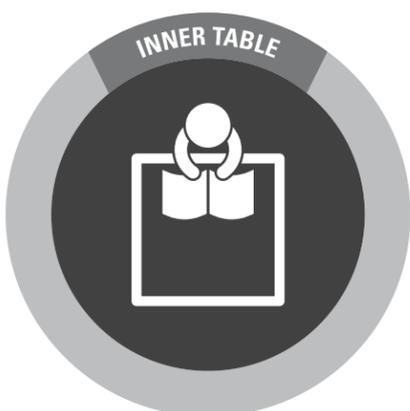


Sermon Notes

“Life on the Anvil”
September 15th, 2019



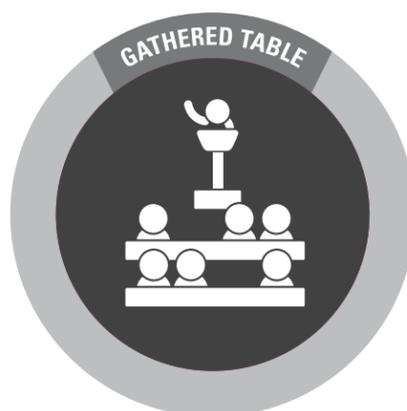
**First
Friends**
Church



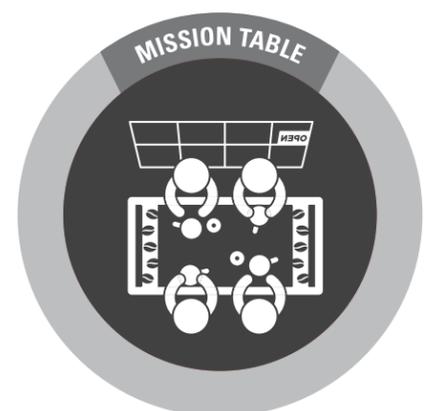
Seeking God
in Solitude



Finding God
in Friendship



Celebrating God
in Community



Reflecting God
in Relationships

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

Discussion Questions:

1. Who was one of your best friends in your formative childhood/teenage years? How did this person affect your life? How did you affect his/hers? What made the relationship unique? What does that relationship teach you about the value of close friendships?
2. What sorts of things can relationships with fellow Christians provide that other relationships (despite their value) are unable to provide, or only provide marginally?
3. Which kind of relational "sharpening" discussed in the sermon has played the most significant role in your life? Accountability in the face of temptation/sin? Softening in instances of hard-heartedness? Encouragement in the midst of being worn out?
4. What are some of the biggest barriers for people to engage in a regular Common Table experience?

Additional Questions:

5. Do you tend to "shell up" when life gets hard or do you ask for help? Why do you think it's so common in our culture that we try to do it on our own?

Devotional Reading & Inward Reflection

- **Proverbs 27:17** | Have you ever helped sharpen someone else's iron before? What was that experience like? Has anyone ever helped you? What levels of vulnerability are required for such tasks?
- **Matthew 18:18-20** | Why do you think Jesus emphasized community so much? Do you have people you can turn to in times of need?
- **1 Samuel 23:7-18** | What important role did Jonathan play in David's life? How did Jonathan provide David with encouragement and accountability?
- **Acts 2:42-47** | The early church grew so rapidly because of the welcoming community that they established through the power of the Spirit. How are you actively participating in the ministry of community?

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

September Discipline: Meditation | Creation Meditation (p. 31)

This week's form of meditation is focused on creation. Now, this is no infantile pantheism, but a majestic monotheism in which the great Creator of the universe shows us something of his glory through his creation. The heavens do indeed declare the glory of God and the firmament does show forth his handiwork (Ps. 19:1). Evelyn Underhill recommends, "begin with that first form of contemplation which the old mystics sometimes called 'the discovery of God in his creatures.'"

So give your attention to the created order. Look at the trees, really look at them. Take a flower and allow its beauty and symmetry to sink deep into your mind and heart. Listen to the birds - they are the messengers of God. Watch the little creatures that creep upon the earth. These are humble acts, to be sure, but sometimes God reaches us profoundly in these simple ways if we will quiet ourselves to listen.

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.