

Finding God in Food

When we consider how we encounter God through our families, we often think about our memories of meaningful family prayers, praise sessions in the car together on the way to Sunday service, or maybe the family's yearly attendance to the New Years' service. But, for me and my family, the most prevalent way we experience the amazing grace of God in our daily lives is through our nightly family dinners.

At first, that may sound odd, but in order to truly understand the importance of eating together, we must first realize how lucky we are to eat at all. Many of us do not realize that a lot of people in our own communities are not fortunate enough to have easy access to food everyday. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a shocking 13.8 million U.S. households live day to day not knowing where their next meal is going to come. To them, every meal is a blessing, no matter where it comes from, because they never know when they will eat again. Likewise, it is important for us to not take for granted the food that God provides us with everyday. Moreover, sharing the experience of eating is a very special and symbolic act. Food is a basic need for everybody. The main reason we eat is not to merely enjoy tasty food but to sustain ourselves and to provide ourselves with energy to last until our next meal. Therefore, by participating in meals together, not only are we having a good time of communion together, but we are also collectively providing our bodies with sustenance and contributing to our overall welfare, not as multiple individuals but as one body.

Fellowship through meals holds a deep spiritual meaning in Christianity as well. One of the most important events in Christian history is the Last Supper during which Jesus Christ shared one final meal with His disciples before the night of His betrayal by Judas Iscariot. Without taking into account the meaning behind the Last Supper, it seems almost absurd that in

the moments before He is taken away from the disciples to be mocked and killed, rather than going to spread the Gospel or performing His last miracles before death, Jesus decides to eat with His disciples. However, the importance of Jesus's Last Supper with His disciples comes from its representation of the sacrifice of His body and His blood without which we all would have died to sin. The breaking of bread and wine to nourish their earthly bodies is representative of the breaking of the body and blood of Jesus Christ to save us from our sins. Today, we celebrate the Lord's Supper with the Holy Communion in which we partake in the consecration of the bread and wine to share the body and the blood of our Lord and Savior. In addition, one of Jesus's most well-known miracles is the feeding of the 5000 where Jesus uses the small lunch of a young boy to feed the thousands of people gathered to hear His Word. He recognizes the importance of food and thus provides for the masses so that they can stay and be nourished by the Word of God while still sustaining their earthly bodies. In Matthew 6:25, Jesus reminds us, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?" Through Matthew 6:25 and the feeding of the 5000, Jesus emphasizes that God will provide for us so that we can come in obedience to Him and, in turn, be filled eternally as well as by earthly sustenance. Finally, in 1 Corinthians 11:33, Paul instructs that "when you come together to eat, wait for another. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you come together it will not result in judgment." In essence, Apostle Paul reminds the Corinthian church that we must remember Christ and the body of His church when we gather to eat and that we should be wary of those who join later and be sensitive to their needs so as to not detract from each other through our gluttony and drunkenness. In all three instances, it is clear that sharing meals and

having fellowship through food is never about the food itself; it is about coming together before Christ and enjoying the companionship of His body.

This fellowship and closeness that results from eating together is the reason why I believe my family collectively experiences God the most through our family dinners. Each member of my family lives a drastically different life from one another. From morning to night, my dad goes to work, spending hours upon hours to progress his business while providing for me and my mom. Everyday for me is spent either at school, working for the betterment of my education, or at home, delving into my extracurricular pursuits and academic studies. In the midst of that, my stay-at-home mom arguably has the most complex life, from having to manage both of our schedules, to figuring out what to prepare for each one of my family's meals, to just being a loving, available mom for me. Yet, even with our completely divergent lifestyles, we all come together at 7 P.M. to enjoy a meal in each other's company and to talk about our days. We take the chance to learn about all the great things happening in each of our lives as well as the not-so-good things that have been weighing us down. Thanks to the mercy of our Lord and Savior, we live under the everlasting grace that He provides. Matthew 18:20 states that "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." In the same way, as we say grace over the amazing food my mom has prepared and laugh as we talk about our lives, we are brought closer together as a family and a body under Christ.