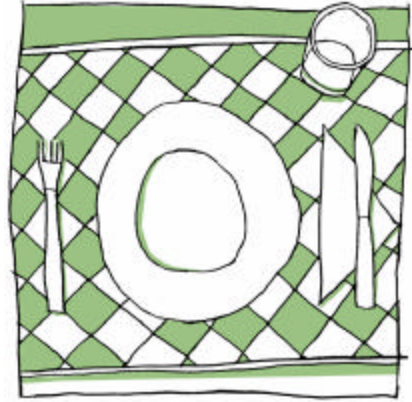


Celebrating a Family Meal



For centuries, Christians have gathered together to tell the stories and break bread. With the business of our lives, most of us don't take enough time to reflect on and thank God for the special qualities of our family.

Materials

- Your family should first determine the type of meal at which they would enjoy celebrating. Would they like to dress up the best china, have breakfast, plan a picnic, or order a pizza?
- The meal's menu should be determined ahead of time with each family member having input. Everyone should have preparation, cooking and/or cleaning task(s).
- Each family member should bring an object for the table that symbolizes the family. These symbols could be photos from the last vacation, a family Bible, a plate to symbolize hospitality, an item from a favorite family hobby, or a candle to symbolize warmth and closeness.
- An uncut loaf of bread or large roll.

Ground Rules

All family member should be present and participate to the degree that they are comfortable. It may be necessary to establish other family rules based on your own set of circumstances, such as confidentiality or respecting other opinions.

Environment

Have everyone gather when no one will be interrupted. Arrange the symbolic objects as a centerpiece or on a table next to the dinner table.

Opening Blessing

If your family prays a special Grace before eating, please use it. Otherwise, pray aloud this prayer:

Loving God, we thank you for allowing us to come together as a family. Please help sustain our lives and love by blessing this food. We ask this through, Jesus our brother. Amen.

Activity

When everyone is finished eating the main meal, clear the table, and spread all of the objects out in the middle. Each person should share what object they brought and why they chose it. When everyone is finished, did anyone notice any common threads? Is there any object that you would all agree best symbolizes your family?

The Leader should now turn everyone's attention to the loaf of bread explaining how Christians for generations have broken bread together as a sign of their fidelity and love, and how today it is a symbol of our Christian faith. The leader should break off a piece of the bread thanking God for something about the family. Do not eat the bread. Each family member in turn should do the same. The bread can be consumed when all have prayed.

The Leader should ask everyone to thank each other for the time spent together. Ask each member to share one thing they learned about the family or family members today.

Have dessert!

Closing Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for nourishing our body and soul through this meal and discussion. We are grateful to be part of the larger Christian family. We ask your blessings on our family as we seek to grow closer to You through our love for each other. We ask this through Jesus our brother. Amen.

Suggestions for Action

1. Sundae-making or another "fun eating" activity can be substituted for a meal.
2. This activity can be adapted to extended family reunions or gatherings by having each family bring an object to symbolize the larger family.
3. This activity could be held once a year to recap the year's activities and growth. Have each family member bring a symbol of the year.
4. This activity could be used for decision-making discussions as well as for special celebrations. For instance, if you needed to make a decision about where to go on the family vacation, you could have everyone bring a symbol of where they'd like to go on vacation. Decision-making symbols may need some guidelines such as the vacation must be under a certain dollar amount.