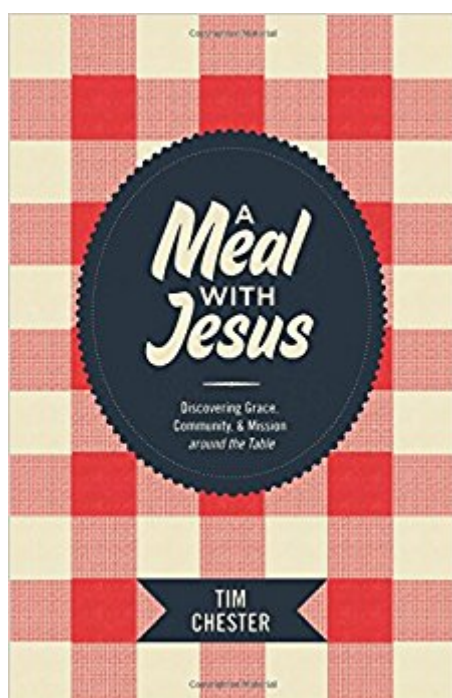


The book was found

A Meal With Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, And Mission Around The Table



Synopsis

The meals of Jesus represent something bigger. They represent a new world, a new kingdom, a new outlook. Tim Chester brings to light God's purposes in the seemingly ordinary act of sharing a meal—how this everyday experience is really an opportunity for grace, community, and mission. Chester challenges contemporary understandings of hospitality as he urges us to evaluate why and who we invite to our table. Learn how you can foster grace and bless others through the rich fare being served in *A Meal with Jesus*.

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Customer Reviews

“We all know fasting can be a spiritual exercise, but eating is really more like Jesus. In this book, Chester points out that Christianity was meant to be conducted at a table with the intimacy of a shared meal. Church was never meant to be holy services held in sacred buildings conducted by saintly men in long robes passing thin wafers and a thimble of juice—removed from real life. Chester rightly puts us back where we belong...at the table in front of a meal—a feast actually. This is an outstanding treatise on an important subject that was long ago lost in the mire of sacred rituals. It is time we come back to the table and enjoy the life given to us.” —Neil Cole, founder and director, Church Multiplication Associates; author, *Organic Church* “I’m not sure I could name all the titles of the books Tim has now written. I’ve even written one or two with him. But this is the best so far, by far! It fed my soul and through it I enjoyed grace in a new way. In fact, the book is a sumptuous meal in its own right. Buy it, not just to read it, but to feast on it.” —Steve Timmis,

Executive Director, Acts 29 Church Planting Network

I've always told the congregations I've served that if you take the mountains and meals out of the Bible, it's a very short book. In a world of competing church models and strategies, Tim shows us that Jesus employed one practice over all others: Sharing a meal with people. This book serves as a poignant reminder that grace, mission, and community are never enacted best through programs and propaganda, but rather through the equality and acceptance experienced at the common table. May our lives never be too busy to live this out.

—Mike Breen, Global Leader, 3DM; author, *Building a Discipleship Culture*

Tim Chester has a keen ability to reflect on gospel, community, and mission, making them accessible to the common person through the mess and movement of everyday life. Tim certainly accomplished this again in *A Meal with Jesus*. With each meal, my convictions about how the gospel informs all of life and relationships went deeper, and my affections for Jesus grew stronger. I want everyone in my church to read this book.

—Jeff Vanderstelt, Visionary Leader, Soma; Pastor, Doxa Church, Bellevue, Washington; author, *Saturate*

Tim Chester (PhD, University of Wales) is a pastor of Grace Church, Boroughbridge, and curriculum director of the Acts 29-Oak Hill Academy, which provides integrated theological and missional training for church leaders. He is the coauthor of *Total Church* and is the author of over thirty books, including *You Can Change*, *A Meal with Jesus*, and *Good News to the Poor*.

3 meals a day, 7 days is a week, is 21 meals a week, 84 meals a month, and 1092 meals a year. The point is not the actual number. The point is we spend a lot of time eating. That's why this book matters. *A Meal with Jesus* affirms something we do so often that is essential to our existence on planet Earth, shows how it's integral to God's design, and gives us unconventional paradigms that change the way we live life and do ministry. Honestly, the sections about hospitality as mission make the book worth buying, reading, and keeping on your shelf to refer back to. Because Chester covers things like how meals help us move from theoretical community to real community, how meals bring mission into the ordinary, and how if you routinely share meals with people and you have a passion for Jesus you'll be doing mission. You probably haven't heard this stuff anywhere else -- on a topic that matters so much to our daily lives. *A Meal with Jesus* is definitely worth reading.

People will often say that Gandhi and Jesus had a lot in common. While I'm sure some similarities exist, I think such a view betrays a superficial understanding of both men. Take one example: their

diverging attitudes about food. Gandhi appeared to have a rather strained and fickle relationship with food. He held the view that one's taste for food was inextricably linked with one's sexual appetite - and both were inherently vulgar, debased, impure - desires to be squelched. In his mind, the disciplined man lives in a state of perpetual "partial fasting," relying only on scant portions in his "grim fight against the inherited and acquired habit of eating for pleasure" (Gandhi quoted in Joseph Lelyveld's book *Great Soul*). "The Son of Man," rather, "came eating and drinking..." (Luke 7:34). This astonishing truth about Christ, along with the Bible's repeated use of food and feast related imagery, is the subject of Tim Chester's fantastic book, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community & Mission around the Table*. Chester's main burdens in this book are as follows: to explain the startling significance of Christ's desire to eat with sinners and Pharisees alike; to reveal the deeper spiritual realities that these shared meals with Christ point to; and to encourage us as Christians to make the sharing of meals an integral part of our fellowship with others, so as to regularly enact and reflect upon the grace that Christ so freely gave to us. This is a neat book because it addresses some of the concerns commonly raised by the emergent church - our lack of connectedness, our desire for authentic community, the need for social justice and equality, the call for the church to reflect people from every tribe, tongue and nation. And yet, it does all this in a completely gospel-centered way, a way that does not depart from historic Protestantism. This is a book about food and fellowship, yes, but, ultimately, this book is unabashedly about the gospel. It's about substitutionary atonement. So, how does Chester connect the topics of food and fellowship with the cross? Chester demonstrates that hospitality is a recurring theme in God's story. From the forbidden fruit of Genesis to the banquet imagery of Revelation, food and feasting - or lack thereof - is symbolic of our standing before a holy God. In the Old Testament, when Israel enjoyed peace with God, food was abundant. And, conversely, in times of judgment, the reality was famine. But, though we deserve the famine, God demonstrates his faithful love to undeserving people through abundant feasting, made possible only by the free distribution of his grace. Chester cites a rich and beautiful passage in Isaiah that embodies this gospel reality: "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined..." "But, how can that be, when our sin separates us from God? Here's the best part!" "...And [the Lord] will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth..." (Isa. 25: 6-8) Chester explains: "No one need ever leave this feast. In Isaiah 25 death itself is on the menu - God himself will swallow it up. So this is a perpetual feast" (59). How beautiful and

coherent the Bible is, that we see substitutionary atonement in the Old Testament, God taking the sin of his people onto himself, so that they can be reconciled to him. We eat good food; God eats death. And all of this points to the cross. Throughout his book, Chester just relishes this fact. It should, then, come as no surprise to us that Jesus is the host of and a participant in many shared meals, as he prepares a way for us to have fellowship with God. "Jesus is the Passover lamb. His blood is daubed over our lives; the Lord passes over us, and we're redeemed...so we can come to the mountain of God, and eat and drink with God" (113). Chester, then, charges us to live in light of this gospel reality, inviting others, particularly those we are in the habit of rejecting, to join us around the table. I loved this book. I've been resisting this cheesy cliché, but, what the heck; it truly was "food for the soul." So, while I appreciate Gandhi's aversion to gluttony and his desire to see hungry people fed, I have to disagree with his assertion that a full meal is "a crime against God and man." For people who put their faith in Christ, a full meal - especially one shared with others - is symbolic of our reconciled relationship with God through Christ, and a pointer to the feast to come.

This book looks deeply into Jesus' ministry and has a lot of powerful things to say about sharing meals with believers and unbelievers alike. If we are truly to be living like He did, we should be reaching the marginalized in our society - not distancing ourselves from the broken. Jesus was a friend to sinners for a reason; today it often seems like Christ-followers cluster around other Christ-followers instead of being mission-minded in everyday life. Great book!

Point: The significance of daily meals has been forgotten. A meal is much more than refueling, rather it is means by which we may worship and share Christ. **Path:** Chester works through six passages in the book of Luke explaining how Christ used meals to enact grace, community, hope, mission, salvation, and promise. These passages are wrapped together with seasoned personal stories, tasty facts, and bold encouragement to use meals for God's glory. **Sources:** Chester quotes from religious sources such as Tim Keller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Robert Karris. He also references current statistics from a variety of works. **Agreement:** Chester challenges the reader to take a second look at Christ's ministry. A majority of his teaching, discipleship and evangelization took place around food. If only we would take one of our 21 meals a week and dedicate it to God's glory through His grace! **Disagreement:** Chester's contemporary parallels of the events in Luke were off at times. I also had a difficult time following his train of thought through the Lord's table as he seems to combine the Table with the Love Feast (although they were generally done at the same time, they each had a different focus). **Personal App:** Because we like food and love people, my wife

and I have sought to bring them together. Chester gave me new ideas and a deeper conviction to do so in a more purposeful and regular fashion. Update: we have put several of his ideas into practice and have benefited greatly from them. You might also want to look into "Art of Neighboring".

Love this book...It is such a simple concept and I love the simplicity of the Gospel.

I enjoyed this book. It's not that it was earth shattering, but it was a good reminder and call back to hospitality as one of the church community's most important activities. Since the Son of Man came eating and drinking, it seems only natural that his people should follow suit. This is a call back to a simple, but vitally important practice.

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