

Feast and Listen Together

2

EXODUS 16:1-18



GOAL

Youth understand the significance of food and fellowship in the Bible and practice acknowledging and celebrating the ways God provides for us with resources and community.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God, grant me wisdom so that I may inspire love and change in your children. Thank you.

THIS SESSION

Mealtimes are great opportunities to remember our connections to one another and practice gratitude for the nurturing food and fellowship that God provides. Paying attention to our food and the process of growing, harvesting, transporting, and preparing it reminds us that we are part of a global community. Fellowship helps us practice being attentive and present with those around us.

While meals do not require a set liturgy or Scripture reading, feasting together and enjoying this time of fellowship are forms of communal Christian worship that honor our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

THE BIBLE STORY

There are many stories in the Bible about communities gathering around food, including bread. The story in Exodus 16, however, is one of the first and provides a foundation for later stories about breaking bread, sharing meals, and celebrating God's providence together. Stories about Jesus providing food for the crowds who came to listen to his message were huge communal meals as well. These stories remind us that God abundantly provides food and strengthens the fellowship of our communities.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Food and fellowship are two things youth already know how to do well. Youth, however, may not be intentional about their practices around food or their socialization habits. Centering this lesson on the practical and physical aspects of food and fellowship will resonate with youth as they become more aware of these daily aspects of their lives.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Look and Wonder” (p. 17): Gather the newsprint from session 1 with lyrics to “O Look and Wonder”

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Eat Mindfully” (p. 14): Obtain a healthy bite-sized snack that is safe for all youth to eat, such as fruit.
- “Commune Together” (p. 16): Invite an elder, a pastor, or someone else permitted to oversee communion in your tradition to talk about your congregation's practice of communion. Prepare to celebrate communion if permitted.
- “Serve a Feast” (p. 17): Coordinate with the people in charge of setting up, serving, and cleaning up for your congregation's communal meal. Create a sign-up sheet for youth who choose to volunteer.

GETTING STARTED

FAVORITE FOODS C

Welcome participants as they arrive and give them a piece of paper and pen. Ask them to make one list of the healthiest foods they enjoy eating and another list of the unhealthiest foods they enjoy.

Once all youth have gathered, invite one person to share their favorite item from each list. Have that person invite someone else from the group to share once they are finished. Some may question whether a food is healthy or not. Have a brief discussion and keep the reporting going.

When all have reported, ask what their favorite food to eat is when they eat together with friends. After a few have answered, ask the group how eating together is different from eating alone. Tell them that today's topic is about how eating together helps us to live in community.

PRAYER

Read the following prayer aloud and invite youth to respond, "Thanks be to you," after each line.

O gracious God, who never fails to provide for us. ("Thanks be to you.")

Your abundant creation gives us shelter, food, and friendship.

("Thanks be to you.")

Remind us to listen to the needs and joys of your creation, ("Thanks be to you.")

and encourage us to act in ways that share your abundance with all.

("Thanks be to you.")

Amen.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Internet-connected device
- Large screen

BREAD AROUND THE WORLD T C

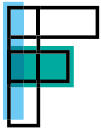
As a group, watch the video "29 Types of Bread Around the World" (bit.ly/FMBreadAroundWorld, 8:54). As youth watch, prompt them to notice how the different types of breads are connected to different cultures.

Ask youth to list some of the connections that they noticed between kinds of bread and different cultures. Invite them to share which kinds of bread and grains they associate with their own culture, family, and community.

- Bite-sized snack
- Resource Page 1

EAT MINDFULLY QC X

After sanitizing hands, provide youth with a bite-sized snack, ideally fruit. Tell youth this is a practice of mindfulness and appreciation of the food God provides. You will respect a time of silence during this activity. Read the meditation on Resource Page 1. After the meditation, ask youth to discuss what the experience was like for them.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.

THREE QUESTIONS

C AT

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- Two sheets of newsprint
 - Markers

Post two sheets of newsprint on the wall. Have one or two volunteers read aloud Exodus 16:1–18. Invite participants to call out one word that struck them from this Scripture passage. As youth list the words, have a volunteer write the words on one of the sheets of newsprint.

Have the volunteers re-read the passage. This time, ask youth which character they most related to in the story and why.

Have volunteers read the passage one final time. Ask youth what questions they have about the story or what parts of the story they remain curious about. Have a volunteer write these questions on the other sheet of newsprint.

After gathering these questions, ask youth to share how they might respond.

TALKING IT OUT

C CT

Read Exodus 16:1–18 together. After reading, discuss a few of the following questions:

- ➔ What do you complain to God about? How does God respond?
- ➔ How would life become easier if everyone had food?
- ➔ What does this text teach us about how communities work?
- ➔ What are things that some in our communities lack that make it difficult to function?
- ➔ Where did you see someone listening in the story? What happened when someone listened?

JESUS AND FOOD

AM C D

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- Bibles

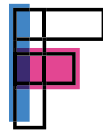


During Jesus' ministry, he explained that the kingdom of God was like a large banquet where everyone had a place at the table and plenty to eat. As you discuss today's passages, encourage youth to imagine what this might look like.

Form four groups. Instruct each group to read one of the following Scripture passages and prepare to share the story in their own words with the rest of the group: Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 8:1–9; Luke 9:12–17; John 6:1–14. After about five minutes, invite each group to tell their story. Challenge them to include anything in their story that was not shared by a previous group.

After all the groups have spoken, discuss the following questions:

- ➔ Why do you think the Gospel writers included these stories in the books they wrote?
- ➔ Why do you think feeding people was so important to Jesus' ministry?
- ➔ How do you think the people involved in these stories were changed by what they witnessed?



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

- Internet-connected device



Passover commemorates the biblical story of the exodus, when God saved the enslaved Hebrews, and they escaped. They prepared unleavened bread before the Passover, so that they would be ready to leave in a hurry and not have to wait for bread to rise.

- Bibles

PASSOVER



Tell youth that an important biblical story related to communities and food is that of the Passover. Ask if anyone knows what Passover is and if anyone has been to a seder meal where Jewish people remember the passover every year. Share the information in the sidebar about the Passover story.

Show the YouTube video “The Passover Seder: What to Expect” (bit.ly/FMPassoverSeder, 3:57). Ask youth how sharing this meal together strengthens the Jewish community.

THE LAST SUPPER



Tell the group that an important biblical story related to sharing meals is the story of the Last Supper where Jesus shared a meal with his community. Read Luke 22:7–27 by going around the room and taking turns reading one verse each.

Invite participants to pretend they were present at that meal and tell what they were feeling. Acknowledge there were some very awkward moments.

Reflect together as a group on how your worshiping community celebrates communion and how it strengthens individuals and community.

- Communion elements
- Guest who can preside at communion

COMMUNE TOGETHER



Introduce the guest who should talk to the group about your congregation’s practice of communion. Have them talk about the importance of celebrating this meal in community and how they understand the importance of it. Invite youth to ask questions. If permitted, have the person administer communion to the group.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

- Glass jar for each participant
- Craft sticks (at least ten per youth)
- Markers
- Copies of Resource Page 2

START A CONVERSATION



Invite youth to close their eyes and think about a group of people with whom they often share meals. Have them think about the conversations these groups have together.

Provide each participant a glass jar, marker, and a copy of Resource Page 2. Have a plentiful amount of craft sticks available so that each participant can use at least ten sticks.

Challenge youth to brainstorm several questions they would like to ask at these gatherings and to write them on their craft sticks. If they need help, invite them to use the prompts on Resource Page 2. Have youth collect their craft sticks in their glass jar to prompt conversations at mealtimes.

EAT TOGETHER COMMERCIAL



Internet-connected device

Show the YouTube video “#EatTogether commercial” (bit.ly/FMEatTogether, 2:30). Encourage participants to notice images and messages that resonate with them that show the practice of living in community. Following the video, share impressions noted by youth. Discuss:

- ➔ How do you think this apartment community was strengthened by the neighbors sharing food together?
- ➔ What do you imagine happened among those neighbors following this shared meal?
- ➔ What examples have you seen like this, if any?
- ➔ How can you support community where you live?

SERVE A FEAST



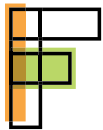
If your church has a communal meal of any sort, arrange with the leadership for youth to help set up, serve, and clean up, as appropriate. As a group, discuss the following questions after the event:

- ➔ How does it feel to volunteer and serve others?
- ➔ Why is it important for people to share meals together?
- ➔ How does eating and listening to each other strengthen our faith?

LISTEN AND PRAY



Gather in a circle and invite the youth to spend a minute thinking of a concern for themselves or others they would like to mention in a prayer together. Explain that, when it is their turn to mention something, they should first summarize the particular concern of the person who spoke before them and then tell their own concern. Start and end the prayer yourself.



FOLLOWING JESUS

LOOK AND WONDER



Newsprint with lyrics to “O Look and Wonder”

Sing or listen to “O Look and Wonder.” To hear the tune, go to bit.ly/FMOLookTune (0:21). To sing along in Spanish (words not provided), show the YouTube video “*Miren que Bueno* (O Look and Wonder)” (bit.ly/FMOLook, 1:52).

Mindful Eating

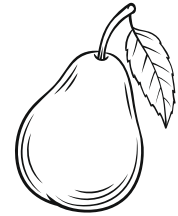
Center yourself in whatever way makes you most comfortable. Maybe your feet are flat on the floor; maybe you are sitting cross-legged. Maybe your back is straight and reaching up tall; maybe you are slouched. Notice your posture as we take a few deep breaths together.



Breathe in through your nose as if you are smelling flowers and out through your mouth as if blowing out candles. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out.



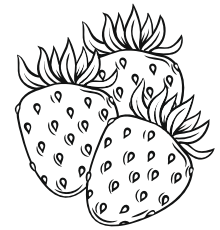
Fix your gaze on the piece of food in front of you. Where do you think the food came from? Imagine the process of growing it, making it. Imagine the process of transporting the final product to you. Imagine everything that had to happen for this small piece of food to sit in front of you. Offer thanks to God.



Notice what color the food is. Notice its shape. Touch it and notice its texture. Pick it up and consider its weight. Turn it around in your hand. How does it look different from different angles?

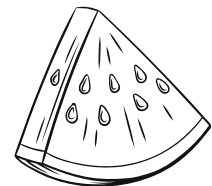
Smell the food. What do you notice? Does it remind you of anything?

Cup the food in your hand and shake it by your ear. What do you hear? Scratch the food with your fingernail and listen to the sound.



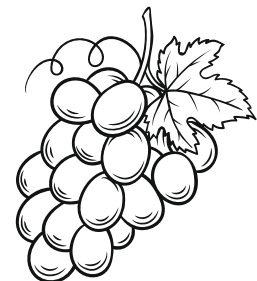
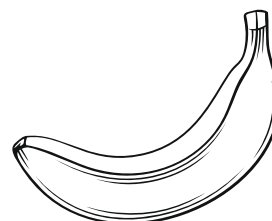
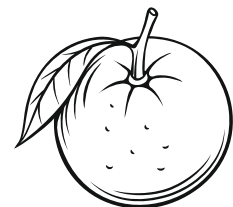
Put the food in your mouth but keep it on your tongue. Notice the taste. What does it remind you of? Move the food around the inside of your mouth and pay attention to the way it tastes and feels in different parts of your mouth.

Bite into it. Notice what happens when you take a bite.



Continue to chew slowly, focusing on the taste and texture. What do you notice as you chew?

When you are ready, swallow the food. Give thanks to God for the ways it will nourish your body.



Start a Conversation

Options to write on craft sticks:

- ➔ If you were a piece of food present at this meal, which food would you be and why?
- ➔ If you could make up a school subject, what would it be and why?
- ➔ If someone gave you \$100 and told you that you had to spend it before the end of the day, what would you buy?
- ➔ How do you cheer up your friends and loved ones when they are sad?
- ➔ What made you laugh recently?
- ➔ What is something you would like to do as a family?
- ➔ What do you think makes you a good friend?
- ➔ What do you like and appreciate about your friends?
- ➔ If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?
- ➔ What do you think defines a good life?
- ➔ What does success mean to you?
- ➔ What scares you most about the future? What excites you?
- ➔ What three things do you want to be remembered for?
- ➔ If you could share a meal with anyone—living or not—who would it be and what would you eat?
- ➔ Who are you thankful for and why?
- ➔ What makes you feel loved and appreciated?
- ➔ What do you appreciate about the people gathered at this meal?

