

## **(The SAVA Project): Reclaiming the Sacred Table**

I love a good meal with family or friends. I love to sit around a table and spend time with those I care about. With my kids. My small group, and college students we serve. I love to cook. I love putting together meals on my blackstone to create that meal for others. I love to go out to eat in the same fashion at times too. But let's face it: Life is crazy and hectic. Between work, classes, athletics, studying, and trying to actually have a social life, carving out time for anything feels impossible. Meals? They often become quick, solitary pit stops—a burger on the go, ramen in the dorm room, a PBJ scarfed down on the fly, or whatever's offered at the campus cafeteria. But what if we could reclaim the power of the table—even in those spaces—turning even the simplest of meals into sacred moments that connect us with God and others, and lead to that deep SAVA (satisfaction) within our souls?

Go with me for a moment to the early church in Acts 2:42-47. They were devoted to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. What did this really look like in their everyday lives? As one of my favorite Bible teachers, D.T. Lancaster explains, "Jesus never went to church. Neither did His disciples... The thing that set the earliest church apart from the rest of the Jewish people was their table." It wasn't just a social gathering; it was a *chavurah*—a sacred meal where believers shared life, celebrated the Messiah, and strengthened their bonds in Christ. In our "easy to grab, easy to forget" world, we see just how intentional their meal gatherings must have been.

Pause: Do our meals feel more like a transaction or a connection? Are they a source of stress or a place of rest? Can we reclaim even some of them to be a more sacred vision for the table, even on a tight schedule and budget?

Turning Simple Meals into Sacred Moments: No Magic Required!

The concept of *chavurah* helps us reimagine mealtimes. Lancaster notes that *chavurah* translates the word "fellowship" and emphasizes joining together. This makes it a time to intentionally join with those around us, but also to join with God. And what exactly could this look like for us?

Here's how we can infuse our meals with that same sense of sacredness, even on a limited budget and tight schedule:

- **Potluck Power:** Host a potluck with friends! Everyone brings a dish to share, making it affordable and a chance to try new things. Theme nights (e.g., "Italian," "Tacos," "Breakfast for Dinner") add extra fun and reduce the cooking pressure on one person.
- **Dorm Room Dinners:** Even if you're stuck in a dorm room, get creative. Microwave a batch of rice, add canned beans, salsa, and cheese for a quick burrito bowl. Invite a friend over and share the experience.
- **"Take-Out" with Intention:** Even takeout can become a moment of connection. Invite someone to your table (or even a picnic blanket in the park), turn off your phones, and simply talk. Reflect on how God is providing for you, even through that cheap pizza.

- Coffee Shop Connection: Replace the usual solo study session with a coffee shop "chavurah." Share a pastry or a coffee and intentionally discuss your faith, struggles, or hopes.

### Beyond the Food: Really Nourishing Your Soul

It's so not just about the food; it's about the fellowship and intentional connection with God. In 2025, how can you be like the early believers? Ponder again what their gatherings looked like and how it can look for us. Fellowship, breaking bread, the apostles' teaching, and prayer. Start small! Just 1-2 meals a week? Maybe more if you're feeling ambitious? Create a regular rhythm for doing what the early Christians did. Why? Because it creates community, it's powerful, and it's a way to connect with others and, more importantly, with God. I believe it moves you more in the direction of SAVA in a chaotic world. What's more, the early believers showed those around them they followed Jesus by the table they chose to partake in.

This week, let's reclaim the power of the table, wherever we are on this life's journey. Let's use our meals—at least some of them—as opportunities to connect with God and others, build community, and cultivate that deep satisfaction that comes from sharing life in Christ—SAVA for the soul!

### Discussion Questions:

- How can you actually prioritize the sacredness of mealtimes despite your crazy student schedule and tight financial limitations? Brainstorm some concrete strategies that will work for your life.
- What are some creative ways to build community and share meaningful conversation around a meal with other students on campus without breaking the bank?
- Beyond the physical nourishment, how can you make mealtimes opportunities for spiritual growth and genuine, deeper connection with God and those around you? Think beyond the surface!

### Daily Devotionals

1. Genesis 18:1-15 – Abraham's Hospitality and the Promise of Isaac
  - Story: Abraham welcomes three strangers (who turn out to be divine messengers) and prepares a lavish meal for them. In return, they reaffirm the promise that Sarah will conceive a son.
  - Theme: Hospitality opens doors to divine encounters.
  - Takeaway: Our willingness to welcome others, especially strangers, can create opportunities to receive unexpected blessings and hear God's promises. Hospitality isn't just about food; it's about creating space for God to work in our lives and the lives of others.
2. Luke 24:13-35 – The Road to Emmaus
  - Story: Two disciples, disheartened by Jesus' death, encounter him on the road to Emmaus but don't recognize him. It's only during a meal, when Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them, that their eyes are opened.
  - Theme: Recognizing Jesus in the breaking of bread.

- Takeaway: Simple acts of sharing a meal, especially the act of communion, can reveal the presence of Christ in our lives. Be attentive to the ways Jesus may be revealing himself in your ordinary moments.

### 3. 2 Samuel 9:1-13 – David and Mephibosheth

- Story: David seeks out any remaining descendants of Jonathan, his friend, and shows kindness to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled son, by inviting him to eat at his table "as one of the king's sons."
- Theme: The table as a place of inclusion and grace.
- Takeaway: Extending an invitation to share a meal can be a powerful act of grace, extending dignity and belonging to those who are often marginalized or forgotten. Who might God be calling you to include at your table?

### 4. Luke 14:15-24 – The Parable of the Great Banquet

- Story: A man prepares a great banquet, but those initially invited make excuses. He then instructs his servants to go out and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.
- Theme: The invitation to God's table is open to all.
- Takeaway: The kingdom of God is not limited to the socially elite or those who "deserve" it. We are called to extend the invitation to all, especially those who are often overlooked.

### 5. John 21:1-14 – Jesus's Breakfast with the Disciples

- Story: After his resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples by the Sea of Galilee. They have been fishing all night with no success. Jesus tells them to cast their net on the right side of the boat, and they catch a huge number of fish. When they come ashore, they find Jesus has prepared a charcoal fire with fish and bread.
- Theme: Jesus provides, restores, and invites us to fellowship through a shared meal.
- Takeaway: Even after disappointment and failure, Jesus offers provision, restoration, and an invitation to deeper fellowship. The table is a place where we can experience his grace and renew our commitment to him.

### 6. Revelation 3:20 – "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

- Story: This is not a full story; but an image showing the intimacy of the Lord wanting to dwell in our homes and partake in our daily activities.
- Theme: Jesus wants to have a meal with you.
- Takeaway: Christ desires a personal encounter. This image gives a new twist, he does not want to be seated above, but to share a meal with. As your friend. In this relationship we get to know the Lord.