

Around the Table

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When Elizabeth and I were first married, we wanted to buy a round table. There is something about a round table that is more welcoming than a square table. Well, after a few years, we found a round table.

On Friday nights in Ohio, we would often go to a local auction. One night, there was an old, big, worn-out round table. It looked like it had been in a barn for years. Elizabeth saw it and instantly wanted to get it. I looked at it and saw nothing but work. But, she turned to me and said, "We sure would have a lot of meals around that." There was something about how she said this that pulled my heartstrings. Sentimentality can be a dangerous thing at an auction!

I asked for the table to be brought up for auction. It was such an undesirable piece that I was the only one who bid on it. \$25. I called my father-in-law to help me haul it home. That summer, I refinished the table and put it in our dining area.

Just like Elizabeth said, we have eaten many meals around that table. We have celebrated around that table. We talk about our days around that table. We talk about the Bible around that table. The table is large. When I look at my boys sitting around it, I've thought about there being room for daughters-in-law. There is a bright future for that table.

Our Family Tables

Family tables are invaluable. While we may have feelings for our tables, this is only because of the people who have put their feet under them. Family. Friendship. Brotherhood. These are some of the greatest blessings with which God has enriched our lives. Never underestimate the importance of gathering family around the table.

Today, people are as busy as they have ever been. Family members all have different schedules. Parents are pressured to keep their children involved in every after-school activity under the sun. When mom and dad are not shuffling kids, they are busy working. When we are home, we are behind a screen. As we try to navigate the business of family life, remember, there is no substitute for the godly values cultivated by gathering around the table.

Psalm 128

Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways!

You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.

The LORD bless you from Zion! May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life!

May you see your children's children! Peace be upon Israel!!

The Table of the Lord

The table is an important image used to convey family and fellowship in the Bible. Tables convey love, welcome, and fellowship. Notice the following examples.

1. Parables. In many of the parables, Jesus spoke about people being invited to dine with Him. While dining at a banquet, Jesus taught how we should invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. We are to honor those who cannot repay us. Of course, Jesus was asking the people to do this because this was exactly what He had done by inviting us to His table. Jesus invites sinners to believe, obey, and join Him at His table in His kingdom. Only those who eat bread in His kingdom will be blessed (Luke 14:15).

2. Passover & the Lord's Supper. At the end of His life, Jesus ate the Passover meal with the apostles. The Passover commemorated the Exodus. While this meal remembered the past, it also pointed to a future, new Exodus. Jesus gave them a new supper to observe. He promised that they would share this meal anew with Him in His Father's kingdom. Today, Christians continue to eat the Lord's Supper in hopeful anticipation this time.

3. Breakfast with the Resurrected Lord. After the resurrection of Jesus, He appeared to the apostles. One morning, the resurrected Lord appeared to the apostles from the seashore. They had been fishing all night. At daybreak, a man on the shore asked if they had caught any fish. They said they had not. The man then told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat.

When the man said this, Peter realized the man on the shore was Jesus. Peter jumped into the water and swam to shore. The other apostles finished bringing in their nets full of fish. Once on shore, Jesus invited the apostles to share breakfast with Him (John 21:1-14). As wonderful as breakfast with the resurrected Lord must have been for the apostles, Jesus invites us to His table.

4. A Future Celebration. In Revelation chapter three, the resurrected Lord said, "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" (Rev. 3:17). Being seated at the table with Jesus is conditional. For Him to come and dine with us, we must answer the door.

We must respond to Jesus' invitation and eat the food He has prepared. As the Bread of Life, Jesus promised, "...whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). We have to come to Him. We have to believe in Him. We have to obey Him. For those who respond to the invitation, Jesus promises a celebration. The Bible describes a great, Heavenly marriage between Him and His Church (Rev. 21).

Conclusion

God has blessed us beyond what we often realize. God has given us the privilege to reflect His glory by receiving and giving love. The love of God is first experienced through the family. Families who love Him and one another become symbols of God's love. Gathering around the family table helps nurture love.

Likewise, God's family gathers around His table to receive and give love. We gather to remember the love of God shown through the sacrifice of His Son. This love is to incrementally transform us in the hope of gathering around God's table in Heaven.