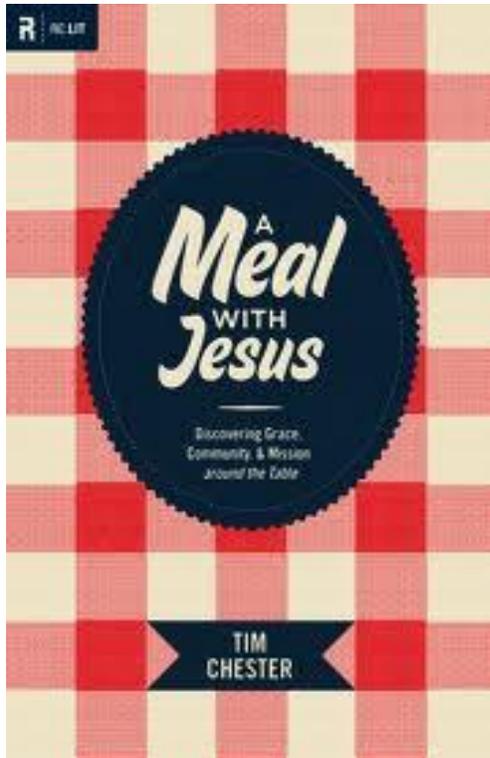


## Excerpts from the Book



### FROM THE INTRODUCTION:

Food matters. Meals matter. Meals are full of significance. “Few acts are more expressive of companionship than the shared meal. . . . Someone with whom we share food is likely to be our friend, or well on the way to becoming one.” The word “companion” comes from the Latin “cum” (“together”) and “panis” (“bread”).

### PREMISE:

There are three ways the New Testament completes the sentence, “The Son of Man came . . .”

- “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45)
- “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10)
- “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking . . .” (Luke 7:34).

### DEVELOPMENT OF PREMISE:

The first two are statements of purpose. Why did Jesus come? He came to serve, to give his life as a ransom, to seek and save the lost.

The third is a statement of method.

How did Jesus come? *He came eating and drinking.*

“Son of Man” is Daniel’s label for one who comes before God to receive authority over the nations (Daniel 7). And now Jesus, the Son of Man, has come. But how does he come? Does he come with an army of angels? Does he come on the clouds of heaven? Does he come with a blaze of glory?

No, he comes “eating and drinking.” The Jews of Jesus’ day would have said the Son of Man will come to vindicate the righteous and defeat God’s enemies. They didn’t expect him to come to seek and save the lost. And they would have said the Son of Man will come in glory and power. They would never have said he would come eating and drinking.

And Luke is not talking about just subsistence eating and drinking.

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Jesus says: “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” (7:34). A glutton, of course, is someone who eats too much, and a drunkard is someone who drinks too much.

Jesus was seriously into eating and drinking—so much so that his enemies accused him of doing it to excess. Earlier in Luke’s Gospel the Pharisees and their scribes said to him, “The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink” (5:33).

Jesus spent his time eating and drinking—a lot of his time. His mission strategy was a long meal, stretching into the evening. He did evangelism and discipleship round a table with some grilled fish, a loaf of bread, and a pitcher of wine.

Luke’s Gospel is full of stories of Jesus eating with people:

- Luke 5 Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners at the home of Levi.
- Luke 7 Jesus is anointed at the home of Simon the Pharisee during a meal.
- Luke 9 Jesus feeds the five thousand.
- Luke 10 Jesus eats in the home of Martha and Mary.
- Luke 11 Jesus condemns the Pharisees and teachers of the law at a meal.
- Luke 14 Jesus is at a meal when he urges people to invite the poor to their meals rather than their friends.
- Luke 19 Jesus invites himself to dinner with Zacchaeus.
- Luke 22 we have the account of the Last Supper.
- Luke 24 the risen Christ has a meal with the two disciples in Emmaus
- He later eats fish with the disciples in Jerusalem.

Robert Karris concludes: “In Luke’s Gospel Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.”

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Jesus is called “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” This is why eating and drinking were so important in the mission of Jesus: they were a sign of his friendship with tax collectors and sinners. His “excess” of food and “excess” of grace are linked.

In the ministry of Jesus, meals were:

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- Enacted grace
- Enacted community
- Enacted Hope
- Enacted Mission
- Enacted Salvation
- Enacted Promise

Not talking about reducing church and mission to meals. Rather, saying that they should be an integral and significant part of our shared life.

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If I pull down books on mission and church planting from my shelves, I can read about contextualization, evangelism matrices, postmodern apologetics, and cultural hermeneutics. I can look at diagrams that tell me how people can be converted or discover the steps required to plant a church. It all sounds impressive, cutting edge, and sophisticated.

But this is how Luke describes Jesus's mission strategy: "The Son of Man came eating and drinking."

We can make community and mission sound like specialized activities that belong to experts. Some people have a vested interest in doing this, because it makes them feel "extraordinary." Or we focus on dynamic personalities who can hold an audience and lead a movement. Some push mission beyond the scope of "ordinary" Christians. But the Son of Man came eating and drinking.

It's not complicated.

True, it's not always easy—it involves people invading your space or going to places where you don't feel comfortable. But it's not complicated. If you share a meal three or four times a week and you have a passion for Jesus, then you will be building up the Christian community and reaching out in mission.

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**Meals represent boundary markers in all cultures.** Jesus was sitting and eating with His enemies. That's partly why religious leaders hated Him.

The Pharisees are people who have the Word, but hide it. Formally they honor the Word, building monuments for the prophets. But in reality they ignore God's Word, effectively siding with those who killed the prophets (Luke 11:47-51). They'd created a system that the poor could

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never keep, and then instead of helping them, despised them for their failures.

Jesus concludes: “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering” (11:52).

How might we do this today?

- Perhaps through sophisticated displays of exegesis or rhetoric that make the non-literate feel that they can’t read the Bible for themselves.
- Perhaps through application that focuses on externals and leaves hearts unchanged.
- Perhaps by applying the text to dodgy charismatics or Catholics or dispensationalists or fundamentalists or liberals or pagans—anyone but ourselves.
- Perhaps by reading the Bible through theological grids so we say what the text does not say rather than what it does say.
- Perhaps by emphasizing knowledge but not obedience or love. A key theme in Luke’s Gospel is “heeding” the Word of God. “Heeding” is an old word, but one that beautifully combines both hearing and doing.

Jesus is handing out God’s party invitations. They read: “You’re invited to my party in the new creation. Come as you are.”

The religious leaders agreed there was a party and an invitation and even that it was possible to attend. But when the religious leaders passed out the invitation, they didn’t say, “Come as you are.” They said, “You’ve got to get changed; you’ve got to get cleaned up.” As a result people didn’t come, because they didn’t think they were good enough. *This is how the Pharisees took away the key of knowledge.*