

Grace Table Discussion 2



Gather: invite someone, make a stranger a friend, break isolation.

Relate: turn off the TV, sit together, face each other, listen.

Accept: let the table be a place of acceptance and not judgement.

Consecrate: thank God, don't be ashamed to acknowledge the Giver.

Eat: shared meals grow trust, unite enemies, and define us.

AND NOW, SOME HOMMUS WITH HOT BREAD. YUM!

This recipe is made much more easily than it would have been in the ancient world. You can just buy some flat bread off the shelf instead of baking it. I suggest using canned chickpeas, but normally you would have to soak them for a day first. It's a small taste of the flavours of the Bible. For fun add olives! - Matt.

- Some nice flat bread (or make it yourself!)
- 1 can of chickpeas drained
- Keep 1 third of a cup of the liquid from the can!
- 1 table spoon of tahini (found in the 'health food' section at the supermarket)
- 1 third cup lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 quartercup olive oil
- 1 half teaspoon salt
- A pinch of cumin
- Paprika, to serve
- Extra-virgin olive oil, to serve

Blend the chickpeas, tahini, juice, garlic, oil, salt and cumin and liquid from the can until almost smooth. Taste and season with salt if needed!

Serve in a bowl, lightly sprinkle the top with paprika. Drizzle with olive oil.

Heat up some flat bread in a mild oven till the edges are crispy but it's not totally dry. Serve the hommus with hot flat bread. Yum.

- The original recipe was from www.taste.com but has been modified to make more tasty!

SOME DISCUSSION STARTERS

What has distracted you from something that really mattered?

Which of the three quotes below is your favourite? Why?

- *“All this [modern] stimulation and distraction takes up so much time. It turns life into a rushing river which we can't escape.” - Georg Simel, 1903*
- *“Rushing is universal because everyone is fleeing from themselves.” - Frederick Neitsche, 1874*
- *“All people's miseries start with not being able to sit in a quiet room alone.” - Blaise Pascal, ~1650*

LUKE 10:38-42 – DISTRACTED!

This first request is important. Please please turn off your mobile phones and all devices just for a quiet time. Put them away out of sight. Then read this week's Bible story and sit silently WITH IT for 5 minutes.

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.”⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,⁴² but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the good thing; it will not be taken away from her.”

Read and silently reflect on 10:38-42.

- Through the Holy Spirit God's Word speaks new every day.
- What did you notice today?

A key word in this story in verse 40 is 'distracted'.

Distracted - this ancient word is 'perispao' and it means: *pulled or dragged away*. This weird word is what they call a middle verb – not quite passive (distraction is done to you) and not quite active (you distract yourself). It's a bit of both. So perhaps this 'distracted' state was something *done to* Martha, but also something she *participated in or chose*. For a distraction to work you have to participate too!

How do we participate in our distractions?

Why do we sometimes prefer our distractions to what really matters?

SOME RESEARCH ON DISTRACTION

Imagine your brain has a spotlight. The world is dim. But you can see clearly only where the spotlight shines. That spotlight is called 'conscious attention'. Your brain can do many things at once subconsciously. But we each have only one spotlight called 'conscious attention'. If your group likes this stuff, you can spend a little time discussing the following factoids from research, or you can just move on!

1. WE ALL OVER ESTIMATE OUR FOCUS AND UNDER ESTIMATE THE DISTRACTIONS!

Two people are in face to face conversation:

The ACTOR: gets a text while they are talking.

The PARTNER: waits to resume the conversation with them.

How did the ACTOR and PARTNER each feel about the quality of that conversation?

ACTOR: usually thought it was a high quality conversation.

PARTNER: usually thought it was a poor quality conversation.

*“When the actor performed distraction multitasking for more time during the interaction, he/she perceived the interaction quality as **higher**. This means that an individual who used his/her phone for distraction multitasking was content with the interaction. If his/her friend, however, is using his/her phone for distraction, then the individual [partner] is less satisfied with the interaction.”*

- Brown G. (2014). *The Effects of Values and the Presence of a Mobile Phone on Friendship Interactions*. Masters Thesis, Western Washington University; Bellingham, WA

The distraction caused the ACTOR to think they did better than they did – to judge their performance as better than normal. It made them blind to how poorly they actually did listen! Distractions make us think we're doing better than we are. Perhaps that's why we like distractions so much?

2. JUST HEARING A NOTIFICATION CAN DISTRACT AS MUCH AS READING THE MESSAGE!

Did you know that if you're in a conversation and your phone rings or you get a text, but you don't answer that call or read the text, that can be just as distracting as actually reading it? I ignore my phone. But now I'm wondering who called. I'm wondering if Telstra rang to get my internet fixed, or if I've offended someone, or if I got a job interview. I didn't read the text but I might be just as distracted!

“We found that cellular phone notifications alone significantly disrupted performance on an attention-demanding task, even when participants did not directly interact with a mobile device during the task. The magnitude of observed distraction effects was comparable in magnitude to those seen when users actively used a mobile phone, either for voice calls or text messaging.”

- Stothart C, Mitchum A, Yehnert C. *The attentional cost of receiving a cell phone notification*. *Journal Of Experimental Psychology Human Perception & Performance*. 2015 Aug;41(4):893-7.

3. EVEN JUST HAVING THE MOBILE PHONE WITH YOU CAN DISTRACT!

The mere presence of a mobile device may be distracting – sitting on the table it can draw attention?

- Thornton B., Faires A., Robbins M., Rollins E. (2014). *The mere presence of a cell phone may be distracting: Implications for attention and task performance*. *The Journal of Social Psychology*. 45 479–488.
- Misra S., Cheng L., Genevie J., Yuan M. (2014). *The iPhone effect: the quality of in-person social interactions in the presence of mobile devices*. *Environmental & Behaviour* 48. 275–298.

RELATING MEANS DUMPING THE DISTRACTIONS

Hospitality is 'philos-xenia' – making strangers (xenia) into friends (philos).

Hospitality (your home table) is God's altar for mission!

What matters most around the meal is how we relate:

- Being face to face
- Sitting with your guests
- Giving them attention
- Actually listening and actually sharing truthfully
- Being truly present

What ideas could you try to make your table a place where people truly relate?

What ideas have you heard to reduce the distractions of technology?

WHAT WAS MARTHA DISTRACTED WITH?

What actually distracted Martha? What do you imagine was going on in her head and heart?

Luke 10:40

But Martha was distracted with much serving. (Diakonia: serving, ministry)

Many translations try to 'interpret' this for us rather than just writing the word 'serving' here. The word here (diakonia) is of critical important for all Christians. It means 'service' or 'ministry'.

How does it sit with you to say that Martha was distracted from Jesus by *ministry*?

Even the most dedicated people of faith get it wrong. It is a fatal mistake to think that "*what I am doing matters most.*" Jesus says your mission or service is NOT what matters most. There is something better or greater than which must come first.

Luke 10:42

Mary has chosen the good thing, it will not be taken away from her.

What is 'the good thing'? What is the actual purpose of our lives before everything else?

AN OLD PRAYER OF PRESENCE

*Be present at our table, Lord; be here and everywhere adorned;
These mercies bless, and grant that we, may feast in paradise with thee.*

By John Cennick (1741)

By Matt Thiele, Nambour & Witta Lutheran Congregations.