

From the Family Room

Creekwood Church of Christ
Mobile, AL

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Family Meals and Grades

Always remember these commands I give you today. Teach them to your children, and talk about them when you sit at home and walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deuteronomy 6:6-7



All across the country yesterday, thousands of high school students took the ACT college entrance test. A lot is riding on the scores achieved on these tests. The benefits include scholarship money and entrance to certain elite colleges. As a result much money was spent (invested) by parents to prepare their children for the ACT. However, research indicates that one of the best tools to prepare our children occurs in our houses each day – time spent eating a meal together and talking daily. Below is an excerpt from an article written by Tim Elmore and posted on December 6, 2017 on *Growing Leaders*.

Cornell University just released the results of a couple of studies that illustrate the power of intimate relationships. One study tied the cultivation of a garden to the cultivation of relationships, bonding and engagement. Another study tied together the relationship of higher SAT scores with consistently eating meals as a family. Students who enjoyed talking over a meal with family members also enjoyed rising scores on standardized tests. Wow.

Numerous positive outcomes result from bonding over a meal. For the last twenty years, my dad has told me, "The problem with our nation comes from the fact that people don't sit down as a family to have meals together any more." This simple statement may be more profound than we realize. My father was born in 1930, at the beginning of the Great Depression. For the first decade of his life, times were tough economically. Then, in 1941, America got involved in World War II. Now times were tough emotionally as well. They were dark and scary times.

How did we get through such times? Well, while there may not have been lots of food, people sat down and talked during their meal. Together, they processed what was happening in these tough times. Their discussion offered a sense of peace, satisfaction, security, clarity and belonging. Dr. Len Sweet has said, "Family is formed and forged, friendships are made and matured, around tables. All tables are good, but home tables are best."

When my two children were growing up, I chose to make mealtime sacred. We tried to have five of our seven dinners together, in any given week. Unless I was out of town, we slowed down our frantic pace to eat and talk. I tried to make sure we:

- *Relaxed. I tried to ensure it was a time to let our hair down and be real.*
- *Revealed. I worked to create a safe place to be transparent about our day.*
- *Reflected. I inserted times to interpret what had happened and to learn.*
- *Reveled. I tried to make sure we laughed and enjoyed our time together.*

We talked about stuff that mattered and about stuff that didn't matter, just for fun. It was a time of both laughter and learning. Don't outsource your table time. Create ways to converse where it feels safe for everyone to reveal thoughts or feelings. During your meal times at your table, I recommend you add these ingredients:

1. *Start with humor. Reflect and offer one funny experience from the day.*
2. *Then, open the conversation for others to unveil highlights from their day.*
3. *Next, come armed with a "current event" that would interest everyone.*
4. *Afterward, pose a relevant question surrounding that current event.*
5. *Finally, offer a principle (or ask what principle) can be learned from it.*

Never underestimate the influence of a conversation at a table, over a meal.

God certainly did not underestimate the influence of talking together as a family. The Israelites were instructed by Moses to talk about God's commandments in the family wherever they were. Let's remember His instructions and take time daily to talk together as a family. We can increase our children's scholarships and spirituality.

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