

**BLESS wk #3, Eat            OakbrookChurch.com   Morgan Young   2.23.14**

So we're starting our third week of BLESS.

BLESS is going to be something that's woven into the fabric of us as a church going forward.

It will simply be how people who call Oakbrook home, do life.  
This is not a temporary behavior for us, BLESS is a lifestyle.

BLESS is an acronym (acrostic is a poem, verse)

Wk 1: Begin w/prayer

Start each day by asking God for a divine appointment,  
Asking God for someone to bless.

Wk 2: Listen.

Listen to your neighbors, friends, family and coworkers.  
Listen to your community.

Listen to the people and places Jesus wants to you use you, to take His light into.  
(Eg. Mailbox,)

And E stands for Eat.

And right now you may be thinking that eating doesn't exactly sound like a spiritual activity.

And that's probably because eating has become a very meaningless activity at this point in human history.

We eat on the run.

We eat out.

Food is instantaneous,  
    it's on the shelf,  
    in the fridge,  
    ready-to-eat,  
    microwavable.

Food requires no forethought, we can grab it and gulp it at a moment's notice.

No time for dinner?

    Order a pizza,  
    Grab some Chipotle,  
    eat, through away the mess and move on.

We in our modern way have nearly snuffed out the sacredness of a shared meal.

But it's not always been like this.  
 For thousands of years, meals have been sacred events where people  
     slowed,  
     listened,  
     shared,  
     felt,  
     and grew closer together.

And guess what? We can rekindle that--  
 we can redeem the act of eating with people and make it something  
 meaningful that God uses to draw people to Himself.

(SELAH)

Since we're on mission to live like Jesus, let's see how *He* did this.

Look at Luke 7:34

*The Son of Man, on the other hand, feasts and drinks, and you say, 'He's a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!'*

**Luke 7:34 nlt**

Jesus hung out so much at dinner parties with the wrong kind of people that He got a reputation as a glutton and a drunk!

(To be clear, Jesus was not a drunk or a glutton; he was just in that setting so much that he got that reputation.)

Jesus was eating and hanging out in intimate home settings with people who didn't *get* that He was the Son of God.

He ate w/people who weren't Jesus followers.

He ate w/people who had socially bad reputations.

He ate w/people who were way off-course spiritually.

He ate w/people *you* wouldn't follow on Twitter.

He ate w/people who may or may not spend eternity in heaven.

He ate w/people for whom He would later die.

So, to live like Jesus is to get in close personal proximity over food,  
 with people who are not necessarily sold out to the Way of Jesus.

(SELAH)

And let's look at one other interesting passage. This is 1 Timothy 3:1-4.

And this is Paul talking to a young church leader, Timothy.

And he's talking to him about the qualities of a leader in the church.

Don't check out because this to leaders!

Think of it like this:

He's talking about people of high spiritual maturity--people who are living a Christ-centered life--people who would say,

"My relationship with Jesus is the most important relationship in my life. It guides everything I do."

And since all of us aspire to live a Christ-centered life--this verse is showing all of us very important and specific things we need to grow in

This is a trustworthy saying: "If someone aspires to be an elder, he desires an honorable position." <sup>2</sup> So an elder must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. **He must enjoy having guests in his home**, and he must be able to teach. <sup>3</sup> He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him.

### 1 Timothy 3:1-4 NLT

That phrase "must enjoy having guests in his home" in older translations is simply the word "hospitable" or "hospitality" which literally means "loving strangers."

So we should aspire to have guests in our home that we don't know or don't know *well*.

And Jesus modeled for us the *how* of "loving strangers."

Quite simply: Sharing a meal with them.

(SELAH)

So curious by show of hands:

How many of you LOVE the idea of having someone over that you don't know or barely know?

Ok, so for the rest of us, when we think of having someone over for dinner that we barely know we think of this

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQzK4GEcrR8>

It's never that bad--but we might think it is--but it NEVER is.

Here's the thing:

Sitting down over dinner sets the stage for conversation and connection in a more profound way than other ways we communicate.

Show you what I mean:

Imagine a famous person that you have a ton of respect for--someone you really think is IT:

- Actor/Celebrity
- Musician
- Author
- Professional/Olympic Athlete
- Executive Pastor ;-)

Picture that person. Got one?

So imagine that \_\_\_\_\_ sends you an email:

"Dear \_\_\_\_\_, you are the coolest fan by far in this part of the country. I just wanted to email you and say thanks for all your support. I can't imagine doing what I do without people like you who support what I've spent my whole life doing-- thanks for looking up to me and I'll try to keep earning your respect. Thanks so much!"

That would be cool.

You would tell ALL your friends about it, you'd take a pic of the email and put it on Instagram like it was some kind of 1st place trophy. And you would talk about it *all week*.

But what if that same person sends you that same email, except at the end it says,

"Believe it or not I'm coming right through your city on Tuesday and if it's not too much of an imposition, I'd love to sit down with you over dinner at your house around 7:30. I really get tired of restaurants and life on the road, so dinner with you would be a real treat."

NOW how do you feel?

Aside that you're freaking out about what food to make for a famous person, you can't believe that they want to have dinner with YOU!

And when people in our relational circle react to us asking them to dinner, they're not reacting as if we're Dave Matthews, Bode Miller or Leonardo DiCaprio--*but*--it makes a bigger impact than other ways we communicate, just the same. Why?

Because getting together over dinner defines the time:

- it's an hour+ for sure.

- You've said yes, so you have to be fully present with the people at dinner--you have over an hour of conversation in front of you.

- You think about things you'll talk about, you'll think about questions to ask.

(SELAH)

And a great thing about substantial time in someone's homes is,  
eventually you'll relax:

You'll fall out of your starched, polite self  
and sink into your real, normal self.

You may even move from  
talking about the *weather*  
to *whether* you think there's anything in life worth believing in,  
because we all believe in something.

And you will have moments where you sense something that is hard to put into words, because whatever we all believe, we all have a soul.

And when we connect and share,  
sometimes this soul of ours resonates, even reverberates  
with the person's soul across the table--  
it's a feeling we can't explain yet we are sure of it.

The mingling of souls that happens over dinner is a sacred moment, even if we're not talking about Jesus.

(SELAH)

Sandra and I & our family have had the privilege of living out this value in a very interesting & fun way.

From 2009 thru 2011 we hosted 36 or so dinner parties at our house, that we called The Brick.

It was a fluke really. Sandra started making pizza every Friday and honestly, it wasn't that great.

But she kept working it. Finally we started saying, "This is the best pizza in town." And that led to someone saying, "This is too good to keep to ourselves."

And so we opened up our house one Friday night and a dozen people showed up.

The next Fri night twice that showed up.

The next Friday 3x that many people showed up.

After that it was the norm to have 40-50 people through our house, eating pizza one a month or so.

Sandra would make amazing pizza, people would bring their beverage of choice and we'd open our house.

And then amazing relational things started to happen:

Our friends would invite their friends who didn't know us.  
Sometimes friends of friends invited friends.

It was Jesus people and Jesus-not-so-much people hanging out in our house, talking and sharing, becoming friends.

People who wouldn't come to Oakbrook for 60 minutes would come and hangout in a pastor's house for hours.

People in our neighborhood came.

A man from India temporarily working at Delphi came every time.

Some great friends of ours who aren't really into church invited some friends that then became our friends, that eventually started hanging out here on Sunday mornings and have since been in two of our small groups.

There were people who attended Oakbrook who met in our home,  
"Do you know you both go to Oakbrook??"

Because we opened our home and laid out some amazing pizza,

People would slow down.  
Eat and drink together.  
Talk.  
Connect.

Souls would mingle in sacred moments as we'd all take a time-out from life to stop and eat together.

I cannot fathom how many ways the Holy Spirit moved in conversations that none of us will ever know.

And then the Brick came to a stop.

Because we felt this tug to start this little  
Main Street Café in downtown Kokomo.

And people who knew us or knew of us said things like,

“Oh is this going to be a Christian café?”  
 “Will you play Christian music?  
 and put up Christian stuff on the walls?”

And we would kindly say, “No.”  
 No, because only Christians like to go to a Christian café.

Normal “Jesus-not-so-much” people who like really good coffee and artisan food don’t like to go to Jesus-themed places.

We have nothing against Christians, it’s just that if we were going to have a business in Kokomo, we wanted it to be attractive to all kinds of people.  
 In the same way that Jesus was attractive to all kinds of people meeting in homes and in the community.

And before we were ever talking about BLESS stories around here,  
 Sandra comes home almost daily with a bless story.

She and her crew are blessing people like crazy.  
 And sometimes she gets to pray for people.  
 And sometimes she has very Jesus-centric conversations.

And sometimes she just listens to people who need to be heard.

But mostly they’re trying to love all kinds of people in practical ordinary ways without forcing Jesus into conversations.

It’s not our sly, slick way of trying to influence people for Jesus.

It’s our authentic expression of Jesus in us, surrounded by really good food and coffee, loving people, talking with people like we would like to be loved and valued.

(“What do you think of Faith?” story.)

(SELAH)

And God probably doesn’t want you to have 50 people over for pizza or start a café, but the question for you is:

What will *you* do with this EAT value?

What will you do with this way that Jesus lived  
 and this value that 1 Timothy 3 says we should mature to?

I think for you to really do this--to intentionally share meals with people you barely know--you will need to know it’s not about the food. It’s what the food represents.

The food represents the time you will make to sit down across from people for whom Jesus died.

The food represents the conversation that will draw you and your guest closer by the end of your time together.

The food represents the mysterious way the Holy Spirit moves between multiple souls as we reveal a little more of our true self.

The food represents that our love for people cannot be fully conveyed over 5-10 minute conversations as we run into each other.

The food represents the great commission--that we are called to love people in larger blocks of time that will authentically and ultimately lead people to consider Jesus.

I hope and I pray that you will embrace our mission as a church by regularly sharing meals that are not about the food,

but about the people God has put into your world--because I can no more reach the people in your relational world any more than you can reach the people in my relational world.

The food is ultimately about people knowing Jesus.

This idea of food being about something else is not new--it's ancient...  
(setup communion)