

A MEAL AND A MESSAGE



RUNNING YOUR OWN DIALOGUE DINNER

Jesus always created a stir over meals - rubbing shoulders with the chief tax man, being wept on by a local prostitute and washing his friends' feet to name but a few. Meal times give us a great opportunity to enjoy good food with friends and family whilst chatting about life. A Meal and a Message is an intentional meal time to talk about faith whilst eating good food.

What could this look like for you? Take a moment to think about hosting your own Meal and a Message. Who could you invite? What food do your friends enjoy eating? What environment do they enjoy eating in? The beauty of a Meal and a Message is that you can shape the evening around your friends in order to create a relational and safe place for them to hear about your faith in Jesus and have meaningful discussions about him over food.

WAYS OF SHARING THE GOSPEL

There are many ways to talk about Jesus over food.

- An honest Jesus-centred testimony about your journey of faith.
- A short explanation of what you actually trust about the bible and Jesus
- Reading a passage of the Bible and explaining what it means and what it means to you in every-day life.
- A discussion about one particular question people have about Jesus
- Watching a short video clip that explaining the gospel.

In all these ways, it is a really good opportunity to ensure that your friends hear about Jesus clearly and faithfully - this will help your conversations remain on topic.

WHAT YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT

Before

- Invitations – formal or informal? Be sure that you send your invitations out in good time by text, WhatsApp, conversation, email etc, in advance or an informal impromptu invite that day. Whatever the context be clear in your invitation as to the nature and content of the meal.
- Have a plan – think about the food, the setting and the structure of the evening. Plan how you will begin and end the evening. Think about your timings and when you will eat, chat and close.
- Friends – the uniqueness about the church is how it lives, grows and operates TOGETHER! Think about which of your Christian friends you can invite round for the meal to introduce to your other friends. It will be encouraging for you to have support and also for your friends to meet and hear other Christians.
- Pray – for yourself as you entrust the meal to God and also have trusted Christian friends praying in advance and duration of the meal

During

- Have as much of the evening prepared in advance so that when your friends arrive you can be present and hospitable.
- It is helpful to give a welcome with a clear, low-key explanation of the purpose of the meal which will help them in their expectations.
- Use the natural breaks of a meal time to guide your conversation. For example, if eating a main meal, eat your main course, share your faith (through your preferred means as described above), serve dessert as you direct the conversations around elements of your mini-talk. Use tea and coffee to draw the discussions to a close.
- Appreciate the different personalities and the ways that people respond. Some might want to talk, others might remain silent. Some might be provoked to respond, others won't have an opinion. Some might be cold towards you, others warm.
- Throughout the meal continue to pray that God's spirit would be at work in conviction of heart and in revealing Jesus.

- Be aware of how much you're talking. Too much talk from you doesn't give space for friends to digest and discuss what you have said. Too little talk could mean an uneasy meal time and some cause of embarrassment for your friends.

After

- Try to leave your friends wanting more and think about how you might follow up with those who were particularly hungry to investigate the claims of Jesus. Another meal, or an individual coffee. Always extend an invitation to your church gathering as you seek to enable your friends to see more of the Christian community.
- Consider giving your friends something to take away with them to read or watch. Maybe give them a gospel account or a book like 'The Case for Christ'. You could direct them to uncover.org.uk to read and watch some videos too.
- 2 Corinthians 4:6 says that God will make his light shine in our hearts to give knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. Pray that God would do this for your friends.

HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS

There are many ways you can facilitate your friends' questions.

- Get them to ask their questions aloud and take them one by one.
- Go round everyone in the group and write down their questions, then get the group to decide which questions you address first.
- At the end of your talk, pose a question that you ask your friends to see what they think about your message
- Have a question box in the middle of the room, as the speaker is sharing their testimony/ gospel message people can write a question down and drop it in the box (it can be anonymous if they wish).

TOP TIPS

- Build relationships – A Meal and a Message is more natural when the friendships are strong and genuine. This involves building relationships and sharing your life with your friends over time.
- Avoid being the guru – There is an obvious pressure of feeling like you should be able to answer everyone's question. It is ok to say "I'm not sure, but I will look it up and get back to you". Sometimes this can be the best response possible as you indirectly show your friends that your faith is not based upon the amount of knowledge you have, rather on what/who your faith is in!
- Use God's word – try and encourage the conversation to remain in the realm of what Jesus has said as opposed to broad categories of theological and philosophical discussions. Keep drawing your friends back into the bible and Jesus as much as you can
- Be in the minority – it is sometimes helpful to have another Christian in the room with you to answer questions and guide discussion however it is essential that you are in the minority. Your friends will feel more comfortable and often it fuels them to ask more questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

"I was surprised at how willing and vocal all the girls were! It was definitely encouraging - especially because it showed me that when people hear about the real Christianity, as opposed to stereotypes, they have a real interest and lots of questions!"

Priscilla from Edinburgh.

"It really is just so normal! There you are sat down in a room with your mates eating a top meal and just simply chatting about Jesus with them! They loved the meal and the low-key atmosphere to chat freely and question Christianity. It has also been a catalyst for us to invite those seamlessly who wanted to search deeper to join us the following week and there again we have stood amazed at God's grace and how it has drawn those we'd have least expected!"

Joseff from Bala, North Wales.

"We had so many amazing conversations on the night and afterwards that never would have happened otherwise! I'd recommend others do it because it's bold and intentional. It shows sacrifice to prepare food and host a dinner and it really gets across to your mates how much you want them to know about Jesus, not because you want to feel validated but because you love them and want to see them saved."

Mark from Birmingham