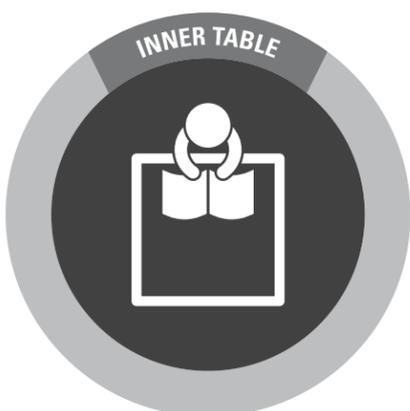


Sermon Notes

“Love Stories”
April 7th, 2019



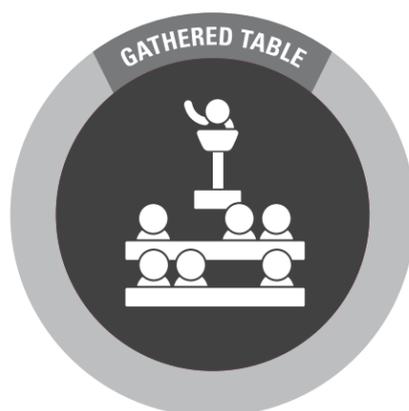
**First
Friends**
Church



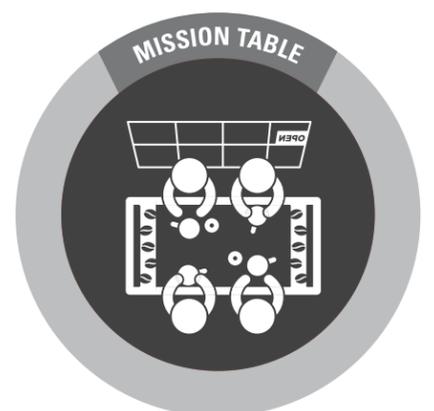
Seeking God
in Solitude



Finding God
in Friendship



Celebrating God
in Community



Reflecting God
in Relationships

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

Sermon Questions:

1. Which stories from your past have most deeply formed how you view God, yourself, and the world?
2. Who do you think you are? How do you think others see you? What do you believe God thinks of you?
3. Do you feel overlooked, forgotten or unappreciated? Ask God to reassure you that he is preparing you in the same way he was preparing David.
4. Do you feel unworthy, unqualified, undeserving or unprepared? Ask God to speak to your heart with a sense of strength and calling, like he spoke to Gideon.
5. Do you feel confused, afraid or hopeless? Ask Jesus to meet you on your journey and allow your breaking heart to become a burning heart, as he did for the disciples.

Additional Questions:

6. Why do you think we shy away from stories as adults? Is there something comforting in facts, numbers, doctrinal statements?
7. Do you think God is more of a story teller or a rule writer? Do you think we are more comfortable with a “story telling” God or a “rule writing” God?

Devotional Reading & Inward Reflection

- **1 Samuel 16:6-12** | Stories like this are woven throughout Scripture. Do you think the church does a good job in following this example? Do we lift up and anoint those whom the world considers too small?
- **Judges 6:11-16** | Are you okay “going back and forth” with God like Gideon? Do you think our relationships with God should be open and honest enough to allow for such dialogue? Is God okay with us wrestling with him?
- **Luke 24:30-36** | Has God ever surprised you after going through something difficult? Why is it hard to trust God in the midst of dysfunction?
- **Matthew 28:16-20** | How can your life be a story like those above to build God’s kingdom? The people above were ordinary people just like you!

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

April Discipline: True Service | (p.128) “Effort & Big Deals”

If true service is to be understood and practiced, it must be distinguished clearly from “self-righteous service.” This month, we will look at several of these differences. Pray that God would allow you to find opportunities for “true service” in your life.

Self-righteous service comes through human effort. It expends immense amounts of energy calculating and scheming how to render the service. Sociological charts and surveys are devised so we can “help the people.” True service comes from a relationship with the divine Other deep inside. We serve out of whispered promptings, divine urgings. Energy is expended but it is not the frantic energy of the flesh.

Self-righteous service is impressed with the “big deal.” It is concerned to make impressive gains on ecclesiastical scoreboards. It enjoys serving, especially when the service is titanic. True service finds itself almost impossible to distinguish the small from the large service. Where a difference is noted, the true servant is often drawn to the small service, not out of false modesty, but because he or she genuinely sees it as the more important task. He or she indiscriminately welcomes all opportunities to serve.

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.