



Lunch and Learn

It's simply impossible to have an authentic relationship with anybody when you're trying to get something from them. Manipulation kills intimacy. Likewise, until we recognize who Jesus is and respond accordingly— with amazed gratitude for the generosity of his presence rather than immediate concern for the benefits we can squeeze out of him— we won't experience peace or intimacy, but only striving and disappointment.

Discussion

Start Talking

What was your "routine," the strategy you employed whenever you wanted something from your parents? Did you try flattery? Emotional manipulation? Something else?

Have you ever been approached by someone for what seemed like a friendly conversation, only to realize halfway through that you were actually fielding a request? What was the situation? How did it make you feel? (Why does this always seem to leave us feeling icky?)

Looking Back

Looking back over our goals for last week, did you experience any instances in which your beliefs, opinions, or cultural loyalties made it hard for you to love other people?

What was the situation that produced the conflict? How did you respond?

What About You?

1. Have you ever found yourself treating God like a genie or vending machine? If so, when?
2. What kinds of thoughts, actions, and prayers did this produce, in your experience?
3. Have you ever experienced openness and intimacy with God? How were your thoughts, actions, and prayers different than the times when you were merely negotiating?



Look It Up

Read the Following Passages: John 6: 2-15, 25-36, Philippians 4:6-7

1. If you're one of the first-century Jewish spectators mentioned in this passage— suffering under the brutal rule of the Roman empire— and you find yourself sitting in a crowd the size of a military faction, watching one of your own performing miraculous signs, where does your mind go? What all do you begin to want from this teacher?
2. Why do you think Jesus flees a mob that would undoubtedly be willing to coronate him and march on the city?
3. What do you make of his unwillingness to talk about revolution, political uprising, or even material concerns like lunch?
4. After ditching the crowd, Jesus urges his followers not to work for food that spoils, but to strive after “food that endures to eternal life.” This is obviously a pretty weighty symbolic statement. What all do you think Jesus meant to evoke for us in that phrase? *(Follow up prompts if the discussion stalls: Is he just anti-food? Is he throwing out some vague platitude about Heaven to shame his listeners the same way a miserly Sunday School teacher would? Or is he nudging them towards any specific revelation?)*

Putting It All Together

1. In your own life, what all takes the place of what Jesus calls, “the food that spoils?” What worries, motives, or material concerns hijack your relationship, putting you in the position of trying to manipulate Jesus?
2. What would it actually look like in your specific circumstances to set these things aside, out of the center of attention? How would your prayers, attitudes, daily actions change?
3. If Jesus hopes that we will stop trying to use him to satisfy our own appetites as consumers, what do you think he wants us to redirect our attention to, instead?
4. Think about how you would respond if you somehow found yourself in the actual presence of the most powerful person you can imagine. Now, compare this reaction to the unfortunately mundane entitlement we so often slip into in conversation with God. What would your life look like if you operated out of a full, felt appreciation of the amazing weight of Jesus' presence on a daily basis? How would your actions change? What would your emotional state be?
5. What can you do in the coming week as a daily reminder to resist slipping into a pattern of consumption and demand with Jesus?
6. What thoughts, practices, and reminders might help you experience what Paul called, “peace beyond understanding?”

