

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday April 11, 2021. "Tabling: Why Tables?"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it. We're deep into 2021 and thankfully, we're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us at the church. We have opened our children's and youth area also and are seeing a good response. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Recap.

A somewhat lengthy, but hopefully useful, recap on the concept of *'tables'* and then we'll dive into Sunday's message. *'Tabling'* is simply creating informal times of gathering, sometimes over food or drink, in which relationships are intentionally grown deeper and more life giving through doing this regularly. *'Tabling'* isn't just hanging with friends for fun, (though that can be an important part of it). But for the purpose of growing relationships deeper to cultivate and nurture a circle of very close trusted friends who can help us be the best us we can be. And we do the same for them.

So, *'tabling'* is the idea of planning regular gatherings with people we feel safe around, won't judge us, but we can have open, honest, conversations. AND it's okay, in fact encouraged, to have differing views and opinions about issues so there can be strength found in a diversity of opinion. Safety is found in a commitment to each other, and to the relationships generally, rather than the protection of a certain position or agreement on issues. This is VERY difficult to do, valuing the relationship over being right. That's what makes these kinds of relationships so important. And the reason we are to work with everything we have to grow these kinds of relationships in our lives. We give the practice and process of cultivating these relationships the name *'tabling'*.

III Sunday.

We were honored to have the return of Kristen Hill to build a fuller understanding of *'tabling'* but also why *'tabling'* is so important. Kristen always brings a unique and super helpful perspective to give us a solid foundation on the concept of *'tabling'*. What we appreciate about Kristen is her ability to share honestly and vulnerably how this topic was difficult for her, but she grew in her understanding of how the idea of *'tabling'* was an opportunity for her to grow in the need for places of equality and how those are used in the process of growing to be more Christlike. A question first.

What does it look like to create a 'table' in which everyone's input and perspective is valued, so to add to a larger understanding of what living for Christ looks like?

The scripture used Sunday was from several sources. **2 Corinthians 1:3-5. Ephesians 4:15. Proverbs 27:17.** So, read those passages, and we'll ask a few questions before we jump into a deeper understanding of how these passages fits into the idea of 'tabling'

What jumped out to you about each of these passages and an understanding of building circles of influence in your life?

How do you read an understanding of creating a space to equally consider everyone's perspective and experience?

How did it challenge you in any way about the relationships in your life?

These passages hit on four fairly specific ideas found in an understanding of creating a circle of people who can speak into each other's lives.

1. Shared goals of trying to love God and others. There is nothing stronger than '*tabling*' with a group of people who share the same values and goals. And with Jesus teaching that the greatest two commandments are to "*love God, and love others*", then what better foundation to build those relationships on. **So, what would it look like to center a 'tabling' group on these two values?**

2. Friendship and fellowship. We were made for connection. There's no escaping this truth. And to try to do life alone, prioritize spiritual growth, and handle all that life throws at us by ourselves is not only foolish, but not how we were created. We all will have 'friends', and even some really good ones. But to have a group of trusted, faithful, people who we can totally be ourselves with is absolutely necessary. In order to face the difficult and challenging times together, we have to have people who we just enjoy being around.

What are some of the things that have brought you closer to the friends in your life?

3. Equality. This is the classic, "*iron sharpens iron*" understanding that everyone is the same in the group, so everyone can help sharpen and grow each other person in the group. This is speaking the truth in love, practicing truth and grace in relationships where each person is committed to each other. **Name a friend or two that you would consider an "iron sharpens iron" person, and how are you both better because of that?**

4. Vulnerability/honesty. Finally '*tabling*' allows us to have a safe place to share our struggles, shortcomings, and the things that hold us back from being fully who God created us to be. James tells us that "*confession is good for the soul*". This is true, because things we hold in only rot and become barriers to growth. Having a safe space to be vulnerable and real is essential in our personal growth. **How has having safe friends helped you grow into the person you were created to be?**

IV Challenge.

Again, we recognize how unusual and different the concept of '*tabling*' is. It's not a word we use regularly, and many of our informal gatherings don't have the purposefulness of designing relationships for growth. But as Kristen presented the importance of creating spaces where everyone is given an equal seat at a table to add to the larger conversation is so important. Especially in the formation of who we are, and IF, (and that's important), we have a desire to become more like Christ. **So, what would it look like for you to design a personal life that would be circles of influence?**