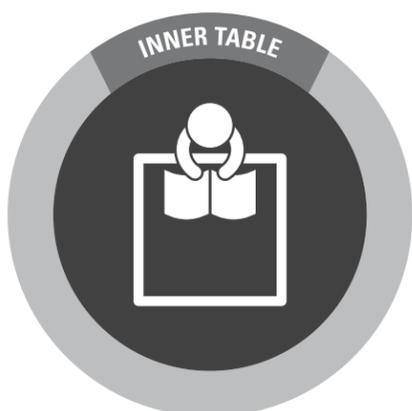


Sermon Notes

“Whatever is Lovely”
February 17th, 2019



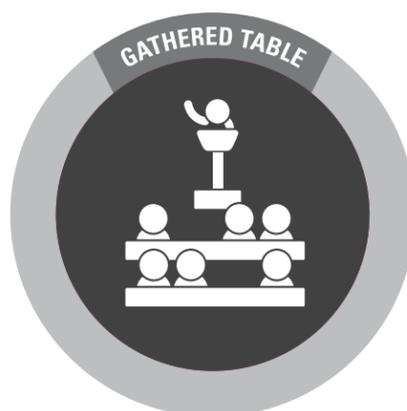
**First
Friends**
Church



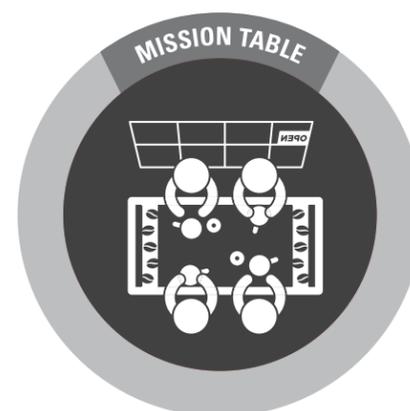
Seeking God
in Solitude



Finding God
in Friendship



Celebrating God
in Community



Reflecting God
in Relationships

Reflection Questions *(please use these individually or in groups)*

Sermon Questions:

1. In what *things* do you do you find pleasure? Are there things in your life that bring you pleasure, but lead you away from Christ?
2. In what *places* do you find pleasure? Are there places that tend to lead you to dysfunction or disobedience?
3. In what *company* do you find pleasure? Do you have a “safe harbor” friend to share your life with?
4. Ask God to help you discern opportunities to empty yourself this week for the sake of the pleasure, blessing and joy of others.

Additional Questions:

5. How would your life look different if, in all that you do, you were moving toward that which is love? In other words, is love the driving motivator for all that you do? Do you act in ways that are sometimes outside of the realm of love?
6. There may be some things in this world that we “love” but are actually not good for us. Another word for this is idol worship. Are there any “idols” in your life that you are pursuing that might be holding you back from living a life of love in Christ?

Devotional Reading & Inward Reflection

- **Acts 2:42-47** | Are there areas in your life where you rely on an accumulation of possessions to find pleasure? Do you feel like building your own “empire” will bring satisfaction? How does this community of believers look different than that?
- **Acts 20:32-35** | Do you find giving joyful? What kinds of giving do you participate in now? Time, Talents, Money, etc.? Why is it important to help others?
- **Matthew 23:1-12** | One of the most crucial things we can give to others is our seat at the table. In other words, sharing the power and influence we have so others can share those spaces. What power and influence do you have that you can share?
- **John 11:32-36** | What friendships and relationships are you so thankful for that it moves you to tears? Take a moment to reflect on what these people mean to you.

Self-Care Disciplines *(Excerpts from Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster)*

February Discipline: Solitude & Silence | Day of Listening (p.106)

The discipline of silence and solitude are interwoven into the DNA of a Christian person. We rely on them like one relies on food or water. Perhaps this is why so many folks feel spiritually malnourished or dehydrated because they are not opening themselves up to silence and solitude. Solitude is not simply the absence of noise but the absence of distraction. Whenever we are able to sit and rest in the presence of God, our eyes are opened in ways that we wouldn't have imagined before.

If you are really feeling that your life is overwhelmed with noise, try spending a day or even several hours without words (as much as you can). You will realize how much we rely on communication. If you want to take it a step further, keep your phone off for whatever duration of time you decide on and even avoid texting and social media. Do this not as a law, but as an experiment. Note your feelings of helplessness and excessive dependence upon how much you communicate. Enjoy and savor the day. Ask God to teach you during this time of rest. Learn what you can about God and yourself during this time.

Note: Don't let these burden you each week. Please engage only if you feel it would be beneficial in caring for yourself. Sometimes self-care involves giving yourself a break, even from self care disciplines.