

Eating Together



Bible Study: Feeding the Five Thousand

¹Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), ²and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing those who were ill. ³Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. ⁴The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

⁵When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' ⁶He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

⁷Philip answered him, 'It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!'

⁸Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, ⁹'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?'

¹⁰Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). ¹¹Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

¹²When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.' ¹³So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.' ¹⁵Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

John 6:1-15 (NIV)

As you look at passages of scripture, prayers, hymns etc. that invite you to consider the importance of 'Eating Together' as disciples of Jesus and with others, we hope that they will encourage you to be people who E.A.T.

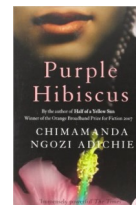
E is for 'Equality' – when you share food, remember that those who prepare it, serve it and eat it are all equals.

A is for 'Affirm' – Jesus affirms the little boy with his lunch. Around the table, picnic rug and so on we affirm our neighbours as people we value and are willing to spend time with.

T is for 'Together' – Food is something that everyone needs, and can draw together people from different backgrounds. It provides an opportunity to get to know someone better.

Fiction Books

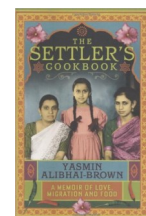
- **PURPLE HIBISCUS**



Chimanda Ngozi Adichie

Look at the relaxed and formal styles of eating together in the different settings in this book. Who eats with whom and what does this say about their relationship?

- **THE SETTLERS COOKBOOK**



Tales of love, migration & food by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown

Through the personal story of Yasmin's family and the food and recipes they've shared together, "The Settler's Cookbook" tells the history of Indian migration to the UK via East Africa. Her family was part of the mass exodus from India to East Africa during the height of British imperial expansion, fleeing famine and lured by the prospect of prosperity under the empire.



Feasting and Fasting

One point that Andrew Roberts mentions in his book *Holy Habits* is that so many of the habits are part of a rhythm of life as it ebbs and flows. In the chapter on eating together, as part of this rhythm of life, he talks about fasting. Again, like eating together, it goes back millennia into the Old Testament, and was also part of Jesus' way of life. By spending a period of time fasting we can, for example, create a time in which to pray and explore the Bible. When Jesus was being tempted by Satan in the desert, he responded,

'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Matthew 4:4

Instead of feasting on food, a period of fasting can be a time when we feast on the word of God.

Please check with your GP if you have any health concerns before considering fasting.

A note from Eric

Our Beacon Café is giving us weekly opportunities to eat and drink together, meeting with friends new and old. One result is that we are getting to know each other far better than previously. That surely helps us to feel more 'in fellowship' with each other, encouraging a greater sense of community. We share all sorts of memories, thoughts and feelings – far more than when we said little more than 'hello' and 'goodbye' before and after our services.



Extended conversations over time often lead us to share our deepest convictions and our equally deep and important questions. We say that 'all are welcome' in our church community. One test of that is how much we are willing to listen when someone shares their searching or their certainties . . . especially when it becomes clear that they hold views very different from our own.

For Personal Reflection from Andrew Roberts

Take some time to plan a personal twelve-month rhythm of feasting and fasting. Think carefully as to what you would want to achieve through this. Is there a friend you could invite to join you in this?

Rediscover the home as a place of discipleship and making eating together part of this through daily practices such as praying over the day's events at meal times or through a weekly feast of thanksgiving for the blessing you have enjoyed that week.

How can you make use of the opportunities presented by the major festivals and develop them as times of community feasting?