



RHYTHM OF LIFE

GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

November 6, 2016

Discussion Guide

Rhythm of the Table

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- IN YOUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN, WAS EATING TOGETHER VALUED AND PRACTICED? COULD YOU EXPLAIN WHY THIS WAS SO?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

OF FOOT WASHING AND SET THE SCENE FOR JESUS' MEAL WITH HIS DISCIPLES.

- READ JOHN 13.1-17, SEEKING TO USE YOUR IMAGINATION TO EXPERIENCE THE SCENE. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, SEEKING TO EXPERIENCE THE SCENE AS ONE OF THE DISCIPLES.
- IN WHAT WAYS DOES JESUS DEMONSTRATE HIS LOVE TO THOSE WHO ARE AT HIS TABLE? IN THESE ACTIONS, WHAT MESSAGE, IF ANY, IS BEING SENT TO THOSE WHO ARE EATING WITH HIM?
- DO YOU THINK PEOPLE HEAR THESE MESSAGES FROM THE WORLD THAT SURROUNDS THEM? WHAT MESSAGES DO THEY HEAR?
- IN WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET, JESUS DEMONSTRATES HOW HE WELCOMES ALL TO HIS TABLE AND THUS INTO HIS FAMILY. IN HIS COMMAND TO WASH THE FEET OF OTHERS, JESUS EXHORTS US TO EXTEND THIS SAME WELCOME TO OTHERS. WHAT FORMS MIGHT THIS TAKE TODAY?
- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, MIGHT THE TABLE STILL BE A VIABLE FORM OF EXTENDING A WELCOME AND INVITATION INTO FAMILY?
- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, MIGHT THE TABLE SPEAK A DIFFERENT MESSAGE THAN THE ONES PEOPLE HEAR?
- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO PRACTICE A RHYTHM OF TABLE AS A FAMILY? AS A CHURCH FAMILY?
- WHAT BENEFITS, IF ANY, MIGHT WE GAIN, FROM A RHYTHM OF TABLE?

- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO PRACTICE THIS RHYTHM AS A GROUP?

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

FOOT WASHING

THE PRACTICE OF FOOT WASHING IN THE ANCIENT WORLD WAS AN ACT OF NECESSITY. MOST ANCIENT CITIES DID NOT POSSESS RUNNING WATER AND NONE HAD ADEQUATE PLANS FOR DEALING WITH SEWAGE. RATHER, THE COMMON PRACTICE WAS EACH MORNING TO THROW THE HUMAN WASTE COLLECTED BY A FAMILY OUT THE WINDOW INTO THE STREET. THIS WASTE WOULD COMBINE WITH THAT OF ANIMALS OF BURDEN WHICH, ALONG WITH OTHER CREATURES, TRAVELED THE STREETS DAILY. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE IMAGE OF CITY LIFE AS GLAMOROUS AND WONDERFUL DOES NOT MATCH PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD. CITIES STANK WITH INCREASING AMOUNTS OF RAW SEWAGE SPILLING FROM THE STREETS, VIRTUAL BREEDING GROUNDS FOR DISEASE. (WITH THIS IN MIND, IT IS NOT HARD TO IMAGINE HOW CITIES HAVE SERVED AS THE EPICENTERS FOR PLAGUES AND PANDEMICS THROUGHOUT HISTORY.) SIMPLY TO WALK OUTSIDE ONE'S DOOR WOULD LEAD ONE TO COME IN CONTACT WITH THIS SEWAGE. IT WAS UNAVOIDABLE. THEREFORE, TO MOVE THROUGH DAILY LIFE WOULD LEAD ONE TO HAVE FEET AND SANDALS WHICH STANK.

WHEN IT CAME TIME TO EAT OR TO RE-ENTER ONE'S HOME, THE NORMAL PRACTICE WAS TO WASH THE SEWAGE (AND SMELL!) OFF OF ONE'S FEET. IF ONE HAD A SERVANT, THEN THIS WAS TYPICALLY A SERVICE PROVIDED BY A SERVANT, THOUGH NOT BY HIGH-RANKING SERVANTS. THE WASHING OF FEET WAS UNDERSTOOD TO BE THE MOST MENIAL AND DEGRADING OF TASKS. SOME RABBIS FORBADE JEWISH MASTERS FROM FORCING THEIR JEWISH SLAVES TO WASH THEIR FEET. INSTEAD, THEY ARGUED THIS TASK WAS RESERVED FOR GENTILES (MEKHILTA 1). WHEN INVITED TO A DINNER, IT WAS CUSTOMARY FOR THE HOST TO PROVIDE FOR FOOT WASHING AS A CURTESY TO HIS GUESTS, AND AS A MEANS OF MAKING THE DINNER MORE ENJOYABLE!

VERY LITTLE EVIDENCE OUTSIDE OF SCRIPTURE EXISTS REGARDING THE PRACTICE OF WASHING FEET AS AN ACT OF SERVICE TO ONE'S PEERS AS JESUS DID OF HIS DISCIPLES (JOHN 13.1-17). HOWEVER, TWO LATE JEWISH SOURCES SEEM TO INDICATE THAT THE PRACTICE WAS UNDERSTOOD TO BE AN ACT OF UTMOST DEVOTION AND LOVE. THERE IS ONE STORY OF RABBI ISHMAEL WHO LIVED AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE IN 70 A.D. HE WAS ADORED BY ALL, INCLUDING HIS MOTHER. HIS MOTHER DESIRED TO SHOW HER DEVOTION TO HER

SON BY WASHING HIS FEET AND THEN DRINKING THE WATER SHE HAD USED TO WASH THEM. HE FORBADE HER, WHICH RESULTED IN THIS MOTHER TAKING HER SON TO COURT DEMANDING THAT SHE BE ALLOWED TO EXPRESS HER DEVOTION IN THIS MANNER. WE DON'T KNOW THE OUTCOME OF THE CASE! THE SECOND STORY COMES FROM THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHAL BOOK JOSEPH AND ASENETH, PROBABLY WRITTEN BETWEEN 100 B.C. AND 100 A.D. IN THIS WORK, JOSEPH'S WIFE ASENETH SEEKS TO WASH HIS FEET, AN ACT WHICH HE FORBIDS, INSTRUCTING HER TO HAVE A SLAVE GIRL DO IT. SHE REFUSES, CLAIMING THAT HER LOVE COMPELS HER TO SERVE HIM IN THIS MANNER (JOSEPH AND ASENETH 20.1-5).

IN WASHING THE FEET OF HIS DISCIPLES, JESUS DOES SOMETHING NEW AND UNEXPECTED IF NOT COMPLETELY UNCONVENTIONAL. THIS MAY EXPLAIN THE RETICENCE OF PETER (JOHN 13.8). HE HAD NO CONTEXT FOR WHAT JESUS WAS DOING. IT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND JESUS' PRACTICE AS BEING OF PRACTICAL VALUE; THAT IS, THE DISCIPLES DID NOT NEED THEIR FEET WASHED. THE MEAL WOULD NOT HAVE BEGUN NOR WOULD THE DISCIPLES HAVE ENTERED THE UPPER ROOM WITHOUT FIRST HAVING THEIR FEET WASHED (JOHN 13.2). WE MUST ASSUME THAT THIS HAS ALREADY TRANSPIRED AND THAT IT WAS MOST LIKELY CARRIED OUT BY A SLAVE OF THE ONE WHO OWNED THE HOME IN WHICH JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WERE GATHERED. THEREFORE, JESUS' ACT OF FOOT WASHING TAKES ON SYMBOLIC MEANING, A MEANING WITH WHICH HIS DISCIPLES DID AND WE MUST WRESTLE.

THE TEXT

JOHN 13.1-17: INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO DO DINNER

ONE OF THE MOST NOTABLE RHYTHMS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS IS THE RHYTHM OF EATING WITH PEOPLE. EATING IN THE ANCIENT WORLD WAS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN FOOD. EATING WAS AN INTRICATE SOCIAL DANCE WHICH SPOKE VOLUMES ABOUT STANDING, HONOR, AND ACCEPTANCE. IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, THOSE WITH WHOM YOU ATE WERE CONSIDERED TO BE YOUR COMMUNITY, A GROUP REFERRED TO BY ANTHROPOLOGISTS AS YOUR KINSHIP GROUP. IT IS THIS GROUP WHICH GAVE A PERSON IDENTITY, PROTECTION, PROVISION, AND HELPED THEM TO DISCOVER THEIR PURPOSE IN LIFE. A MODERN COROLLARY OF THE ANCIENT KINSHIP GROUP IS THAT OF FAMILY. IN HIS MINISTRY, JESUS WAS OFTEN CRITICIZED FOR CREATING A KINSHIP GROUP WITH A NEGATIVE IDENTITY BECAUSE HE INTENTIONALLY ATE WITH SCOUNDRELS AND OUTCASTS (LUKE 5.29-32; 7.36-50; LUKE 15.1-2). JESUS' ACCUSERS UNDERSTOOD JESUS' HONOR TO BE IMPUGNED BY WELCOMING OUTCASTS TO HIS TABLE; THAT IS, JESUS MOVED DOWN TO THEIR LEVEL IN THE EYES OF SOCIETY. HOWEVER, JESUS VIEWED HIS PRACTICE AS ACTUALLY GIVING HONOR TO

THOSE WHO OTHERWISE HAD NONE (LUKE 7.48). THUS, IN JESUS' PRACTICE OF SHARING MEALS, WE WITNESS ONE OF HIS PRIMARY MEANS OF WELCOMING AND INTEGRATING THOSE WHO WERE OTHERWISE CAST OUT INTO AN ANCIENT FORM OF SURROGATE FAMILY. FOR JESUS, THE DINNER TABLE WAS THE PLACE WHERE PEOPLE DISCOVERED THEY WERE WELCOME TO BE PART OF JESUS' FAMILY.

IN JOHN 13, WE FIND JESUS INSTRUCTING HIS DISCIPLES IN HOW TO CARRY ON THIS TRADITION OF USING MEALS TO WELCOME OTHERS AND INTEGRATE THEM INTO A FORM OF FAMILY, A PRACTICE WHICH THE DISCIPLES CONTINUED (ACTS 2.42, 46-47). THE SETTING FOR JESUS' INSTRUCTION IS ON THE NIGHT OF HIS BETRAYAL AND ARREST. JOHN IS QUITE METICULOUS IN SETTING UP THE SCENE FOR HIS READERS. HE NOTES THAT THE TIME IS THAT OF THE EVENING BEFORE THE PASSOVER FESTIVAL. AT THIS TIME, JESUS WAS FULLY AWARE THAT HIS TIME OF EARTHLY MINISTRY HAD COME TO A CLOSE AND THAT HE WOULD SOON BE RETURNING TO HIS FATHER. THIS STATEMENT INDICATES A NOTE OF FINALITY OR PERHAPS ADDS A WEIGHT OF SERIOUSNESS TO THE SCENE. WHAT IS ABOUT TO TRANSPIRE IS NOT UNLIKE A FINAL WILL AND TESTAMENT.

JOHN ALSO NOTES THAT WHAT IS ABOUT TO TRANSPIRE IS SATURATED IN DIVINE LOVE. THE ENTIRE GOSPEL OF JOHN IS DRIVEN BY THE IDEA THAT JESUS' MINISTRY IS ONE OF LOVE (JOHN 3.16). HERE THE READER IS REMINDED ONCE MORE THAT JESUS' ACTIONS WERE MOTIVATED BY LOVE, INCLUDING THOSE WHICH ARE ABOUT TO FOLLOW. ACCORDING TO JOHN, WHAT FOLLOWS TAKES PLACE SOMETIME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MEAL AT A POINT WHERE JUDAS' LOYALTY WAS BEING TESTED BY SATAN, THOUGH HIS ACTUAL SUCCUMBING TO TEMPTATION IS YET TO OCCUR (JOHN 13.28-30). JOHN ALSO REMINDS HIS READERS OF JESUS' DEEP SECURITY IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S POWER AND WILL AND HIS OWN STATUS. JOHN MENTIONS JUDAS AT THIS POINT BECAUSE WHAT JESUS DOES NEXT IS PRACTICALLY UNTHINKABLE ESPECIALLY WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THAT JESUS INCLUDES JUDAS. HOWEVER, THE NOTE ABOUT JESUS' DEEP SECURITY ENABLES THE READER TO UNDERSTAND HOW JESUS COULD HAVE THE STRENGTH TO DO WHAT HE DOES.

WHAT JESUS DOES IS WASH HIS DISCIPLES' FEET. THE PRACTICE OF WASHING FEET WAS A NECESSITY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, AND AT A DINNER, A CURTESY PROVIDED BY DINNER HOSTS. THE ACTUAL PRACTICE WAS DEMAANING AND PERFORMED ONLY BY THE LOWLIEST OF SLAVES. HOWEVER, IN HIS CHARACTERISTICALLY SERVANT ATTITUDE, JESUS CHOOSES TO DRESS LIKE A SLAVE AND BEGIN WASHING THE FEET OF HIS

DISCIPLES, INCLUDING THOSE OF JUDAS! BECAUSE THE MEAL HAS ALREADY BEGUN, THE FOOT WASHING DOES NOT INVOLVE A PRACTICAL REASON BUT IS PURELY SYMBOLIC. JESUS IS GIVING AN OBJECT LESSON.

WHEN JESUS COMES TO PETER, PETER RESISTS. HE DOES NOT WANT JESUS TO WASH HIS FEET. THIS IS NOT A CRY OF MODESTY BUT ONE OF SOCIAL IMPROPRIETY. AS THE TEACHER AND HOST OF THE MEAL, JESUS SHOULD NOT WASH PETER'S FEET. HOWEVER, JESUS INDICATES THAT PETER DOES NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT HE IS DOING BUT THAT HE SOON WILL. HOWEVER, PETER CANNOT ACCEPT THAT JESUS WOULD WASH HIS FEET EVEN IN A SYMBOLIC MANNER. JESUS REPLIES THAT WHAT HE IS DOING IS OF THE UTMOST NECESSITY. HE MUST ALLOW JESUS TO DO THIS OR HE CANNOT HAVE A PART WITH JESUS. THIS IS IMPORTANT KINSHIP LANGUAGE TO WHICH WE NEED TO PAY ATTENTION. BASICALLY, JESUS SAYS, IT IS BY WASHING PETER'S FEET THAT HE IS PART OF JESUS' "FAMILY." IF PETER DOESN'T ALLOW JESUS TO DO THIS, HE IS NOT PART OF JESUS' "FAMILY." WITH THIS, PETER SUBMITS, BUT HE ONCE AGAIN MISUNDERSTANDS, ASKING FOR A MORE THOROUGH WASHING. JESUS RESPONDS THAT PETER DOES NOT NEED A BATH BECAUSE HE IS ALREADY CLEAN. HERE WE FIND A REDEMPTIVE THREAD THOUGH IT IS NOT DEVELOPED BY JESUS. INSTEAD, JESUS PICKS UP ON SOCIAL PRACTICE. WHEN ONE TAKES A BATH AND GOES TO A DINNER (LIKE THE PRESENT ONE) THEY ONLY NEED THEIR FEET WASHED. THE STATEMENT SAYS MUCH ABOUT THE MEANING JESUS IS GIVING TO THE FOOT WASHING. THE ISSUE WASN'T CLEANLINESS OF BODY BUT OF THE FEET WHICH MADE IT PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR ONE TO BE AT THE TABLE. NO ONE FEELS LIKE EATING WHEN IT SMELLS LIKE POOP AT THE TABLE! IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, TO BE AT THE TABLE WAS A SIGN OF KINSHIP. THEREFORE, IN THIS FOOT WASHING, JESUS IS SYMBOLICALLY MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR PETER TO BE AT THE TABLE AND THUS PART OF HIS KINSHIP GROUP. ONE MIGHT HEAR OVERTONES OF SALVATION OR FORGIVENESS IN THESE WORDS, BUT AS THEY ARE NOT DEVELOPED BY JOHN WE CANNOT SAY THEY ARE IN HIS MIND. WHAT DOES COME THROUGH IS THAT JESUS WANTS HIS DISCIPLES TO KNOW THAT HE IS WELCOMING THEM TO THE TABLE, EVEN JUDAS. IN WELCOMING THEM TO THE TABLE HE IS INVITING THEM INTO HIS FAMILY. HERE WE FIND A LIVING PICTURE EXPLAINING WHAT HAS BEEN A CENTRAL PART OF JESUS' MINISTRY PRACTICE.

AFTER JESUS FINISHED, HE RETURNS TO THE MEAL AND ASKS IF HIS DISCIPLES HAVE UNDERSTOOD HIS OBJECT LESSON, WHICH THEY HAVE NOT. HE EXPLAINS THAT HE IS THEIR LEADER AND TEACHER BUT THAT HE HAS WASHED THEIR FEET, WELCOMING THEM INTO HIS FAMILY. THIS HAS ACTUALLY BEEN JESUS' PRACTICE

THROUGHOUT HIS MINISTRY, WELCOMING PEOPLE TO HIS TABLE AND THUS INTO HIS FAMILY. WHAT IS NEW IS THAT NOW JESUS ASKS HIS DISCIPLES TO DO THE SAME. AS HE HAS WASHED FEET, SO TOO ARE THEY TO MOVE FORWARD WASHING FEET; THAT IS, THEY ARE TO WELCOME ONE ANOTHER AND OTHERS TO THE TABLE, INTO THEIR FAMILY, A FAMILY WHICH COMES TO BE CALLED THE CHURCH. JESUS INDICATES THAT NOT ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES IS ABOVE THIS PRACTICE AND THAT THOSE WHO CARRY ON THIS MINISTRY OF WELCOMING PEOPLE TO THE TABLE WILL FIND THEY ARE BLESSED. THEY WILL EXPERIENCE THE FAVOR OF GOD.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

MEALS. FOR ME THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT THE FOOD. I LOVE TO COOK, AND I LOVE TO EAT EVEN MORE. THEREFORE, AS OFTEN AS I CAN I TAKE TIME TO PREPARE FLAVORFUL MEALS WHICH MY FAMILY CAN SIT DOWN AND ENJOY TOGETHER. WE MAKE SURE WE ENJOY THEM TOGETHER. EVERY DAY WE CHOOSE TO EAT AT LEAST ONE MEAL TOGETHER. HOWEVER, WHEN I AM HONEST, OUR EATING TOGETHER IS REALLY ABOUT EATING WHILE WE ARE TOGETHER, NOT REALLY MUCH MORE. HOWEVER, I AM BEGINNING TO WONDER IF THERE IS MORE TO EATING TOGETHER THAN WE ARE EXPERIENCING. EVERY NOW AND AGAIN I CATCH A STUDY WHICH SPEAKS OF THE POWER OF EATING TOGETHER, BUT I HAVE ALWAYS SCRATCHED MY HEAD AND WONDERED WHAT KIND OF POWER CAN BE FOUND IN A SIMPLE MEAL. THE MORE I WATCH JESUS, THE MORE I SEE THAT MEALS CAN BE ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL THINGS WE HAVE FOR FEEDING HUNGRY SOULS AND NOT JUST EMPTY BELLIES. WHEN JESUS SAT DOWN AND ATE, HE DID SO WITH PURPOSE. HIS MEALS FUNCTIONED AS WONDERFUL INVITATIONS TO THOSE WHO FOUND THEMSELVES EXCLUDED, INVITATIONS TO BE FAMILY. HIS MEALS DECLARED LOUDLY THAT PEOPLE WERE LOVED AND WELCOMED BY GOD EVEN THOUGH THEY MIGHT BE LABELED AS SINNERS, TAX COLLECTORS, OR PROSTITUTES. HIS MEALS LIFTED PEOPLE'S SHAME AND REPLACED IT WITH HONOR, AND HE HAS CALLED ME TO DO THE SAME, AT MY MEALS. ON THE NIGHT HE WAS BETRAYED, JESUS LOOKED AT HIS DISCIPLES AND SAID, IN ACTIONS NOT WORDS, HERE IS HOW YOU USE A MEAL LIKE ME. HE TOOK OFF HIS CLOAK AND WASHED STINKY FEET, AND IN SO DOING WELCOMED THOSE MEN INTO HIS FAMILY, EVEN THE ONE WHO WAS ABOUT TO BETRAY HIM. THEN HE SAID, I AM TO DO THE SAME. BUT HOW?

HOW CAN A MEAL WELCOME PEOPLE AND LIFT SHAME? SOUNDS LIKE A TALL ORDER FOR A HASTILY PUT TOGETHER CASSEROLE, BUT I THINK I AM BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND. THE POWER OF THE MEAL ACTUALLY HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH THE FOOD AND MORE TO DO WITH THE TIME AROUND THE TABLE. AS MY CHILDREN MOVE THROUGH THE WORLD THEY HEAR THE LOUD MESSAGE THAT THEY ARE NOT ENOUGH. THEY ARE NOT SMART ENOUGH, FAST ENOUGH, PRETTY ENOUGH. SOMETIMES THEY HEAR THIS FROM ME. AT THE TABLE, THEY HEAR SOMETHING DIFFERENT. AS WE TALK AND SHARE AND LAUGH, THEY HEAR HOW MUCH THEY ARE WELCOMED. AS WE CRY ABOUT HURTFUL THINGS AND

CELEBRATE GOOD THINGS, THEY HEAR THEIR LIVES HAVE MEANING. AS WE REFRAIN FROM DISCIPLINE BUT EXTEND ONLY GRACE AT THE TABLE, THEY DISCOVER THEY DON'T HAVE TO PRETEND TO FIND ACCEPTANCE. AT THE TABLE THEY DISCOVER THEY ARE ENOUGH IN MY EYES TO BE CALLED MY CHILDREN. THEY DISCOVER THEY ARE FAMILY. I BELIEVE THE SAME CAN OCCUR IN THIS FAMILY CALLED THE CHURCH. WE MOVE THROUGH THE WORLD THINKING WE ARE UNLOVABLE AND UNWANTED, BUT WHEN PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO SIT DOWN AND LINGER AT THE TABLE ON A REGULAR BASIS WE HEAR A DIFFERENT NARRATIVE, ONE WHICH DECLARES OUR DEEP LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE. THIS MAKES ME WONDER IF PERHAPS THE GREATEST EVANGELISM TOOL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY IS NOT A NEW PROGRAM BUT AN OLD CROCKPOT.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

POTLUCK DINNERS WERE SOME OF MY FAVORITE TIMES IN THE CHURCH OF MY YOUTH. I LOVED SAMPLING EVERYONE'S SPECIAL DISH. HOWEVER, WHAT WAS THE BEST WAS THE SENSE OF FAMILY WHICH WAS SHARED AROUND THOSE TABLES LADEN WITH FOOD. OVER THE YEARS, THE POTLUCK HAS BECOME A THING OF THE PAST IN MANY CHURCHES, AND I WONDER IF IT IS TO OUR DETRIMENT. IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS, THE SHARING OF A MEAL SENT A POWERFUL MESSAGE OF LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE TO THOSE WHO NEEDED IT MOST. COULD IT BE THAT DIGGING OUT THE CROCKPOTS AND DUSTING OFF THE CASSEROLE PANS ONCE AGAIN MIGHT DO THE SAME? WE LIVE IN A WORLD FULL OF HURTING PEOPLE, A WORLD FULL OF PEOPLE WHO WONDER IF THEY ARE TRULY ALONE OR IF THEY MATTER. HOWEVER, WHEN WE SIT DOWN AND SHARE A MEAL AND THAT MEAL IS ABOUT MORE THAN EATING, WE SEND A POWERFUL MESSAGE THAT DECLARES THEY ARE NOT ALONE AND THEY DO MATTER. AT THE TABLE, THEY HAVE FAMILY. AT THE TABLE, THEIR STORY MATTERS. AT THE TABLE, THEIR TEARS ARE SHARED AND THEIR JOYS ARE CELEBRATED. AT THE TABLE, AND PERHAPS BEST THROUGH THE TABLE, WE SEND A MESSAGE THAT ALL ARE WELCOME NO MATTER THEIR BACKGROUND OR BAGGAGE. SO, PERHAPS IT IS TIME TO LOOK AT THE WORLD AND INVITE IT TO DINNER. WHERE DO WE START? PERHAPS WE START BY EXPERIENCING THE POWER OF THE TABLE OURSELVES. ON A REGULAR BASIS, UNION CENTER HOSTS SOMETHING CALLED FAMILY CHAT. AT THESE CHATS, WE SHARE A MEAL IN AN EFFORT TO SHARE OUR LIVES AND TO DECLARE TO ONE ANOTHER THAT WE ARE FAMILY. PERHAPS YOU COME TO EVERY ONE OF THESE, OR PERHAPS YOU HAVE NEVER DARKENED THE DOOR. WE INVITE YOU TO COME TO THE NEXT FAMILY CHAT ON SUNDAY NOVEMBER 13 AT 5 PM AND EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF THE TABLE.



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