

Resonate

ISSUE 29

THE
Hospitality
ISSUE



GLOBAL
INTERACTION

Eating –
A Missional Habit

Table Spirituality

May Mission Month

Your Turf or Mine?



15 MINUTES WITH *Phoebe*

In uni I did an exchange semester in the city where Global Interaction team members Dave and Caz live. A few weeks after arriving, I caught a motorbike to the office of the Education Foundation they head up and introduced myself. I mentioned that as part of my uni exchange I was required to volunteer for 200 hours, and they offered to take me on!

I was part of their morning devotions, contributed to their marketing and events, and taught some English classes. I loved getting to know the local staff and practicing the language. When I hit the inevitable low points, the ever-welcoming Global Interaction team was there to remind me of God's love not just for me but for the whole world.

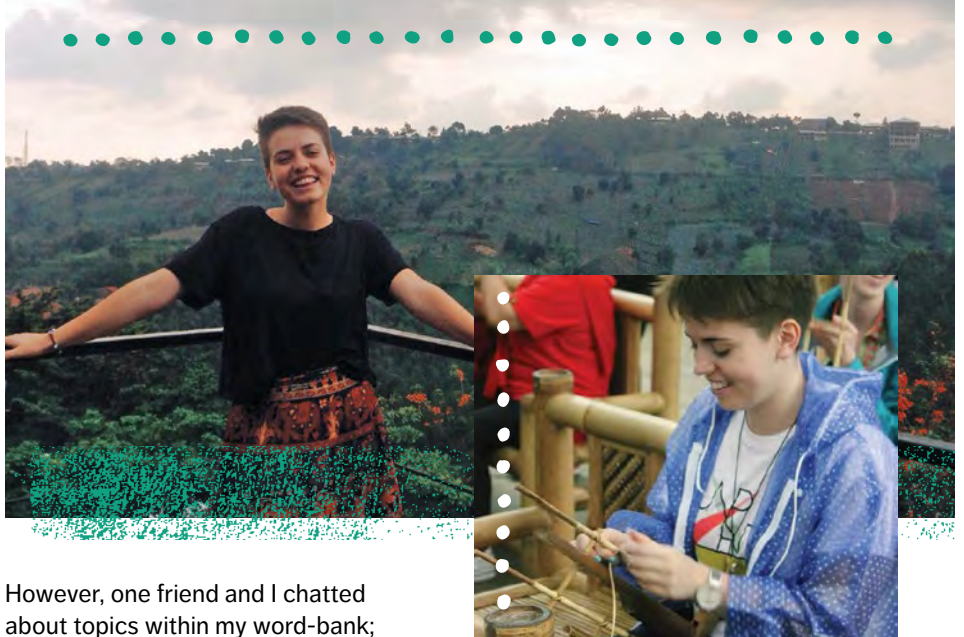
What sparked your interest in mission?

Dad used to sing us a song about 'being a missionary every day' and he always taught us that showing people Jesus was the best thing we could do!

Describe how your trip was challenging?

When I was overseas, I would only ever get a hint of someone's story. Language and time barriers prevented me from sitting down and getting the full story.

After high school, Canberran Phoebe Siers deferred her Education degree and moved to Sydney to undertake the Plunge young adult discipleship program at Morling College, which included a mission exposure trip where she was captivated by South East Asia. After the trip, she returned to Canberra, switched to Asia Pacific Studies and started Global Interaction's i68 internship.



However, one friend and I chatted about topics within my word-bank; food, study and clothes. I later found out that through her relationship with the Global Interaction team, she gave her life to Jesus. I couldn't stop smiling for a week!

What are you enjoying about the i68 internship?

It has brought like-minded people together. Though we are called to different parts of the world, we get to encourage each other. We also get close contact with cross-cultural workers – seeing them with their kids, in their homes and in their work. When I was little I thought only certain types of people could do mission but I've seen that the only common denominator is responding to God's call and being ready to learn!

Even though I was always interested in mission, I didn't have the motivation to go to a Bible College and dedicate my whole future to it. However, doing i68 and seeing how people's lives are changed when they come to faith makes me so keen to go back! So I guess the 'taste' has changed my perspective! I know God has a good and perfect plan for my life, and I have an inkling it's going to include returning to Asia.

To find out about the Plunge young adult discipleship program check out www.plungegapyear.com.

To talk more about the i68 mission internship in NSW and ACT, contact the team on 02 9868 9250.

COME & SERVE

Have you ever wondered if God may be inviting you on a new journey? If you love God, love people and are willing to share your faith, then consider cross-cultural ministry.



We have learnt that cross-cultural mission is not a one-size-fits-all prospect. Rather, it takes a multi-talented, diversely gifted team of people to share the message of Jesus in a community.

Short-term or long-term, single or family, Africa or Asia? Take the next step on your journey and contact your state office or head to www.globalinteraction.org.au/serve





For the last few years, Resonate subscribers have been reading snippets from Luke and Belle. They are now beginning their third year serving with the Global Interaction team in Thailand.

One of the most surprising things I've (Luke) found while learning a language is discovering how much the words can teach me about the culture. For example, being an Aussie, one of my most commonly asked questions in my vocabulary is, "How ya goin'?" It casually asks someone how they are and serves as a great conversation starter.

However, the Thai equivalent, "Sabai dee mai?" isn't the question the Thai's ask. Instead, they ask, "Gin cow gup aray?" meaning, "What did you eat with your rice?!" Almost every meal is eaten with rice, even breakfast. I usually study with my language nurturer in the mornings and she asks me this question every time I see her. My answer is the same every time, "Cereal!"

The fact that this question is about food and not mood reveals a cultural priority for hospitality.

When I visit someone at home, the host will always bring me a drink, without asking if I'd like one. If we see our neighbours around a meal time they'll always ask if we've eaten and invite us to join them. When we study with our teachers, they'll usually serve us Thai sweets or occasionally their mothers bring us some curry to try (the latest one included meat from Asian Palm Civet, a cat-like animal!).

Hospitality is also important in Thai faith groups. Weekly gatherings always include snacks of seasonal fruit, sweets and water. Just last weekend we all went to a beautiful local waterfall for a baptism service, which included a tasty spread of chicken, a red-ant egg dish and a spicy fermented fish sauce with sticky rice – very different to the Arnott's Family Assorted biscuits and weak cordial served after church at home!

But hospitality goes beyond simply serving food. I've known some of the poorest of people to be the most hospitable. During a university placement, Belle stayed with a family in a slum in the Philippines. She was welcomed with a meal and a soft drink, which the family didn't have. They lived in a tiny little two room house by a river, which meant it flooded every rainy season. The family of five shared a double bed which they insisted Belle use.

Hospitality isn't about offering up a nice spread. It's about honouring others with the gift of generosity no matter how much or how little you have.

For us, hospitality means having an open home and sharing what we've been blessed with, most important of which is the treasure we have in Jesus.



• Table • SPIRITUALITY

Michael Smith has been a farm kid, horticulturalist, pastor, property manager and Global Interaction cross-cultural worker in Thailand. He shares how his understanding of hospitality has been shaped by his Mum and Dad, Jesus, a Thai woman, colleagues and community members at Metford Community Baptist Church in NSW.

Growing up I developed a love for hospitality through the example of my parents. Rarely a Sunday went by where there were not guests at our dinner table and cooking at youth camps was also a regular event. Hospitality has been a big part of my married life and my family has been enriched by the stories, prayers and conversations shared around our table.

So I was excited when I had the opportunity to study a theological college subject about 'Table Spirituality', which is the very ordinary, routine, daily activity of eating and suggests that **eating is a spiritual act that should be focused on hospitality, community and mission.** As I read through the Gospels I am struck by how central it is in Jesus' ministry. For example, as Jesus eats the Passover meal He introduces communion to His disciples. Communion demonstrates the hospitality of God much more clearly than any other meal in the Bible. God sent his Son so that we might be in relationship with Him – communion with God!

Another story I find challenging is when Jesus goes to eat at the house of Simon the Pharisee. Simon neglects his duty as host in offering hospitality to a guest. He doesn't even provide the basic courtesies of greeting and foot washing (what was he thinking?). However, a lady described as a sinner washes Jesus feet with her tears, dries them with her hair and kisses them repeatedly. In return, the women receives Jesus hospitality but Simon misses out. Jesus neither judges nor rejects the women. He offers her unbounded hospitality.

Jesus repeatedly displays hospitality and shows us the importance of allowing outsiders to experience God's hospitality offered without constraint. There is no judgement – just a meeting of people where they are.

This is an important point for me as I consider how I can offer hospitality to those who do not know God. Do I create conditions and rules that must be met first or do I meet people with grace, mercy and compassion?

It is costly to extend God's hospitality to others and I need to ask if I am prepared to pay the price. Extending hospitality always comes with risk.

As I reflect on my ministry in Thailand, there were times when table spirituality was particularly important and my faith was both uplifted and challenged. When my family first moved there we were living in a small rural community with two other Global Interaction couples. We were the only foreigners in the area. During the first week, our neighbours invited us to celebrate the New Year with them. We had doubts about accepting the invitation because we didn't have enough language, we didn't know how to act appropriately and we were fearful that we would say the wrong thing and make fools of ourselves. However, we remembered the example of Jesus and acknowledged that through participation in hospitality community would be formed and mission would be possible. We went on to build a close relationship with our neighbour and she was invaluable in helping us understand our local community. We had many opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus with her.




JESUS REPEATEDLY DISPLAYS HOSPITALITY AND SHOWS US THE IMPORTANCE OF ALLOWING OUTSIDERS TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S HOSPITALITY...

In the early days, it felt like we were living in a fishbowl from which there was no escape. It was here that we learnt the importance of eating together with other believers. **Through the sharing of a weekly meal I experienced the hospitality of my team mates, which created a precious community and the inspiration for mission. With this encouragement I felt empowered to offer hospitality to my new Thai friends.**

Years later, as we prepared to return to Australia, one of our good friends wanted to farewell us with a string tying ceremony and meal. This involved the village shaman leading a ceremony where our wrists were tied with string which is believed to bring good luck. We had many questions; if we attend, were we affirming their Buddhist beliefs? Were we staying true to our faith? What would our supporters think?! Yet, if we didn't show up, would our friend be offended? Would it create a barrier for her to meet Jesus? How could we tell her that she couldn't say goodbye to us the only way she knew how?

This is one example of the risks involved in showing hospitality to those who are yet to meet Jesus. After discussing it with our team and praying about it, we decided to follow the example of Jesus by meeting people where they were at, not judging them for their actions, and breaking down the barriers that prevent hospitality, community and mission.

Since returning from Thailand I have found it difficult to be intentional about eating with others because Aussie culture is so individual and private. However, I jumped at the chance to be involved in our church's new ministry called Grace Community Kitchen. Once a fortnight we have a community meal where everyone is welcome – and the church and community have responded! I intentionally sit and eat with someone from the community I do not know. Through hospitality, community is being built, barriers are breaking down and people are meeting Jesus!



How do you practice Table Spirituality? If you're a regular reader you might remember last year's issue on mindfulness – look it up online, it's a great place to start. When you eat, pay attention, be thankful for the gift of food, consider what opportunities this meal presents for building hospitality, community and mission and then have the courage to act.

Also check out Simon Holt's book *Eating Heaven: Spirituality at the Table* and Michael Frost's ebook *The 5 Habits of Highly Missional People*.

May Mission Month



Key text: John 4: 4-42 (NIV)

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Using this Bible study resource

> Small groups

Read the passage and discuss the questions together. As a group, choose to support a Global Interaction cross-cultural worker or project as part of your giving to mission.

> Personal reflection time

Meditate on the Bible verses, journal your responses to the discussion questions and challenge yourself to learn more about the people around you and overseas who need to hear the message of Jesus.

> Church leaders

Visit the May Mission Month page www.globalinteraction.org.au/mmm to find sermon ideas, children's activities, ministry video clips plus extra resources that will help you involve your congregation.

Session 1

On a hot summer's day Jesus arrived at the famous well. Here Jacob, revered in all of Israel, had made this well with his hands. Over the centuries this well had quenched the thirst of generations of people and their animals, tired and thirsty from their work and travels. Jesus comes to this well ready to speak with a foreigner who was all alone.

Just as Jesus entered the area beyond which His fellow Jews were willing to go, so too God entered the world as a babe - crossing from the divine to the human in order to make a way for us to know God. Known as the incarnation, Jesus enters our world and understands fully what it is to be human. As His humanness interacts with our humanity, Jesus knows what we go through, the highs and lows, enabling us to encounter Him where we're at.



Think about it

- > Is the reality of Jesus entering our world something you find hard to grasp? In what ways?
- > In the past year, what has helped you encounter Jesus as you go about following Him?
- > What strikes you when contemplating Jesus entering foreign places in order to encounter others?

Live it

- > Have coffee or a meal with a friend in a suburb you'd rarely, if ever, go to. Observe what's happening around you. What rises within as you go to this place and see what's happening? How might God be reaching this area of your city or town? Take a friend and chat about it.
- > Call your Global Interaction State team to tee up a date and time for an Xpose Day for a small group of people from your church. Xpose days enable cross-cultural interactions in your city and allow people to open up their eyes to what is around them.
- > Learn about people groups from the Global Interaction Guide or website. Think about what it would take to enter into their world.
- > Pray about the openness of your heart to connecting with others in different regions and cultural areas of your city.
- > Download the Ekteino App – for the next four weeks take the challenge to discover more about God, His plans and how we can partner with Him in our world through intentional action and reflection.

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Session 2

As Jesus and the Samaritan woman came together we see a collision of cultures. Perhaps it draws a parallel to how Christ's coming into the world brought heavenly and earthly realms together. Here, Jesus breaks barriers of racial tension, gender norms, ritual cleanliness and religious difference. These cultural distinctions would normally create a distance between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. With ease Jesus breaks this down through conversation - the building of a relationship. This relationship is of such a level that Jesus is even willing to share and drink from her water container.



Think about it

- > Isn't it interesting that even asking for the simplest of things, a cup of water in this instance, can be difficult to overcome with cultural barriers? In what ways do you find yourself at odds with the culture around you?
- > Notice how Jesus takes the initiative in asking for water, yet the end result is for the Samaritan woman's benefit. With relationships you're involved in, what initiative do you need to take in order for people to become more aware of Jesus?
- > In what area is Jesus asking you to take initiative in order to follow Him?

Live it

- > In the next week, approach a situation where there may be barriers from the perspective of the other person. In what ways can you initiate change through understanding the other perspective?
- > Spend a couple of hours in a shopping centre, train station or public space watching how people from different cultures interact. What can you learn?
- > Reflect on a relationship that might have broken down due to a communication misunderstanding. Were differing cultures at play? What can you learn from this experience?
- > Go and meet someone from a different culture to you. Talk to them about where they grew up and the expectations upon them. Learn from them!

May Mission Month

Session 3

Jesus hints that there is a life-nourishing gift that can only come from God and it comes through Jesus. It is living water. In the Middle East the expression 'living water' was a description of water that was not stagnant from the likes of a cistern, pool, pond or well. Living water had a replenishing source like a river, spring or stream. It was moving, refreshing – it was living and life-giving. God has water like this on offer and it comes through Jesus.

The Samaritan wants this water. Jesus has given her hope in even the suggestion of it. Considering her life situation as one who is outcast from her society, it is not surprising that with this glimmer of hope she begins to hope that her life can be refreshed and renewed. What great news for this woman as that living water, that refreshing hope, is standing right in front of her!



Think about it

- › Do you know this living water yourself? Do you experience this refreshment regularly or are you still searching for it?
- › In what ways are you refreshed by your knowledge and relationship with Jesus?
- › We see that the Samaritan woman is seeking satisfaction in life but finding it in all the wrong places. How do you see Jesus satisfy your life and the life of others?
- › This gift of water is for all people, not just this woman. How do you go about sharing this gift of living water with others?

Live it

- › Talk to someone in your church about how they came to know Jesus.
- › Spend some time with Jesus, seeking and praying for refreshment.
- › If you don't believe you are satisfied, if you believe you are still seeking this living water, why not talk to a trusted Christian friend or pastor about it?
- › Is it time to share this living water with someone else? Consider your friends who don't have the satisfying knowledge and relationship with Jesus and think about an appropriate way to introduce them to it.
- › Would you consider praying about sharing this living water in a cross-cultural context? Talk with your Global Interaction State Team to take the next step.

May Mission Month

Session 4



It seems that relationship after relationship has broken down in the Samaritan woman's life and her social status has been diminished. We don't know the precise details of why these things happen but considering the honour and shame-focused culture she lived in, it is likely that her opportunity for stability, income, housing, security and social standing was obliterated after each divorce. She was socially ostracised. She resorts to collecting water, alone, in the heat of the day.

Jesus knows all this about her and begins to reveal His true nature to her. He tells her that He is indeed the living water, the hope and satisfaction in life that she is seeking. In revealing His knowledge of her life, He shows Himself to be at least a prophet but more than that, He openly admits His divinity as the expected Christ.

Despite his knowledge of who she is Jesus still offers her living water. He still seeks her and wants her to know that she is not too-far gone for God. God in Christ has not given up. He loves her still and calls her to a transformed life in Him.

Think about it

- > Do you consider yourself to be too-far gone for God? If you do, this is not true. Jesus is seeking you and calling you to Himself. Can you imagine Jesus sitting there with you as you drink a cup of water, calling you to His all-satisfying living water?
- > As a believer, do you ever feel ostracised? How do you deal with situations where you are not being respected or understood because of your beliefs?
- > When you've been struggling with your faith and relationship with Jesus what do you do? Are you aware that Christ is actually right beside you, not giving up on you?

Live it

- > No one is too-far gone from God. Are there people you can think of who have lost hope? Is it time to talk with them and encourage them in their life with Jesus?
- > Pray to God, laying down your own struggles, needs and wants, and taste and see that the Lord is good! Drink from His living water. Pray for others who seem to be struggling too.
- > Watch episode two of Global Interaction's MOVED series, seeing the way in which God has transformed the lives of people through his calling into mission. www.globalinteraction.org.au/MOVED
- > The transformation of people's lives is for all cultures. Select one of Global Interaction's nine people groups and find out more about what makes their culture unique. Consider how the Gospel of living water might transform their lives.

May Mission Month

Session 5

When the disciples return they are stunned to see Jesus in conversation with the woman. Think about the cultural situation they are in - the barriers between the Jews and the Samaritans were already complicated enough by their long history, let alone the barrier between Jesus, a man, and this Samaritan, a woman, conversing so openly.

The conversation was so life-giving for this woman that she went back to her village and told the people about it, forgetting all about the reason she had gone to the well in the first place. With this interaction the Samaritan woman now becomes a missionary herself. She goes and tells the village of the Good News that comes through knowing God. This is a stark transformation from when she first met Jesus.

The disciples are so shocked that their teacher is happily talking with this woman that they quickly focus on the food they've just bought. Yet Jesus turns their attention away from the food to the mission that they are on. The food may well be physically sustaining for a short period but it is the long-term food, the mission of God, that is of greater importance.

Jesus, the Living Water, is all-satisfying to all peoples, including those who may seem of least importance or of complete difference to us. Jesus turns the understanding of the disciples to the conversation with the Samaritan woman, showing them that this is the way of Jesus. In following Him the mission of God is for all, it is a new way of seeing the world and crosses cultural barriers, with transformation open to all individuals and ethnicities.

May Mission Month

Think about it

- > Do you find the reaction of the disciples surprising considering they've been following Jesus for a little while already? What about the reaction of the Samaritan woman post-conversation with Jesus? How or why?
- > With such urgency the woman goes back to her village and tells them about this person Jesus. Was there a time you had similar urgency in your faith? What do you think you could do to foster that now?
- > The mission of God becomes surprising and unexpected to the disciples. Jesus explains that things are different on His watch. What baggage would they need to let go of to approach this mission in a new way?
- > How are you invited into this story? How are you invited into God's mission through the principles of this passage?

Live it

- > What do you sense God calling you to in terms of His mission to the world? Is it time to take a first step at talk to someone about it?
- > Spend time with God this week, reading his Word and praying, asking Him to increase your urgency in letting others know about this all-satisfying living water.
- > Consider a short-term Global Xposure team, would this be something you would like to be part of? Contact your Global Interaction State Office for more information and how to make this a reality.
- > Is there a particular mission endeavour you can get involved in with your church? Take the next step in joining in with your church family in pursuing God's mission in your local community.



Jon Coombs is the Youth & Young Adult Pastor of Rowville Baptist Church in Melbourne, Australia. For over 15 years he has been working with youth and young adults in churches, schools, mission agencies and not-for-profit organisations. He enjoys watching test match cricket with his wife, and blogs regularly at joncoombs.com.



EATING – A Missional Habit

A few years ago, Michael Frost wrote a short e-book called *The Five Habits of Highly Missional People: Taking the BELLS Challenge to Fulfill the Mission of God*. It's been read by thousands of people around the globe and created the impetus for the transformation of many Christians, and in turn, their friends who have since been introduced to Jesus. It challenges us to adopt five practices that "unite us together as believers, while also propelling us into the lives of others." These are; **Blessing, Eating, Listening, Learning and Sending.**

If this edited excerpt from the 'Eat' chapter whets your appetite to find out more head to www.crossover.org.au/surprise-the-world

In fourth-century Rome, cranky old Emperor Julian was peeved with the Christians for practicing such an amazing form of hospitality that they were taking over the empire. He complained to his officials that one of the Christians' methods for "perverting" the empire was their so-called love-feast or service of tables. He appears to be uncertain of the name of their gathering because he says, "... they have many ways of carrying it out and hence call it by many names."

We know the Corinthians were practicing a communal meal as part of their weekly habit because Paul rebukes them for conducting it so poorly.¹

He is outraged that their so-called love feast doesn't express love at all, with certain people being left out and others appearing to eat in cliques rather than as a whole body of believers. He then goes on to offer them a form of words they should use when eating the Eucharist, which indicates that the Corinthian love feast included the Lord's Supper at its heart.

In other documents of the time, there appear to be various references to the separation of the Eucharist from the love feast, as though they were seen as two very distinct gatherings. This might be why Emperor Julian had trouble keeping track. In any case, a rhythm eventually developed where it was standard practice for the early Christians to celebrate the Eucharist in the morning and the love feast in the evening.

My point is that eating has been a central Christian practice since the beginning of our movement. And not only eating sacramentally, as in the Eucharist, but eating missionally as a way to express love to all.

The invitation to share a table is a profoundly meaningful one in every culture. I'm calling you to foster the habit of eating with three people each week. You won't need to add a great deal into your often already busy schedule. You already eat three times a day. That's 21 meals a week. I'm simply asking that you bring another person to your table for three of those. Or if you want to cut corners, you could bring three people to your table for one of them.

The meal could be an elaborate dinner party or it could be breakfast or even just coffee and a donut. Just sit across a table from three people this week and... talk. The table is the great equaliser in relationships. When we eat together, we discover the inherent humanity of all people. We share stories. And hopes. And fears. And disappointments. People open up to each other. And we can open up to them to share the same things, including our faith in Jesus. As Alan Hirsch and Lance Ford write:

“Sharing meals together on a regular basis is one of the most sacred practices we can engage in as believers. Missional hospitality is a tremendous opportunity to extend the Kingdom of God. We can literally eat our way into the Kingdom of God! If every Christian household regularly invited a stranger or a poor person into their home for a meal once a week, we would literally change the world by eating!”ⁱⁱ

I agree. Of course, inviting well-mannered Christian folks into your home is easy. But what about inviting unbelievers or the poor to our table?

What’s more, what if they reciprocate our hospitality and invite us to their home? Would our presence at their table imply that we affirm all their values? Ben Meyer addresses this in the example of Jesus himself. After explaining that in Jesus’ time a person wouldn’t eat with someone of different social standing, and certainly never with someone of a different religion (i.e. Jews eating at the table of Gentiles), he tells us that Jesus turned this on its head:

“... the act of Jesus was to reverse this structure: communion first, conversion second. His table fellowship with sinners implied no acquiescence in their sins, for the gratuity of the reign of God cancelled none of its demands. But in a world in which sinners stood ineluctably condemned, Jesus’ openness to them was irresistible. Contact triggered repentance; conversion flowered from communion. In the tense little world of ancient Palestine, where religious meanings were the warp and woof of the social order, this was a potent phenomenon.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Conversion flowered from communion. What a beautiful expression. We see it in Jesus’ attendance at a meal at the home of the tax collector Zacchaeus.^{iv} His communion with the sinful tax collector led to repentance and conversion. Likewise, we should be as prepared to eat with sinners as a habitual missional practice.

Initially, all I’m asking is that you invite three people to share your table, at least one of whom isn’t a churchgoer. But what you’ll find happening is that people will reciprocate your hospitality. You’ll start getting return invitations. And when that happens you’ve got serious missional traction. Don’t judge the lifestyles or eating (or drinking) habits of your host. See the opportunity as a goldmine for missional relationship building. Let communion precede conversion.

ⁱ 1 Cor. 11:17-34

ⁱⁱ Alan Hirsch & Lance Ford, *Right Here, Right Now* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010) p. 203

ⁱⁱⁱ Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, (London: SCM, 1979) p. 161.

^{iv} Luke 19:1-10

Global Interaction team members share what the ‘Eat’ missional habit looks like for them:

Rob in Cambodia

Since we arrived, we have looked for opportunities to build relationships with local Khmer people. Enjoying a morning coffee has been a routine for many years, so I was pleased to find a coffee cart in our street that served a very nice coffee with locally roasted beans. While my wife Deb doesn’t like coffee, she is a midwife and has enjoyed following the progress of the coffee cart lady’s pregnancy. Being welcomed into the lives of the coffee cart family gives us a sense that God is involved in these interactions.



Kevin in Central Asia

I have befriended a local married couple with a baby daughter. On occasion I have invited them to my apartment and cooked for them. It has been so easy to talk over a meal together. They have often invited me to go on outings in their car. One day my new ‘mate’ (as he calls me) informed me that his aunt had been admitted to hospital and was unlikely to recover from a serious illness. I told him I would pray for healing in the name of Jesus. Days later he excitedly told me that the doctors were amazed at her recovery and she had been discharged from hospital! This incident has galvanised our friendship and our catch-ups are more frequent. While sitting and eating together at our favourite café, complete with sleeping infant in tow, he asks questions about being a follower of Jesus and his wife has also expressed interest in knowing more!



Petina in Thailand

I have an intentional habit of visiting my local café at least once a week. It’s a rustic open space with no walls, a tin roof, wooden benches and a constantly changing menu – whatever the owner chooses to sell that week. Fried banana chips, Thai green tea, whole coconuts, bananas or meatballs on sticks (not like the frozen Ikea variety). It’s in a central point to town, it transforms into part of the market precinct each Monday and is a popular place for people to meet. I sit and eat with the Thai villagers, hearing about everything that is going on in the community and I often meet new people there. These meals together are an important way to be part of my community and enter into the lives of those I am serving among – a key part of a mission-centred life!



Baptist Churches of South Australia team member, Tabor College lecturer and top-shelf preacher Melinda Cousins gives a challenging take on what hospitality really looks like.



A few years ago I had a disagreement with a politician about words. He was using a phrase that was understood in the popular media as a kind of 'slogan' with a particular emphasis. I made an assumption about what he meant by using this phrase; he assured me that he had a more nuanced perspective to communicate. The key to our disagreement was that he then said it was my responsibility to understand what he intended to communicate and it was my problem if I didn't get what he meant. Conversely, I suggested that it was his responsibility to understand how I would hear what he was saying and to use words to ensure that I would receive his intention. In the end we had to agree to disagree but it is a conversation I have often thought about since.

Does the onus lie on the speaker or the hearer to make sure communication is clearly understood?

And what does that have to do with hospitality?

Missiology 101 tells me that as someone who has a good message to proclaim, the onus is on me to make sure that my words are being heard and understood by those I am seeking to communicate with, rather than expecting or assuming that they will know what I intend. We call it 'contextualisation'. To me, this is a form of hospitality. **I invite someone into the conversation in a way that is welcoming when I focus not so much on what I want to say but on what they will hear.**

I think hospitality is often misunderstood. The mental picture many people have is of inviting someone into their home. However, there is an important caveat. In many ways, our home is our 'turf'. It is the place where we feel most comfortable and where we do things our way. If we invite someone in to that but expect and assume that they will 'fit in' with us, are we truly being welcoming?

Or is hospitality about making the other person feel comfortable, choosing to accommodate ourselves to their way of doing things and making sure they feel at home?

True hospitality is the attitude of making someone else feel at home rather than simply being in our home.

What would it look like to live that kind of hospitality in speech and in action?

My church has recently started partnering with a Christian community who speak a different language to us, many of whom are refugees and have left everything they have known behind. I see joy in their eyes as they come into a place where they can speak their own language, eat food that is familiar to them and feel comfortable knowing that they understand what is expected of them. I imagine that in nearly every other aspect of their lives this is not the case. Everywhere they go they are expected to fit in with us, speak like us, do things our way. And yes, that is part of the process of learning to live in a new culture. But, what if, instead of the church being just one more place where they as outsiders are expected to find ways to fit in, we as followers of Jesus chose to be the ones who learned their language, ate their food, did things their way? **What if we went out of our way to be the ones who were uncomfortable so that they might feel at home?**

That's a challenge. That's what is difficult. That's the kind of hospitality that is costly as we sacrifice our own comfort and ease for the sake of the other. That's the kind of hospitality of a church whose early leaders chose to become like outsiders in order to share their hope with those on the outside. That's the kind of hospitality of a church whose head is a God who condescended to become a human being in order to demonstrate His great love for humanity.

For more of Melinda's works, subscribe to www.melindacousins.com.

EKTEINO

Last year Global Interaction, with the support of Baptist Financial Services, launched its first discipleship App called Ekteino. Mary Ackers, Youth and Young Adults Pastor at Salisbury Baptist Church took up the four week challenge to stretch out (that's kinda what Ekteino means) – to impact her world and the people around her for good. So let's find out how the stretching went...



Take Global Interaction's Ekteino challenge! Over four weeks, discover more about God, His plans and how you can partner with Him in our world through intentional action and reflection. Download from your favourite App store (yep, it's free!).



What did you like about Ekteino?

Ekteino had a definite purpose going through the daily challenges. It really felt like a journey of discovery! I also loved that it was relevant to local and global mission. Regardless of where your passion for missional activity lies, there is something for everyone in this journey.

I also liked the look and feel of the app. I could take notes and save them for future reference and I enjoyed the other media (stories, videos, etc.) that gave insight into the concepts explored.

What surprised you?

I was pleasantly surprised by how much I got out of the daily challenges. I sometimes struggle with daily devotionals, as they can be anecdotal and superficial, but with Ekteino it was different. A Bible reading with both active and reflective responses fit the bill for a daily Bible time for me.

How has it impacted you?

In the past, when I've thought about ways to 'stretch-out' into my community, it's felt like a huge challenge and at times has been overwhelming. Going through Ekteino gave focus and direction to my thoughts and I felt much more encouraged about the number of missional opportunities already in my community. I've really begun to think differently but also listen to God's leading. I now do a lot more noticing and thinking about what was happening around me and less getting caught up in my own head. It has been encouraging and eye-opening.

Ekteino has given me some great tools and strategies for engaging with my neighbours and seeking out ways to stretch out into the world around me.

This was really one of the most engaging devotion-type exercises I've done and I really enjoyed it! I only wish there was more!

COOKING CULTURALLY



Vegetable Noodle Stir-Fry

SOUTH EAST ASIA

Serves 4

Buy or Grow it

- 500 grams fresh Hokkien Noodles
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 onion, cut into wedges
- 1 carrot, sliced thinly
- 1 small zucchini, sliced thinly
- 1 cup cabbage, shredded
- ½ small capsicum, sliced thinly (and other vegetables if desired)
- ½ teaspoon sambal oelek
- ½ - 1 teaspoon ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon crushed garlic
- ¼ - ½ cup kecap manis
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce

Make it

- > place noodles in a bowl and cover with boiling water, stir to separate then drain
- > heat oil in wok or fry pan, add onion and cook until soft
- > add vegetables and fry until just cooked
- > add spices and sauces, stir through well
- > add noodles and stir-fry until heated through

Resonate

- Interested in a particular aspect of mission?
- Keen to do another mission Bible study?
- Need a recipe for your next dinner party?

Past issues are available online: globalinteraction.org.au/Resonate or contact us for a hard copy.



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