

### **Table Time**

My wife does an amazing job at creating a wonderful relational atmosphere at our dining room or patio table. Her creativity, rooted in a thoughtful and hospitable heartbeat offers people delicious food and an enjoyable environment to connect in meaningful ways.

Each of us has 'tasted' the emotional and spiritual nourishment of healthy table time...and we have known times when table time has been scarred with tension and shaded with strained relationships. We know how important healthy and happy table times can be.

### **A Transforming Table Time: Luke 22:14-20**

This scene from the Scriptures, chronicling some of the final interactions and hours of Jesus' life before his crucifixion are gripping and rich in instructive value to us. This morning we are exploring the importance and meaning of the Lord's Table experience. Why do we do this on a recurring basis? What is the point? What can I do to prepare to participate with a clean conscience and an understanding mind?

This 'table' may be new to you. I hope you will understand the significance of why Jesus initiated what he did and why it can be a transforming experience, an opportunity for change, for you...and others. For many, participating in the Lord's Table is a regular experience; may it become more treasured as a result of being reminded of certain core truths about the Table of Jesus.

### **The Lord's Table: Origins: Luke 22:7-20**

Jesus wants to spend time with his closest disciples, remembering God's dynamic deliverance of the Jewish nation from Egyptian captivity, a time when God's avenging angel 'passed over' homes that displayed sacrificial blood on the door frame. This remarkable story can be read in Exodus 12.

Please feel the emotional intensity of his words, both intimate and instructive.

- **Intimate Words: Luke 22:14-16**

*"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."* This was not a mechanical ritual Jesus engaged in. His mind and heart were deeply and purposefully engaged in the Passover meal. This was not a solitary exercise; this was a shared experience.

*"You've no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this Passover meal with you before I enter my time of suffering."*  
(The Message)

To Jesus, this 'table time' was all about relationships...with a salvation providing God and with the people of God.

- **Instructive Words: Luke 22:17-20**

In words that would have riveted the attention of his disciples Jesus instructs them about a new covenant being established between God and people, and he roots his words in simple and down to earth, and 'up from the earth' elements as conveying truth about who he is and why he came.

Bread: *"This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."*

Cup: *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."*

Jesus is making a profound statement: 'I am the singular source of salvation from the penalty, power and one day, the presence of sin. I am the one who alone can offer forgiveness of sins and enable you to be in relationship with the Father, empowered to live a life of love in action.'

What Jesus began was to be carried on throughout the ages...and we start with the first century.

### **An Ongoing Remembrance: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

Paul is writing to a community of faith in the bustling city of Corinth. He loved this church family and he also courageously challenged and instructed them when necessary. His instructive words in this passage are stern, passionate

and direct. Why? Because they have lost sight of what the Lord's Table was about and who the Lord's Table was for...and not for. Which of the following 'headline words/phrases' gets your attention?

- Rebuke: 1 Corinthians 11:17-22

He is deeply troubled by their attitudes and relational behaviours. In the early church, the believers would share a meal, called the Love Feast, and in that relational setting, the sacrificial death of Jesus would be remembered. In Corinth, they had marginalized Jesus and others with blatant self-interest and self-indulgence. Hear his words. Instead of a shared, thoughtful meal, it becomes a self centered free for all. Unity has been tossed out the window.

- Remember Jesus: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

At the heart of the Lord's Table is a Person and relationships. With God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and other followers of Jesus. Remember his sacrificial death as payment for sin, and freedom from the destructive power of sin...and remember, Jesus will return one day to establish his kingdom.

Pause: Song 'When I Survey'

- Repair Relationships: 1 Corinthians 11:18,21-22

The church is marred by all sorts of disunity and tension. There is a profound lack of respect and compassion being expressed. The body of Christ is being harmed and damaged and the reputation of Jesus is taking a massive hit. The lack of sacrificial love is causing others to be confused and disenchanted. 'If this is Christianity, why bother?'

Paul is passionately and thoughtfully instructing the people of God..."make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:2-6)

It is virtually impossible to honour Jesus at his Table if I am, knowingly, out of step with a fellow Christian. If I know that there is a strain or broken relationship with a Christian and I ignore doing my part to bring about healing and reconciliation, I dishonour God and risk his discipline. Vss. 27-30

Consider the simple and direct words of Jesus in Matthew 5:23-24

What creates tension and strain between Christians? Arrogant self-righteousness, stubbornly held preferences, unaddressed tensions or misunderstandings, lack of truth telling and forgiveness, socio-economic differences...what might you add?

How do I go about 'repairing relationships', with God and others? To repair means "to restore to a good and sound condition after decay or damage, to mend or heal". How do I do this on a recurring and effective basis?

By 'keeping short accounts' with God, myself and others. 1 Corinthians 11:28-34 Read and link with Ephesians 4:25-27, Matthew 5:23-25. There is a strong and no nonsense expectation from God to deal with relational strains and spiritual/moral issues promptly. Reject procrastination. Boldly, courageously.

For the honour of Jesus whose table we gather around and for the family of faith we are part of.

What does that look and sound like in real situations...first with God.

- Confession

It means I confess sin...the failure to love God, others and myself, in specifics. I admit in concrete specifics. I express sorrow to Jesus and ask his forgiveness.

- Conversation

Here is what it can look like with others: I initiate a connection and ask for a conversation to address an issue, it may be to ask, 'have I offended you?' or 'I am sorry for offending you.' I am also open to a conversation where someone wants to come clean with me or clear the air. I respect the courage it takes and do not put the person off. I make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1-6 A 'relational test'...can I look at anyone with a smile, in the eye...or not? If I can't that could be a signal that something isn't just right...and maybe needs repair.

You might say...'That is too hard for me to do.' Sure it is; it is humbling. Ask God for wisdom, ask a trusted friend for insight...and then act. Sometimes we need to take a friend with us. That's ok, but you do the talking, not your friend!

If I procrastinate from doing my part to promote healthy relationships, with excuses or justifications within the family of God then...I don't belong at his table until I get my relational, attitudinal and behavioural act together. I run the risk of experiencing hard consequences. A spiritual and relationally healthy church family is a big deal to Jesus. Make no mistake, you and I are responsible for doing our part to help foster a sense of genuine togetherness. And that needs to be an ongoing commitment that requires keeping short accounts with God/Jesus and each other. There is no other way friends, no other way.

## **The Lord's Table: A Place of Change**

Can you imagine the ongoing growth, maturity and relational connectedness that would be cultivated and expressed if we were resolute in 'keeping short accounts' with God and each other? It could be life changing. Seriously so. And...I see that happening at RBC. People serious about honoring Jesus and caring for others. So, what if...the next Lord's Table was a compassionate catalyst for each of us to 'strive to have a clean and clear conscience before God and others?'

Can we see and grasp the great love of Jesus, he wants to be loved by us...and for us to love one another wisely and well...and there is no better place for that to be encouraged and nourished than at the table of Jesus, where he has set the table, prepared a meal of grace and truth and invite us to join him, with our brothers and sisters...as different as we are, but as beloved as we are to God.

So, is there a confession to God needed? Is there a conversation with someone required?

Come to the table: video before the Lord's Table

### **DRIVE HOME QUESTIONS**

Message Series: **Change: Stories then and now**

Message Title: **The Lord's Table: it's all about relationships...  
and keeping 'short accounts'**

Date: Sunday, April 7, 2019

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#### **CONNECT:**

Recall a favorite or memorable meal shared with others...and why the memory has stayed with you?

**ENGAGE:** Read through 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1. Why is Paul so direct, passionate and even stern with the Corinthian believers? What is bothering him? Be as specific as possible.
2. Origins of the Lord's Table: Luke 22:7-20: What stands out to you from this passage? What does Jesus teach us about the purpose of the Lord's Table?

Please remember - the Lord's Table is not to be seen as a solitary exercise but as a shared experience.

3. Let's go back to 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26: what are we to remember about Jesus?
4. Let's talk about the relational component with fellow Christians: 1 Corinthians 11:18, 21-22, 27-30  
What is Paul annoyed about and advocating they do when relationships get stressed and strained?
5. Do we need to be perfect to 'take communion'? Is that what Paul is teaching? What is he teaching?
6. Confessions and conversations...these are expressions of 'keeping short accounts' with God and others.  
What holds you back at times from keeping short accounts?  
What motivates you to improve on the 'short accounts' practice?
7. Change happens as we cooperate with God and address issues, with him and others. When you practice keeping short accounts, what are the benefits, spiritually, relationally and emotionally? What have you experienced?
8. What is your one big 'truth takeaway' today?