

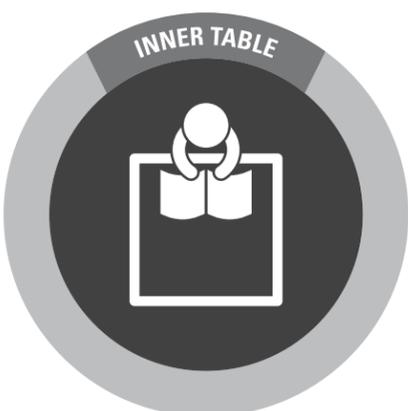
Sermon Notes

“Whatever is Excellent & Praiseworthy”

March 3rd, 2019

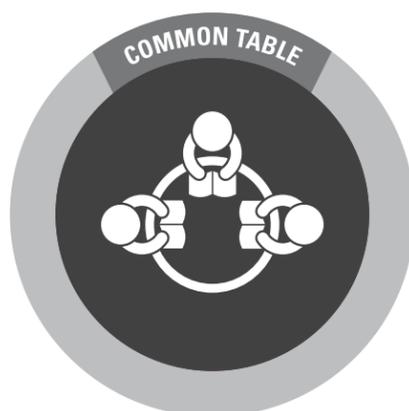


**First
Friends**
Church



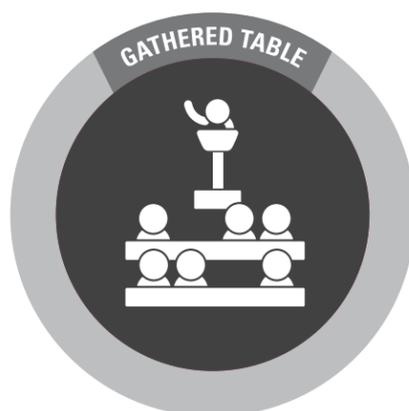
INNER TABLE

Seeking God
in Solitude



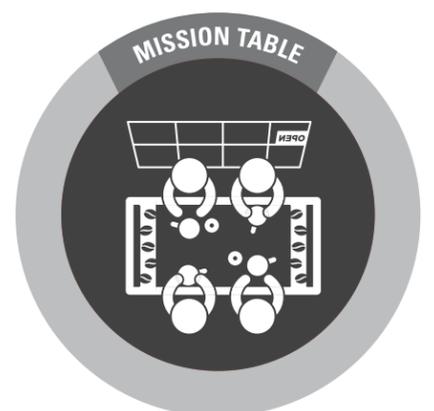
COMMON TABLE

Finding God
in Friendship



GATHERED TABLE

Celebrating God
in Community



MISSION TABLE

Reflecting God
in Relationships

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

Sermon Questions:

1. In what areas of life do you most desire and/or pursue excellence?
2. Express thanks to God for the gift of being "clothed" with excellence, holiness and righteousness.
3. Pray that you will be diligent in obedience so that others may see, and be drawn to, the excellence of Christ by the power of the Spirit.
4. Are there any areas of life in which you are pursuing excellence in ways that might be threatening to your integrity?

Additional Questions:

5. Do you ever confuse "excellence" and "perfection"? Does this cause a high amount of anxiety or stress for you as you pursue excellence? Do you allow space in your life to fall short of perfection? How might you give yourself a break or learn to parse out the difference between these two ideas?
6. Is there a difference between the pursuit of excellence for the Christian person and the non-Christian person? If so, what is the difference? What role does the Spirit play in this?

Devotional Reading & Inward Reflection

- **Ephesians 4:21-24** | In a culture that prides itself on "earning" any excellence we have or pursue, how does it make you uncomfortable that excellence in the Christian faith must firstly be received?
- **Zechariah 6:9-15** | Though our "excellence" is first received, it can grow by our efforts in "diligently obeying." Where are you good & bad at being obedient?
- **1 Samuel 18:6-11** | Do you ever get jealous whenever someone else has success that you feel like you are entitled to? How might you train yourself to celebrate with them instead of holding a grudge (especially if they have earned their success)?
- **Matthew 26:14-16** | Are there times in your life where you "sell out" to pursue excellence? Do you ever compromise your faith for personal gain?

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

March Discipline: Submission | The Triune God (p.121-122)

Submission and service function concurrently. Hence, much of the practical outflow of submission will come in the next month (service). There are, however, seven acts of submission that we should draw attention to. There will be one or two mentioned each week in the month of March

The first act of submission is to the Triune God. At the beginning of the day we wait, in the words of the hymn writer, "yielded and still" before our Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The first words of our day form the prayer of Thomas à Kempis, "As thou wilt; what thou wilt; when thou wilt." We yield our body, mind, and spirit for his purposes. Likewise, the day is lived in deeds of submission interspersed with constant motions of inward surrender. As the first words of the morning are of submission, so are the last words of the night. We surrender our body, mind, and spirit into the hands of God to do with us as he pleases through the long darkness.

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.