

How Eating Together Is a Spiritual Activity

In today's busy culture, mealtime seems to be a forgotten art. Grabbing dinner on the go can be bad for our wallets and our waistlines, but most importantly we miss the opportunity to bond and grow as a family.

Throughout the Bible, we see that mealtime was a time for being together and enjoying each other, and it was also a time for teaching and imparting wisdom. From Sarah hosting the angels to Jesus changing water to wine for a wedding feast, we would have missed some of the Bible's greatest moments without mealtime.

Three Bible stories stand out to me as I think about the spiritual importance of mealtimes. These stories have important lessons on how we should approach mealtime with our families.

Daniel and the Food From the King's Table

The story of Daniel serving in King Nebuchadnezzar's court, found in Daniel 1:3-16, shares the physical and spiritual importance of eating wholesome foods. Daniel and his friends were given the rich, decadent foods from the king's table. However, they knew that indulging daily was neither good for their bodies, nor pleasing to the Lord. They petitioned the king to be given vegetables, and at the end of 10 days, they seemed remarkably healthier than the other servants.

We all love to indulge in a guilty pleasure (chocolate, anyone?) once in a while, but it is important that we take care of our bodies. God has given us stewardship over them, and we should do what we can to honor His gift. More importantly, while your children are young and you're responsible for feeding them, you also have stewardship over

their little bodies. Healthy and wholesome meals don't have to be tasteless meals, but you have to commit to making health a priority. Eating wholesome foods is a way to honor God with our mealtimes!

Martha Prepares for Jesus' Visit

While many of us struggle with finding time to provide wholesome meals for our family, there are those who tend toward the other extreme and spend inordinate amounts of time preparing meals and obsessing over ingredients. Of course, there are special occasions that require extra time in the kitchen, but it's so important that we don't miss out on the special moments with our families. If your children grow up healthy, but you haven't invested in their spiritual formation, you haven't done them any favors!

I'm often reminded of the story of Martha preparing for Jesus' visit in Luke 10:38-42. Martha is so busy making preparations for their meal that she misses out on the more important part of Jesus' presence. Sometimes I find myself falling into the same trap. The key is finding balance, by providing healthful meals that still allow us to spend time with our families.

Jesus Teaches His Disciples at the Last Supper

Perhaps the most famous meal in the Bible is the Last Supper. Found in all four Gospels, it's clear this night made a huge impact on Jesus' disciples, not only because this was the night before Christ's crucifixion, but also because of the many truths Jesus packed into this one meal. From the importance of servant leadership to how to pray, Jesus taught so many important things to his disciples during this evening.

Gathering your family around the table means that your focus is on one another. As a parent, this is a great opportunity to instill important character traits and spiritual truths in the lives of your children. Just as the disciples walked away from that meal with new knowledge of their faith, your children

will glean wisdom from your dinner table conversations. If we do not take the time to gather as a family consistently, setting aside distractions, we miss the opportunity to invest in their lives. Your children will not learn what you need to teach them from the back seat of the car. They need that face-to-face time with you!

I believe eating wholesome meals around the dinner table is an opportunity to grow and mold little hearts and souls. Family meal times were a great tradition at my house growing up, and I hope to pass that along to my son. Understanding the biblical importance of family meals can help us make dinner a priority. And by making it a priority and planning ahead, we can plan ahead and look forward to dinner as an integral part of our family lives.

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