

Week 5: A Healthy Table

The more people we invite around our table, the more opportunity there is for a mess. When we throw a large dinner party we expect there will be dishes and a messy kitchen to clean up at the end. However, the anticipation of cleaning up does not detour us from throwing the party because we know the joy will outweigh the work. In the same way, we cannot avoid one another because we know there may be messes. The joy of obedience to Jesus, the joy of a healthy relationship with another hopefully outweighs the work or sacrifice required of us.

To create a healthy table we can begin by setting a place where we are quick to forgive and slow to judge. The safer people feel the more likely we are to start off on the right foot. We all make mistakes and can tell who is keeping score or who genuinely forgives us. We can also typically tell when someone has made a judgement about us. The quicker we forgive and deal with any issues that arise the less time there is for a mess to grow. And the slower we are to judge the more time there is for us to know the heart of a person before we determine who we think they are.

1. The word judge in the Bible can be defined as “to separate.” Once we have a negative judgement, made a determination about someone, there is now a separation between us and them. This separation can be felt in the natural and/or in the spiritual realm. A judgement can feel like a wall you can’t break through to change someone’s mind about you. Have you ever experienced a judgement against you? How do you overcome a judgement?

2. What does it look like to be quick to forgive and maintain healthy boundaries at the same time?

In Romans 12 right after Paul tells us to serve one another with the gifts we have been given he reminds us how we are to treat each other. To maintain healthy relationships with the people we are serving, it will matter greatly how we treat each other. Then Paul wraps things up with what to do when we reach out to someone and it ends in rejection or pain; we keep on doing good.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:9-21

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| <p>3. Which 3 phrases in the scripture above do you personally find most difficult to do?</p> | <p>4. What makes a relationship healthy?</p> |
| <p>5. How can an unhealthy relationship become healthy?</p> | <p>6. Scripture gives us direction on how to handle some difficult situations that could arise with people we are doing life with. Do you feel confident on how to handle a more serious issue that could arise with someone you invited into your life?</p> |

Practical Convo: When inviting someone over to your home for the first time, does it help to give a start and end time to your guest before they commit to coming? If so, how much time is ideal?