

The Practice of Eating Well

Session Focus

The family or household meal is one of the few rituals that allow us to act out our concern for each other, our need and desire to be together. So many good things can happen when family or household members gather together to eat. Just as a meal was central in the ministry of Jesus, a shared meal can be a central faith experience for families or household groups. It is an opportunity to discover Jesus' presence in the midst of family or household life. "The simple act of eating together is perhaps the most fundamental of all the ways in which food can express and foster the community that God desires should exist among people, and between humans and God." (Margaret Kim Peterson, *Keeping House*)

Session Activities

There are ten activities that include a teaching plan and the activity. All of the activities are also included on a separate MS Word document so that you can create handouts for sessions, a digital or print booklet, online playlists and activities, social media posts, and more.

- Activity 1: Family Meals: Yesterday
- Activity 2: Family Meals: Today
- Activity 3: The Surprising Power of Family Meals
- Activity 4: The Christian Practice of Eating Well
- Activity 5: Eating Well Involves Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Food
- Activity 6: Eating Well Involves Storytelling
- Activity 7: Eating Well Involves Sharing Food and Serving Others
- Activity 8: Eating Well Involves Celebrating
- Activity 9: Eating Well Involves Listening to God's Word
- Activity 10: Living the Practice of Eating Well
- Mealtime Blessings

Children's Activities

There are four children's activities that can be used in a children's program and family activities.

1. Eating Well in the Family (Connects to Activities #1 and 2)
2. Jesus Eats Well (Connects to Activities #4-9)
3. Eating Well in Our Family (Connects to Activity #10)
4. Try It—Eating Well (Connects to Activity #10)

A Learning Process for Christian Practices

The dynamic of forming people of all ages in a Christian practice incorporates four movements.

Movement 1. Reflecting on Our Lives

The first movement, *Reflecting*, taps into a basic area of human need that can find meaning and purpose in a Christian practice. Reflecting gives people an opportunity to become aware of how they experience a basic human need and hunger for the Christian practice in their own life. Reflecting also provides space for people to become aware of how they already engage in this practice, and the things that distort or hinder the practice. Oftentimes this first movement begins with real-life stories (presentations, print, audio, and/or video) of people who seek meaning and purpose for their lives through a particular practice. This helps spark people’s reflection and storytelling.

Movement 2. Exploring the Christian Practice

The second movement, *Exploring*, grounds the Christian practice in the Bible by describing how the biblical story deepens our understanding of the Christian practice and connects to people’s human needs and hungers. We present the wisdom of the Christian tradition on a particular Christian practice, describing what people today, and throughout history, actually do when they are engaged well in a particular practice—how people or communities live the practice with exceptional grace and skill. By connecting the Christian practice to human needs and hungers, people can identify how and why a practice is important to living a meaningful life.

Movement 3. Experiencing the Christian Practice

The third movement, *Experiencing*, immerses people in the actual practice—opportunities to experience activities that lead them into the Christian practice. This immersion can take place in programs, within the life of the Christian community (such as worship and ministry activities), and/or out in the community (serving people, providing hospitality, etc.). The key is that people actually experience the practice.

Movement 4. Living the Practice

The fourth movement, *Living*, includes reflecting on the experience of the practice activities (Movement 3); showing people how to make the Christian practice a part of everyday life; and providing people with a variety of tools and activities to integrate the Christian practice into their daily life—at home, at work, at school, and in the world.

Learning Activities through the Four Movements

Movement 1. Reflecting on Life Experience

- Activity 1: Family Meals: Yesterday
- Activity 2: Family Meals: Today
- Activity 3: The Surprising Power of Family Meals

Movement 2. Exploring the Christian Practice

- Activity 4: The Christian Practice of Eating Well

Movement 3. Experiencing the Christian Practice

- Activity 5: Eating Well Involves Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Food

- Activity 6: Eating Well Involves Storytelling
- Activity 7: Eating Well Involves Sharing Food and Serving Others
- Activity 8: Eating Well Involves Celebrating
- Activity 9: Eating Well Involves Listening to God's Word

Movement 4. Living the Practice

- Activity 10: Living the Practice of Eating Well

Session Plan

There are at least two ways to structure the learning design to give people direct experiences of Eating Well through the activities: a *guided experience* and *experience centers*.

Approach 1. Guided Experience with the Whole Group

Guide the participants in small groups or family groupings through the selected activities with a mix of presentation and direct experience. This approach works best with the whole group in the same room and a presentation/facilitation team that guides people through the activities in age-appropriate table groups. Guide the table groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences.
- Where needed, small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

Session Plan for Whole Group Experience

Whole Group Gathering and Opening Prayer Experience

Part 1. Reflecting on Life Experience (30 minutes)

Lead the group in experiencing each of the following activities:

1. Conduct Activity #1: Family Meals: Yesterday.
2. Conduct Activity #2: Family Meals: Today.
3. Present a summary of the key content on Activity #3: The Surprising Power of Family Meals.

Part 2. Exploring and Experiencing the Christian Practice of Eating Well (60 minutes)

Lead the group in experiencing each of the following activities:

1. Introduce the Christian Practice of Eating Well using Activity #4. (5 minutes)
2. Activity #5: Eating Well Involves Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Food (10 minutes)
3. Activity #6: Eating Well Involves Storytelling (10 minutes)
4. Activity #7: Eating Well Involves Sharing Food and Serving Others (10 minutes)

5. Activity #8: Eating Well Involves Celebrating (10 minutes)
6. Activity #9: Eating Well Involves Listening to God's Word (10 minutes)

Part 3. Living the Practice: Whole Group Experience (30 minutes)

Lead the group in experiencing the following activity:

Activity #10: Living the Practice of Eating Well

Demonstration:

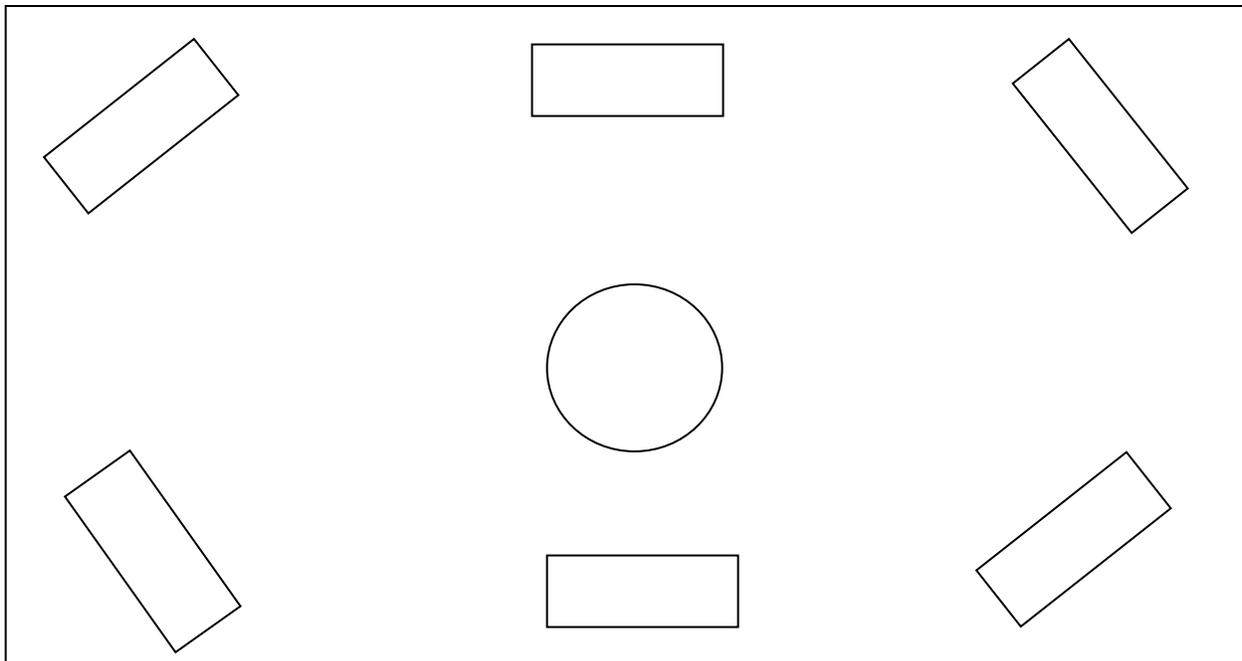
Consider ending with an actual meal where you can demonstrate how to put the activities into practice.

Approach 2. Activity Centers

The Eating Well activities can be used to design activities center for each activity you select. Have the participants move from station to station to experience the activities, similar to attending workshops at a conference. Each learning activity should have its own room or section of a large room. If you want everyone to experience all of the learning activities, then organize the participants into the same number of groups as you have learning stations. Make the groups of equal size and have them rotate from learning station to learning station.

There are two ways to set up activity centers: one large room, or multiple break-out rooms.

If you arrange all of the learning centers in one large meeting gym or parish hall, set-up the centers around the outside of the room (see example). The center space can become a storytelling center with a carpet or chairs for children to sit. The example below shows six different learning centers plus the storytelling center. You may still need separate rooms if you have a learning center that focuses on prayer (worship space) or shows a film (meeting room).



Keep in mind the following when organizing in one room:

- Make sure there is adequate space between learning centers so that people are not interrupted by the activity at other centers.
- Set-up each learning activity center with tables and chairs (or carpeted floor space) for participants to listen, discuss, and create. Children and teens can use the floor, but adults will need chairs.
- Assign each learning center a number and post the number on the wall and floor at each center.

If you arrange learning centers in multiple rooms such as meeting rooms, classrooms, parish hall, gym, worship space, assign one learning center to each space. This format resembles a conference where people move from room to room for each session. Place the learning center name outside each room and develop a list of centers with locations, and a map if necessary, so that people can easily find the correct room.

Organizing Groups

Once you have determined how many learning centers you will offer, you can organize participants accordingly. If you offer four learning centers, you can organize the participants into four groups of equal size and assign each group a specific sequence that they will move through the learning centers. Assign a number to each learning center and an alphabet letter to each group, then describe how they will move through the centers: Group A: 1-2-3-4; Group B: 2-3-4-1, Group C: 3-4-1-2, and Group D: 4-1-2-3. If you offer three learning centers, there would be three groups rotating among the three learning centers. Keep families together in one group.

If you offer more than three or four learning centers, allow people to choose the learning centers they are going to experience. Remind them that if a particular center is crowded, they can move to another center and then return to their first choice in another round. Families with children should stay together because the activities require parents to work with their children.

Staffing

Each center is facilitated by a team of facilitators who guide the participants through the activity plan. The teaching team facilitates the overall learning plan for the center: making presentations, guiding learning activities, organizing discussions, and so on. The number of team members needed depends on the complexity of the activities and the number of participants at a learning center. Teams should have at least two or three people, but some centers will require five or six people. Older adolescents can also serve as members of the teaching team, and are especially valuable in facilitating creative activities and dramatic presentations.

To present the focus of each learning activity center, ask the teaching teams to present a very brief overview of what they will be doing in each center. Give each participant the list of learning activity centers with short descriptions, a schedule, and the locations of the centers.

Session Plan for Activity Centers

Offer as many experience centers as possible to accommodate the size of the group, and the physical space and leaders that you have. Create an Eating Well Guide (print, digital) to accompany the program.

All of the instructions for conducting the activity are included with the activity. Distribute copies of the activities to each individual or family.

Whole Group Gathering and Opening Prayer Experience

Part 1. Reflecting on Life Experience: Whole Group Experience (30 minutes)

Lead the group in experiencing each of the following activities:

1. Conduct Activity #1: Family Meals: Yesterday.
2. Conduct Activity #2: Family Meals: Today.
3. Present a summary of the key content on Activity #3: The Surprising Power of Family Meals.

Part 2. Exploring and Experiencing the Christian Practice of Eating Well: Activity Centers (60 minutes)

Engage participants in activity centers to experience each of the following activities:

Activity Centers

1. Activity #5: Eating Well Involves Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Food (10 minutes)
2. Activity #6: Eating Well Involves Storytelling (10 minutes)
3. Activity #7: Eating Well Involves Sharing Food and Serving Others (10 minutes)
4. Activity #8: Eating Well Involves Celebrating (10 minutes)
5. Activity #9: Eating Well Involves Listening to God's Word (10 minutes)

Design

- Introduce the Christian Practice of Eating Well using Activity #4 and then invite people to move to their first activity center. (10 minutes)
- Round 1: Five Experience Centers for Activities #5-9 (10 minutes)
Break—move to next Center (2-3 minutes)
- Round 2: Five Experience Centers for Activities #5-9 (10 minutes)
Break—move to next Center (2-3 minutes)
- Round 3: Five Experience Centers for Activities #5-9 (10 minutes)
Break—move to next Center (2-3 minutes)
- Round 4: Five Experience Centers for Activities #5-9 (10 minutes)
Break—move to next Center (2-3 minutes)
- Round 5: Five Experience Centers for Activities #5-9 (10 minutes)

Part 3. Living the Practice: Whole Group Experience (30 minutes)

Lead the whole group in experiencing the following activity:

Activity 10: Living the Practice of Eating Well

Demonstration:

Consider ending with an actual meal where you can demonstrate how to put the activities into practice.

Additional Resources

Eating Well Activities from Vibrant Faith at Home

There are variety of activities from Vibrant Faith at Home that can be used with the Practice of Eating Well. They are PDF files and Vibrant Faith grants permission to use these activities in print or digital formats. All activities are available at www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/vibrant-faith-home.html.

Children & Families

Bible Stories:

- Two activities that directly relate to Eating Well are “Come Eat Breakfast”—Jesus eating with his disciples (Spring) and “Jesus’ First Miracle”—Cana (Spring).

Caring Conversations

- Many Caring Conversation activities can be easily used as meal discussions.

Prayer

- Many of the Prayer activities can be easily used at mealtime.

Ritual & Tradition

- Many of the Ritual activities are designed for mealtime. Two good examples are “Learning about Passover Seder” (Spring) and “Back to School Breakfast Devotions”(Fall).

Just for Kids

- Bread of Life: Feeding the 5000 (Bible Trek)

Teens

Bible Stories:

- “Blessing Board” (Spring) and “Family Bonds” (Fall) are among the Bible activities for teens that would work easily at a meal.

Caring Conversations

- Many of the Caring Conversation activities can be easily used as meal discussions.

Prayer

- Many of the Prayer activities can be easily used at mealtime.

Ritual & Tradition

- Many Ritual activities are designed for mealtime. For example: “Eating Together” (Summer), “Meaningful Family Time”(Summer), and “Thanksgiving Stories” (Fall)

Visual Faith Bible Activity on Eating Well

Road Trip, Meal, and Discovery (Luke 24:13-34)

Download from <https://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/visual-faith-activities.html>.

You can purchase images through Vibrant Faith (<https://vibrantfaith.org/product/vfp-image-database>) or use copyright-free photo websites, such as Unsplash (<https://unsplash.com>) and Pixabay (<https://pixabay.com>).

Video Sources for the Christian Practice of Eating Well

There are numerous videos available on YouTube and within the resources of each Christian denomination for all of the Christian Practices. Using YouTube to search for available videos will produce a number of excellent resources. Here are several sources of religious video programs:

- Amplify Media: <https://my.amplifymedia.com/amplify/home>
- Ascension Presents (Ascension Press): [YouTube Channel](#)
- BibleProject (<https://bibleproject.com>) and The Bible Project TV (<https://bibleproject.com/stream>)
- BustedHalo: <https://bustedhalo.com/category/video> and [BustedHalo YouTube Channel](#).
- Catholic Central: <https://www.catholiccentral.com>
- Church Knows Church: Things We Can Do: <https://chuckknowschurch.com> and [ChuckKnowsChurch YouTube Channel](#)
- Formed: <https://formed.org> (Catholic video resource)
- Minno Kids: <https://visit.gominno.com> and [YouTube Channel](#)
- ODB Films: <https://odbfilms.com> and [Video Catechism \(VCAT\)](#)
- Paraclete Press: <https://paracletepress.com/products/paraclete-video-streaming-4>
- Right Now Media: <https://www.rightnowmedia.org>
- Saddleback Kids Videos: [YouTube Channel](#)
- The Skit Guys: <https://skitguys.com> and [The Skit Guys on YouTube](#)
- Thirty Seconds or Less: <http://thirtysecondsorless.net> and #30SecondBible
- Work of the People: <https://www.theworkofthepeople.com>
- Worship House Media: <https://www.worshiphousemedia.com>
- Worship House Kids: <https://www.worshiphousekids.com>

Activity 1. Family Meals: Yesterday

Plan

Give each family/household or small group time to share experiences of family meals when they were growing up using the questions in the Activity. This is a storytelling experience so be sure to give people time to share their story without interruptions or discussion.

Create a placement or table tent with the questions so that everyone has them. (There is a sample placemat and table tent design at the end of this document.)

Activity

What was it like in your family when you were growing up? Think about your family table and place the people around your family table.



Photo by [amira aldia amal](#) on [Unsplash](#)

- ◆ What was a typical family dinner like?
- ◆ What time did you eat?
- ◆ What were your typical meals? Favorites? Worst meal?
- ◆ Who prepared it? Who served it? Who cleaned-up?
- ◆ How did your meal begin?
- ◆ What did you talk about at the family table?
- ◆ How did the family meal end?

Activity 2. Family Meals: Today

Plan

Ask one member from each family/household (of any age) to share the household's experience of eating today using the questions in the Activity. This is a storytelling experience so be sure to give people time to share their story without interruptions or discussion.

Use a placement or table tent with the questions so that everyone has them (see the two designs at the end of this document).

Activity

What is your typical family meal like today? A lot has changed over the past twenty-to-thirty years. A typical answer to this question is another question: "What family meal?" So what is your typical family meal like today?

- ◆ How many days a week does your family or household gather for a family meal together?
- ◆ What time do you eat?
- ◆ Where are your typical meals?
- ◆ Who prepares it? Who serves it? Who cleans-up?
- ◆ How does your meal begin?
- ◆ What do you talk about at the family table?
- ◆ How does the family meal end?

Reflection

- ◆ What are the biggest challenges of eating together as a household?

Activity 3. The Surprising Power of Family Meals

Plan

1. Present the commentary on the power of the family meal in the Activity: “The Surprising Power of the Family Meal” and “What Makes a Regular Family Meal so Hard Today?”
2. After your presentation, ask groups (or individual families/households) to discuss the following questions.
 - ◆ Where you aware of the research on the benefits of the family meal?
 - ◆ What are the implications of the research for families today?
 - ◆ What challenges to the family meal would you add to the presentation?

Activity

1. The Surprising Power of the Family Meal

Who has time for supper? Well, you do. Your family does. We all do. Believe me, I would not be making such a big deal about supper if we had other, stronger communal bonds. But we are living in a time when the social fabric is fraying, and supper is one of the few habits that has not yet disappeared from memory.

(Miriam Weinstein, *The Surprising Power of Family Meals*)

What if you heard that that there was something that would improve the quality of your daily life, your children’s chances of success in the world, your family’s health, our values as a society? Something that is inexpensive, simple to produce, and within the reach of pretty much everyone?

What is it? It is family dinner. Research has been accumulating from very, very disparate fields. It shows how eating ordinary, average everyday supper with our family is strongly linked to lower incidence of bad outcomes, such as teenage drug and alcohol use, and to good qualities like emotional stability. It correlates with kindergartners being better prepared to learn to read.

Regular family supper helps keep asthmatic kids out of hospitals. It discourages both obesity and eating disorders. It supports your staying more connected to your extended family, ethnic heritage, your community of faith. It will help children and families to be more resilient, reacting positively to those curves and arrows that life throws our way. It will certainly keep you better nourished. The things we are likely to discuss at the supper table anchor our children more firmly in the world.

When families prepare meals together, kids learn real life skills. They assume responsibility and become better team members. Sharing meals helps cement family relationships, no matter how you define family.

Consider this:

- ◆ Compared to teens who have fewer than three family dinners per week, teens who have five or more are likelier to experience lower levels of tension or stress among family members. They are also likelier to say their parents are very or fairly proud of them, and that they can go to one or both parents with a serious problem.
- ◆ Those teens who live in households with these four characteristics—frequent family dinners (five to seven times in a typical week), low levels of tension or stress among family members, parents who are very or fairly proud of their teen, and a parent in whom the teen can confide—are at half the risk of the average teen for substance abuse.
- ◆ More than one in five parents and teens say they are “too busy” to have dinner together more often. Given the importance of frequent family dinners and the powerful impact parental engagement has in preventing teen substance abuse, families should identify and work to overcome the barriers to frequent family dining. Late work hours, after school activities, and long commutes all come at the expense of valuable family time.
- ◆ Studies on the subject show a number of important benefits of frequent family dining. For instance, kids who have frequent family dinners are half as likely to smoke cigarettes and marijuana, and one-third less likely to drink alcohol. Teens who dine frequently with their parents are likelier to have parents who take responsibility for teen drug use, and they are 40 percent likelier to say future drug use will never happen.

2. What Makes a Regular Family Meal so Hard Today?

Researchers say we are losing the family meal and our ability to eat well. The pressures of a lack of time and overscheduled lives are the usual reasons. We are often eating on the run and often in the car, as we move from activity to activity. What is being lost?

In *The Surprising Power of Family Meals*, Miriam Weinstein writes,

As a society, we do not favor supper with preferential treatment; because we schedule everything constantly, all the time, that humble, shared meal is no longer expected. And because it is not expected, it is less likely to happen. And so it is expected even less. We stay late at the office. We stop by the gym, or catch up on our e-mail. We drive one kid to soccer, bring another one along in the car.

We grab fast food, or let the kids open the freezer and fend for themselves. Our supermarket aisles are bulging with single-serving, idiot-proof, heat-and-eat meal substitutes. And the more of them we buy, the less practice we have in putting meals together. Who even knows what a meal means? How do we learn what constitutes reasonable portions, what tastes good, what our grandmothers cooked, what we should combine with what to make a tasty, nutritionally complete, appealing whole?

We are living in a time of intense individualism, in a culture defined by competition and consumption. It has been an article of faith that a parent’s job is to provide every child with every opportunity to find his or her particular talent, interest, or bliss. But somehow, as we drive-thru our

lives, we have given up something so modest, so humble, so available that we never realized its worth. Family supper can be a bulwark against the pressures we all face every day.

The family meal—dinner at whatever time works for a family—is one of the few rituals that allow us to act out our concern for each other, our need and desire to be together. The family meal is a time when family comes first; it is a time for establishing, enjoying, and maintaining ties. The goal is to create and reinforce a secure place for your loved ones in a society that can seem awfully uninterested in human needs.

Reflection

- ◆ Where you aware of the research on the benefits of the family meal?
- ◆ What are the implications of the research for families today?
- ◆ What challenges to the family meal would you add?

Activity 4. The Christian Practice of Eating Well

Plan

1. Ask people (in groups or families/households) to identify as many meal and feeding stories in the Gospels as they can recall.
2. Use the Introduction (quotes) and Commentary in the Activity to present an introduction to “Eating Well in the Gospels.”
3. Share one or two complete stories of Jesus’ meals or feeding people from the Gospel of Luke. (See list in the Activity.)
4. Have groups and/or individual families/households discuss the presentation and the Gospel stories by responding to the question:
 - ◆ Why do you think a meal and feeding people was so important for Jesus?

Activity

1. Introduction

*Food has always been an important vehicle for sacred learning. The bitter herbs of a Passover Seder teach about the bitterness of slavery in Egypt. The broken bread of communion teaches the crucifixion. Kosher laws, potluck dinners, meals for the grieving or ill, Shabbat, and Sunday dinner—these meals teach so much, including what it means to be part of this community, part of this family. Anthropologists pay particular attention to what happens around food in a society because so often the pattern and values of the society come to a head around the meal. (Brad Wigger, *The Power of God at Home*)*

*Throughout the Bible, eating a meal together has special significance. Much more happens than physical hunger being satisfied. Intimacy develops between people who share food together. Jesus used his last meal with his disciples to symbolize his continuing relationship with them, even after his death. He fed them after his resurrection, and with the bread and fish came the opportunity to talk together (John 21:9–23). It was only when Jesus fed them that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus finally recognized him: “their eyes were opened” (Luke 24:30–31). (Diana Garland, *Sacred Stories of Ordinary Families*)*

2. Commentary

In the Gospels, Jesus teaches us how to eat well. In the Gospel of Luke alone there are ten important meal stories. Much of Jesus’ teaching took place during meals. Indeed, meals appear to have been the privileged place for Jesus’ teaching. Meals provided an excellent setting for surfacing the various problems and issues in the community, as well as for serious conversation. In view of the importance of meals in the life of the community, the meal itself was often the subject of Jesus’ teaching at dinner.

Such is the case in the dinner at the home of a Pharisee (7:36–40), in the hospitality at the home of Martha (10:38–42), and even at the Last Supper (22:14–38).

It was at a meal that Jesus celebrated for the last time with his disciples, asking them to remember him each time they celebrate the breaking of the bread and drinking from the cup. Blessing comes through this meal as Jesus establishes the common meal that has come to mark the communal life of his followers ever since. For two millennia now, Christians have been breaking bread and blessing it and expecting as they do so to encounter Jesus and feed upon him.

Then he took a piece of bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in memory of me.” In the same way, he gave them the cup after the supper, saying, “This is God’s new covenant sealed with my blood, which is poured out for you.” (Luke 22:19–20)

It was at a meal that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus discover Jesus in their midst. Neither disciple recognizes him as they recount the things that happened to Jesus in Jerusalem, how he was put to death and how they found the tomb empty on the third day. Then Jesus uses the Scriptures to explain why the Messiah had to suffer. As they came near the village of Emmaus, the disciples ask Jesus to stay with them.

“Stay with us, the day is almost over and it is getting dark.” So he went in to stay with them. He sat down to eat with them, took the bread and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, “Wasn’t it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:29–32; read the whole story in Luke 24:13–35)

So many good things can happen when family members gather together to eat. Just as a meal was central in the ministry of Jesus, the family meal can be a central faith experience for family members, and the family as a whole. It is a daily opportunity to discover Jesus’ presence in the midst of family life. “The simple act of eating together is perhaps the most fundamental of all the ways in which food can express and foster the community that God desires should exist among people, and between humans and God.” (Margaret Kim Peterson, *Keeping House: The Litany of Everyday Life*)

3. Stories of Jesus’ Meals in the Gospel of Luke.

- A Great Banquet at the House of Levi (5:27–39)
- A Great Dinner at the House of Simon the Pharisee (7:36–50)
- The Breaking of the Bread in the City of Bethsaida (9:10–17)
- Hospitality at the Home of Martha (10:38–42)
- A Noon Meal at the Home of a Pharisee (11:37–54)
- A Sabbath Dinner at the Home of a Leading Pharisee (14:1–24)
- Hospitality at the House of Zacchaeus (19:1–10)
- Preparing the Passover (22:7–13)
- The Passover (22:14–38)
- The Breaking of the Bread at Emmaus (24:13–35)
- With the Community in Jerusalem (24:36–53)

Activity 5. Eating Well Involves Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Food

Plan

1. Use the Commentary in the Activity to present “Eating Well Involves Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Food.”
2. Invite people in groups and/or families/households to discuss:
 - ◆ *How do we give thanks for food in our household?*
 - ◆ *How can we give thanks for food in our household?*
3. In groups and/or families/households ask people to create a meal prayer that they can utilize at home. Groups can write their meal prayer on a sheet of newsprint or PowerPoint slide to present to the whole group.
4. Invite groups to share their meal prayers with the whole group. (You may want to collect them and make them available online and/or in print.)

Activity

Jesus’ miracle of the feeding of the five thousand teaches us that food is a good gift of God. We are called to give God thanks for our food as we share it with others.

When the sun was beginning to set, the twelve disciples came to him and said, “Send the people away so that they can go to the villages and farms around here and find food and lodging, because this is a lonely place.” But Jesus said to them, “You yourselves give them something to eat.” They answered, “All we have are five loaves and two fish. Do you want us to go and buy food for this whole crowd?” Jesus said to his disciples, “Make the people sit down in groups of about fifty each.” After the disciples had done so, Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, thanked God for them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and had enough, and the disciples took up twelve baskets of what was left over. (Luke 9:12–17)

Eating well is characterized by gratitude. Jesus is recorded in Scripture as giving thanks before meals (John 6:11), as is the apostle Paul (Acts 27:35). Christians in all walks of life have long been in the habit of “saying grace” as one means of expressing thanks to God, who sustains our lives through gifts of food.

Saying grace is a means of setting mealtime apart from the rest of the day, and of acknowledging God as the source of all good gifts, and of this food and fellowship in particular. Table graces may vary from short blessings said or sung from memory to longer or shorter spontaneous prayers said by one or more members of the household.

Practice

Try using this simple format for your prayer before a meal.

- ◆ Begin with a salutation, such as Dear Lord, or Almighty God, or Gracious Creator, or another title for God
- ◆ Give God thanks for the blessings of the day and for the food you are about to eat
- ◆ Remember the needs of people who need your prayer this day

Here's an easy-to-use grace before meal that you can easily modify each day.

Dear God,
 thank you for this day,
 for one another, for the food before us,
 and for all who helped to grow and cook this food.

We remember our world
 and all those who need our prayers today, especially___ (*add the names of people you are praying for*)

Please help this meal
 to nourish our hearts and souls
 as well as our bodies

Amen!
(Kathy Finley, *Amen!*)

The practice of saying grace is important. If nothing else, it preserves the form of asking God's blessing. The expression of gratitude is spiritually formative. Such rituals and traditions shape us.

Activity 6. Eating Well Involves Storytelling

Plan

1. Use the Commentary in the Activity to present “Eating Well Involves Storytelling.”
2. Invite people in groups and/or families/households to discuss:
 - ◆ *How do we share our stories over a meal in our household?*
 - ◆ *How can we share our stories over a meal in our household?*
3. In groups and/or families/households ask people to create suggestions (potential topics or questions) for mealtime storytelling at home. (Groups can write their suggestions on a sheet of newsprint or PowerPoint slide to present to the whole group.)
4. Invite groups to share their topics or questions with the whole group. (You may want to collect them and make them available online and/or in print.)

Activity

Family meals are the central daily ritual opportunity in family life. At best, they are an oasis in a hectic day, a time to reconnect, relax, discuss, debate, support one another, and laugh together. Family dinners in particular are apt to be the only time during the day when the whole family has the chance to be together, face-to-face, doing the same activity and sharing in conversation.

Family meal rituals involve:

- ◆ *being-around talk*, as we prepare meals, set up, eat our food, and clean up
- ◆ *logistics talk*, as we use the meal to catch up with what is happening on everyone’s schedule
- ◆ *connecting talk*, as we use the meal (at the best of times, anyway) to tell stories, share opinions and feelings, and generally get caught up in one another’s lives.

Family meals provide time for face-to-face interaction. This is a time to look at your family members. Who looks happy? Who looks healthy? It’s a time to discuss everyone’s day.

Family meals enhance communication skills. Children learn how to hold a conversation by listening and participating in conversation at the dinner table. They learn how to initiate conversation, take turns, maintain and change topics, and request clarification.

Practice

The family meal provides a great setting for sharing stories. It’s a time to:

- ◆ talk about the highs and lows of the day
- ◆ talk about upcoming and past events

- ◆ tell stories about the family, such as where grandparents grew up, how they met, what their parents did for a living.

Here are a variety of questions that can be used at mealtime to promote storytelling:

- ◆ What was something new you learned today?
- ◆ What was one interesting thing that happened today?
- ◆ How did you see God at work today?
- ◆ What made you feel happy today?
- ◆ How did you care for someone else today?
- ◆ Who needs our prayers tonight?
- ◆ What is the biggest challenge you are facing right now?
- ◆ What made you laugh today?
- ◆ What made you cry (or sad) today?
- ◆ What is one (or two or three) things you are thankful for?
- ◆ What is one question you would like to ask God?
- ◆ If you could describe your ideal day, what would it be like?
- ◆ If you could take lessons in anything, what would you learn?
- ◆ What is one thing you wish you knew how to cook?
- ◆ If you could have dinner with one person, past or present, whom would you choose?
- ◆ When during the day do you feel closest to God? Why?
- ◆ If you had \$100,000 to spend on others, how would you use it?
- ◆ What is one of your favorite Bible passages, or Bible stories? Why?

Activity 7. Eating Well Involves Sharing Food and Serving Others

Plan

1. Use the Commentary in the Activity to present “Eating Well Involves Sharing Food and Serving Others.”
2. Invite people in groups and/or families/households to discuss:
 - ◆ *How do we share food and serve those in need?*
 - ◆ *How can we share food and serve those in need?*
3. In groups and/or families/households ask people to create specific actions and suggestions that people can use to share food and serve those in need. Groups can write their suggestions on a sheet of newsprint or PowerPoint slide to present to the whole group.)
4. Invite groups to share their ideas with the whole group. (You may want to collect them and make them available online and/or in print.)

Activity

When Jesus was at a meal in the home of a prominent religious leader of his day, he taught the guests that their meal was not only for themselves but that they were called to serve the poor in their community as well.

The Jesus said to his host, “When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your rich neighbors—for they will invite you back, and in this way you will be paid for what you did. When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; and you will be blessed, because they are not able to pay you back. God will repay you on the day the good people rise from death.” (Luke 14:12–14; read the whole story in Luke 14:1–24)

Sharing food with those in need is central to the Christian way of life and to the practice of eating well. In Matthew 25 Jesus identifies himself with the hungry and tells us that when we share our food with the hungry, we are sharing our faith with him. Here is the story of one woman’s experience.

Each Tuesday Linda prepares a meal for the women and children at the local homeless shelter. She makes a special point to cook a healthy, homemade meal, something that the homeless rarely have. It is her Tuesday evening ritual: arriving home a little early from work, cooking the meal, carrying it to the shelter, serving the food, talking with the ladies, playing with the children while their mothers eat. Her Tuesday meal is shared with those who are hungry and homeless. Her food and presence show her respect for the dignity and value of each person at the shelter. Over a shared meal, she listens to their stories and carries them with her all week long.

One family decided to simplify its food purchases by reducing meat consumption and eliminating some foods altogether (unhealthy snacks, candy). They took the \$20-a-week savings in their food bill—about \$1000 per year—and invested the money into providing food for the local food bank, and sponsoring a child with an international relief agency.

There are many ways to share food with those in need:

- ◆ Many churches gather regularly to prepare and serve a meal at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen. Look for opportunities to participate with your church in serving the hungry in your community and in the world.
- ◆ Work with local organizations who feed people at homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and food banks.
- ◆ Support the international work of organizations that help people become food sufficient, such as Heifer (www.heifer.org), World Vision (www.worldvision.org), Church World Service (www.churchworldservice.org), and Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org).
- ◆ Support organizations that advocate for policies that will feed the hungry in our country and world, such as Bread for the World (www.bread.org).
- ◆ Support the poor economically by purchasing fair trade products, such as coffee, whenever possible. Find fair trade products online at sites such as Equal Exchange (www.equalexchange.com) and Ten Thousand Villages (www.tenthousandvillages.com).

Activity 8. Eating Well Involves Celebrating

Plan

1. Use the Commentary in the Activity to present “Eating Well Involves Celebrating.” Also read the story of the Wedding Feast at Cana from John 2:1-11.
2. Invite people in groups and/or families/households to discuss:
 - ◆ *What are several of your favorite celebrations involving a meal?*
 - ◆ *What are the possibilities for celebrations involving a meal?*
3. In groups and/or families/households ask people to identify a list of events that people can celebrate throughout the year and incorporate into their own ritual traditions, e.g., feast days, liturgical seasons, holidays, life transitions, and special occasions. Groups can write their suggestions on a sheet of newsprint or PowerPoint slide to present to the whole group.
4. Invite groups to share their ideas with the whole group. (You may want to collect them and make them available online and/or in print.)

Activity

So many important holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, and family events, such as birthdays, anniversaries, and accomplishments, are celebrated at a meal. These are times of grace when we can experience God’s presence through celebration. Celebration is at the heart of Christ’s way; the story of the wedding feast in Cana (John 2:1–11) is but one example of the importance Jesus placed on celebrating life events.

Celebration brings joy into our lives, and joy—especially shared joy—gives us strength. Here is one person’s experience of a birthday milestone:

It happens once in a lifetime. This particular birthday, my children were coming home for my sixtieth birthday, and we decided to play golf that afternoon. That was very nice, and I was looking forward to it.

When we got home I was pretty oblivious. As I was going up the stairs in my sweat-soaked T-shirt, I heard a loud scream, “Happy Birthday!” and saw a huge crowd. Friends and family from near and far had gathered at our house for a surprise birthday party.

Yes, I was surprised. But that was just the beginning. My wife had the event catered, and the food was terrific—hors d’oeuvres, champagne and wine, and a really fine meal. Too much.

A feast, a celebration—not something one deserves. It only happens once in a lifetime. It was great, a blessing beyond anything I could imagine.

Practice

Good family celebrations don't happen; they are planned. Look ahead on the calendar and schedule your Advent or Lenten activities, or your first-day-of-school ritual.

Sit down together as a family and decide what rituals you would like to try this year. Perhaps you will want only three or four.

Think of possible feast days, holidays, and special occasions that you can celebrate as a family: Ash Wednesday, a Seder dinner, Easter, birthdays, a wedding anniversary, Mother's Day, Father's Day, back-to-school ritual, Thanksgiving, and Christmas rituals. Give each family member a particular responsibility for planning and carrying out the celebration.

Birthday Celebration

(From Milestones Ministry: <https://milestonesministry.org/milestone-moments>)

Caring Conversation

- ◆ Birthday person: Tell us some of the joys, challenges and blessings you have experienced.
- ◆ Guests: Tell a story about the birthday person.
- ◆ Birthday person: What hopes do you have for the future?
- ◆ Guests: What hopes do you have for the birthday person?

Scripture Reading

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24, NRSV)

God is the creator of all life, including the gift of this day.

- ◆ Talk about how this day is a gift from God.
- ◆ How has the birthday person been a gift to you?

Pray Together

Dear God, today we especially thank you for the gift of (name), who is celebrating his/her birthday. We thank you for (name) and for your love for all through the gift of this day. May we respond with joy for the life of (name) and for the gift of life we all share together. In the name of Jesus Christ, your only Son born into the world that we may have life in his name. Amen.

Rituals and Traditions

Before the traditional birthday cake and opening of gifts, bless the birthday person. Surround the person and hold hands or lay hands on the honored person and bless them: *May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord teach you to count each day so that you may gain a heart of wisdom.* (Psalm 90:12)

Activity 9. Eating Well Involves Listening to God's Word

Plan

1. Use the Commentary in the Activity to present "Eating Well Involves Listening to God's Word."
2. Invite people in groups and/or families/households to discuss:

How can we incorporate reading the Bible into our meals as a household?

3. In groups and/or families/households ask people to create practical ways that people can incorporate reading the Bible into mealtimes. Groups can write their suggestions on a sheet of newsprint or PowerPoint slide to present to the whole group.)
4. Invite groups to share their ideas with the whole group. (You may want to collect them and make them available online and/or in print.)
5. Share with the group how to use the "Live Themes & Bible Verses" list.

Activity

Reading the Bible and applying it to our lives is one of the most powerful ways to grow in faith as a family. Mealtime is an excellent opportunity to read a Scripture verse, whether daily or a few times a week. You may also want to discuss a Bible passage at one meal each week, perhaps using one of the readings for the upcoming Sunday. Here is the story of one family's experience.

A friend of mine from church told me how her family (including two teenagers) has begun having breakfast together. Instead of each person grabbing something on the run, as they always had, the whole family actually sits down together on workdays and school days, in one place at the same time; as the sun rises, they read from the first chapter of Genesis. Each day, they read about one day of creation and how God saw it was good. I asked about this, and the friend told me, "Everything around us tries to tell us to be cynical and dissatisfied, so taking even five minutes, including our time to teach, to know goodness, to look at each other face-to-face, has got to be worth something." Over and over again, daily, they read of the goodness of God's creative work and welcome the day with appreciation. "Breakfast itself has become meaningful to us now, in ways it never had been." This family, maybe intuitively, discovered at least a partial antidote to the perpetual dissatisfaction, cynicism, distraction, and danger always knocking at the door. The story of God's good creation feeds the soul of this family with meaning, as food feeds their body. (Brad Wigger, *The Power of God at Home*)

Practice

Use the "Life Themes and Bible Verses" list as a guide to selecting a Bible reading that connects to a life issue in your life or your family/household's life.

Life Themes & Bible Verses

Affliction: Romans 8:18–25, 35–39; Sirach 2:1–18; John 14:1–3; Matthew 11:28–30; Philippians 4:12–13; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7.

Anger: James 1:19–21; Ephesians 4:26; Proverbs 12:16; Sirach 30:24; Colossians 3:12–13; Ps. 37:7–8

Charity/love: John 13:1–15, 15:9–13; Romans 12:9–21, 13:8–10; 1 Corinthians 13:1–13; 1 Peter 4:8–10; 1 John 3:11–20; 1 John 4:7–12, 18–21.

Confusion about God: Isaiah 55:8–9; James 1:13–14; 1 Peter 4:12–13; James 1:2–3; Luke 6:22–23; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10

Death: 1 Corinthians 15:19–22; John 11:1–44; Romans 5:12–15; Colossians 3:1–4.

Discouragement: Philippians 4:6–8; Ps. 138:7–8; John 14:1; John 14:27; Philippians 1:6; Ps. 94:18–19

Family: Colossians 3:18–21; Mark 3:33–35; Acts 2:42–47; Joel 2:15–16; Deuteronomy 31:12–13; 1 Corinthians 12:12–26.

Fear: John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1:6–7; Romans 8:15; Psalm 91:1–5; Proverbs 3:25–26; Isaiah 43:2; Sirach 34:14; Matthew 10:28

Forgiveness: Ezekiel 36:25–36; Matthew 18:15–18, 21–35; Luke 15:11–32.

Friendship: Sirach 6:5–17, 9:10–16, 13:1–13; Luke 10:25–37, 11:5–13; John 15:14–17, 20:11–18.

Happiness or joyfulness: Psalm 4:8–9; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 34:6; Psalm 71:23; Isaiah 29:19; Acts 2:28; 3 John 1:4

Hatred: Psalm 25:18–20; Deuteronomy 31:6; Jeremiah 1:8; Psalm 18:1–4; Psalm 25:1–2; Proverbs 16:7; Proverbs 24:17; Luke 1:69–71

Impatience: Romans 8:24–25; Psalm 37:7–8; Proverbs 25:15; Ephesians 4:1–3; James 5:8–10

Life: Isaiah 65:17–25; Genesis 1:1–2:4; John 15:4–7; Romans 6:3–11, Romans 20–23; Matthew 7:13–14; 1 John 5:9–13.

Loneliness: Psalm 25:16–17; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 41:13; John 14:18; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 73:23–24; Revelation 3:20

Marriage: Genesis 2:18–24; Deuteronomy 24:5; Isaiah 62:3–5; Matthew 19:3–11; 1 Corinthians 7:3–5; Ephesians 5:22–33.

Peace: Ezekiel 34:25–31; Isaiah 2:2–5; John 20:19–26; Luke 24:36–43; Philippians 4:4–7; 2 Timothy 2:20–26.

Physical illness: Psalm 103:2–3; Jeremiah 30:17; James 5:14–15; Exodus 23:25; Sirach 31:22; Matthew 10:1

Sadness: Sirach 30:21–23; Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 4:8–10; Ecclesiastes 7:3; Matthew 19:21–22; Isaiah 41:10; Proverbs 15:30

Temptation: Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:15–16; 1 Timothy 6:9; Psalm 119:9–11; James 1:13–14; Ephesians 6:10–11

Thankfulness: Tobit 12:6; Psalm 107; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 30:13; Psalm 105:1; Psalm 118; Daniel 3:89; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Exodus 18:8–12; Psalm 111; John 11:41–42; Ephesians 1:3–6; Philippians 1:3–6.

Worry: Matt 6:25; Matt 6:34; 1 Peter 5:6–7; Philippians 4:18–19; Mark 13:11; Philippians 4:6

Activity 10. Living the Christian Practice of Eating Well

Plan

1. Begin by reading the opening story “They Think We’re Crazy” in the Activity.
2. Invite selected individuals and families to share their own stories of how they practice Eating Well at home.
3. Review the strategies in “Getting Ready” and “Enriching the Meal” with the group.

Getting Ready

- ◆ Find time for family meals.
- ◆ Prepare meals together as a family.
- ◆ Tune out distractions.

Enriching the Meal

- ◆ Give thanks to God before eating.
- ◆ Make conversation and storytelling central at your meals.
- ◆ Share food with those in need.
- ◆ Celebrate church seasons and family events.
- ◆ Read the Bible as part of your mealtime.

4. Invite people (in groups and/or families/households) to develop additional ways to strengthen the practice of Eating Well. Groups can write their suggestions on a sheet of newsprint or PowerPoint slide to present to the whole group.)
5. Invite groups to share their ideas with the whole group. (You may want to collect them and make them available online and/or in print.)
6. Guide the participants in developing a plan for strengthening the practice of Eating Well using the “Make a Plan” process:
 - ◆ Decide on 3-5 ideas your family or household can put into action for eating well together.
 - ◆ Take each idea and write a script for how you will live the idea in your family or household: where, when, how, etc.
 - ◆ Identify roadblocks that you might encounter and think about how you will overcome them.
 - ◆ Commit to a date when you will start practicing each new idea.

Activity

We understand the powerful forces that keep many families from breaking bread together. But we believe deeply that for most families, the first beachhead in the battle to reclaim family life is their meal rituals. Make your stand here if you can. Be committed and flexible, accept where you are starting from, develop your skills in family conversation, realize that there will be dry times, and have some creative fun along the journey. In this way, you will

pass along an important family tradition to your children that will carry on when they have families.

(William J. Doherty and Barbara Carlson, *Putting Family First*)

Ten years from now, what will have been most important in building lifelong family relationships: adding an extracurricular activity, or having meals together? How can you more fully live the Christian practice of eating well every day? To get you started here is a story to inspire you, and a simple guide for using the ideas in this article.

“They Think We’re Crazy”

David and Darlene have been married for ten years and have lived all of those years in a southern town where David is a medical doctor and Darlene is a social worker. They each brought a son and a different religious tradition to their marriage. David has continued to be involved in the Catholic Church with his son, Pete, age fourteen. Darlene is a member of the session (the governing body) of her Presbyterian congregation. Darlene’s son Paul, age eleven, is involved with her in the Presbyterian Church.

When I asked them to relate to me a picture of their family doing something together that really says who they are as a family, David began, “Having dinner together is important to us. We might not plan on it or talk about the fact that it is important, but it is, and we make it happen.”

“Sometimes, it’s impossible with Pete’s basketball,” his wife added. “The games start at 6:00 PM. But generally we really try to eat together. We have so much fun when we eat at night; their friends come over and just sit there going....”

Paul interrupted his mother, “They think we’re crazy. The TV is off....”

Peter interrupted Paul, “The family is more entertaining than the TV, anyway.”

Outside activities pull these family members away from the family dinner. But they work at making their dinner table a place to gather, where friends are welcome. The very telling of this story illustrates that this is not just significant to parents but to teenagers as well, as Paul interrupts his mother, helping to build the story of how their friends see their family as “crazy,” and Pete in turn interrupts his stepbrother and builds on his words. The boys have a sense of pride in their family; they are quite willing to invite friends in and expose them to their “crazy” family that actually turns the television off during dinner. Mealtime is often the only time the whole family is gathered in one place. As a teenager in another family said, “The dinner table is the place where you find out what’s going on.”

(Diana Garland, *Sacred Stories of Ordinary Families*)

Ideas for Eating Well

Getting Ready

Find time for family meals.

Decide to be together for a meal certain days and times each week, and then do it. Find good places to each together—think of where you can eat meals together at home and away. Develop a family meal calendar each week. Consider the following questions in preparing your calendar:

- ◆ Who will be there?
- ◆ Where will we eat?
- ◆ When will we eat?
- ◆ What is going to be served?
- ◆ How will the meal be prepared?
- ◆ Who is doing what to get ready for the dinner?

Prepare meals together as a family.

Create the menu. Shop for the food. Clean up together. Make mealtimes special with candles, good dishes, and a tablecloth. Eat in the dining room. Have special meal nights that celebrate a particular ethnic tradition or family recipe, or a special accomplishment of a family member.

Tune out distractions.

Turn off the TV and radio. Take the phone off the hook or plug in the answering machine. Put away the newspaper or magazines. Put all the things that could distract you from eating well— cell phones, pagers, iPods, magazines, work projects, and so on—into a box during dinner time. You can get them back when dinner is over for everyone!

Enriching the Meal

Give thanks to God before eating.

Pray real prayers that reflect gratitude, warmth, hospitality, and a genuine awareness of those who live without enough food each day. Use the simple format for grace that was presented earlier in this chapter.

Make conversation and storytelling central at your meals.

- ◆ Talk about the highs and lows of the day.
- ◆ Talk about decisions that need to be made as a family or by individual members.
- ◆ Talk about one interesting thing you learned today or one thing that happened today, or something that made you feel happy/sad today.
- ◆ Talk about how you saw God at work in your life today.

Share food with those in need.

Find ways to serve the hungry and needy in your community by working together as a family or with your church. Consider adjusting your diet and food expense so that you can find ways to financially support those who are hungry around the world.

Celebrate church seasons and family events.

Incorporate the celebration of important rituals—in the life of the church and in your family—into your meal tradition. Find ways to include Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter traditions as part of your meal, such as a daily table prayer, an Advent wreath prayer, and so on. Find special ways to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and accomplishments with a simple prayer, Bible reading, decorations, special foods, and so on.

Read the Bible as part of your mealtime.

Begin your meal with a Bible verse or devotion each day. Select one meal to read and discuss the Scripture reading from a past or upcoming Sunday worship service.

Make a Plan

Develop a plan for strengthening the practice of Eating Well in your family or household. Here is a simple process of moving from idea to action.

1. Decide on 3-5 ideas your family or household can put into action for eating well together.
2. Take each idea and write a script for how you will live the idea in your family or household: where, when, how, etc.
3. Identify roadblocks that you might encounter and think about how you will overcome them.
4. Commit to a date when you will start practicing each new idea.

Activity 11. Mealtime Blessings

Loving Father, we thank You for the family gathered around the table, the friends who extend your goodness, the food which nourishes our bodies and the Faith that strengthens our souls. Keep us ever mindful of these blessings, and may this food inspire us to bring these blessings to those who go without family, friends, food and faith. We ask all of this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
(Father Leo E. Patalinghug, *Grace Before Meals*)

Lord God and Giver of All Good Gifts, we are grateful as we pause before this meal, for all the blessings of life that You give to us.

Daily, we are fed with good things, nourished by friendship and care, feasted with forgiveness and understanding.

And so, mindful of Your continuous care, we pause to be grateful for the blessings of this table.
(*Pause for silent reflection*)

May Your presence be the “extra” taste to this meal which we eat in the name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen

The day is coming to a close, and, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we pause to break bread together.

May our eyes be opened, and, in this act of common sharing, may we see the risen Lord in one another.

May we see the Lord of Life in our food, our conversation and lives shared in common.

May these gifts strengthen us to continue your work in our world.

May the blessing of God, His peace and love, rest upon our table. Amen

We thank you, our God, for the food you have given us.

Make our sharing this bread together lead to a renewal of our communion with you, with one another, and with all creatures.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord, you feed every living thing.

We have eaten together at this table; keep us in your love.

Give us true concern for the least of our sisters and brothers, so that as we gladly share our food with them, we may also sit down together with them at the table of the kingdom of God.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord, you have fed us from your gifts and favors; fill us with your mercy, for you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen