eating and drinking with people that don't know Jesus.

We're going to just take a look at the practice guide as we wrap up. Here's 4 points of how we're going to plan this out together in our groups.

1. Think of and list 3 people you would like to build with in various areas of your life — work, play, live.
2. Think of and list some activities you could do with these folks — workout, brewery, dinner, sport, etc.
3. Who are some folks from your CG you could invite as well?
4. Put it on your calendar and invite.

As you start to do this, I think you'll realize something pretty amazing. And that's that this practice is the only one you're already doing. Think about it, you already do this. .You eat 2-3 times a day. What would it look like to go out of your way to include the lost and the family in on this with you?

**Gabe story.** Couple years ago I met a guy that didn't know Jesus through some other friends. We were just hanging out and we found out we both like to hang out at the same coffee shop. So I said lets meet up. So we did, and it was just a normal hangout. Found out we have similar interests, talked about life. Met up again a few weeks later, then again and got to the point where we're grabbing coffee weekly. After 6 months or so, we start talking about God. I'm asking questions about his beliefs, he's asking questions about mine. Eventually almost a year later he comes to church with me. And meets some other Christians who start hanging out with him and doing the same things. And a couple months later of doing the same things, life hits the fan and he's asking some real questions about his own beliefs. And me and some other Christians who had just been hanging out in a coffee shop with him for almost a year, were able to be there for him. And God used all of that somehow to save Him.

I was already hanging at that coffee shop, just shifted the time and who I was doing it with. What would that look like for you? Maybe grab dinner or drinks after work? If you're virtual, maybe do a virtual happy hour with friends?

Some of us have rhythms with your groups and friends in our church. What would it look like to turn drinks and trivia, or run club, or mom group into being a rhythm of connecting with non believers?

Do what you're already doing—> with non believers.

**Gospel Conclusion:** We do this because it's exactly what Jesus has done for us.

**Pray.**

**Space for response.**

**Communion.**





**BIG PICTURE THOUGHTS:**

- Just sounds like one big joke - Jesus ate and drank a bunch hooray! Missing the beauty of what it means to spend time with people far from God
- Don't overstate - Jesus did lots of things besides eating and drinking. Show the importance of the meals themselves.
- He's eating and drinking with sinners to show the kingdom of God.
- The point is to show Jesus living everyday life and doing everyday things with people far from God.

Jesus ministry. Across from a table with other people.

Cultural context– meals. Not lame fast food. Hours. Meals were more like feasts or parties.

Not at meals, Jessu was talking about them. Parables. Kingdom life. Giant feast that people are and aren't invited.

Wine and wineskins as ministry before him.

Reclining at table in the kingdom of God.

Father has assigned for them a place at the table—comfort before his death.

Eating and drinking our fill of his presence.

Integral to the life and teaching of Jesus.

His critics, discredit him by calling him a glutton or a drunkard. How much are you eating and drinking to get that reputation?

We focus on what's wrong about parties. NOT about what's right.

John 2? THink about how we invite people to weddings. I'd love to have an uptight religious guy.