

# Lent and Easter

## five meals

### AIM

This material offers a plan for five meals to share during Lent. You might want to use these meals as a time of preparation on the run up to the 24/7 prayer initiative in Holy Week that features on the website <http://www.vision4life.org.uk/index.php/prayer-year-a-sneak-preview/seasons-lent-easter/247-holy-week-prayer-event/>

### INTRODUCTION

Human beings must eat and drink to live. Although fasting in Lent has been a Christian tradition since at least the second century it has never been just about not eating. Fasting is always balanced with times of feasting, and so not eating should be balanced with eating. Alongside considerations of what to eat and drink there would be prayer, scripture reading and worship. So for this Lent, here are some ideas for five meals, during which we can think about what we eat and drink as we consider the bible and prayer together. These ideas are flexible, meant for people of all ages and abilities to do together and can be for a group of any size. They may be people from the same household or from across a community. You may want to have one of these meals each week for five weeks or you may want to choose just one or two meals to have together. Another way to do this would be for five people to have a meal together in five different places. For each meal we have provided:

- a story of ordinary life and food;
- some points about planning a meal
- some Bible input and discussion questions;
- a prayer.

You may use these in any order or change or add to them from your own store of resources. So now use your imagination and think about how you can eat, drink, pray and study the bible together over some meals this Lent.

### MEAL 1: A NEW FLAVOUR

#### Let me tell you...

Hannah, aged 16, has been teaching Janet, aged 50, some German so they can take part in the Yorkshire Synod Women's Exchange to the churches of the Palatinate and Anhalt together. Janet has not learnt much, but she has learnt that 'Fruhstuck' is breakfast and she can say 'Haben sie blumenkohl', which means 'Do you have any cauliflower'. Not many people have cauliflower for breakfast but Janet likes the sound of the word.

#### Planning the meal

Think about some words for food that you like either because you like the food or the sound of the word. Maybe the words are in the language you speak everyday or another language you are learning or from a culture the food or which you like. Put some of the words on small piece of card and place them near the foods you will serve for your first meal. Encourage other people at the meal to share words about food they like or have learned recently, new tastes and flavours they have discovered.

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### Bible

Read, retell or recall what Jesus said about food and drink at Luke 12:22-31

Have a discussion over your meal about this:

- Why do we worry about food, drink and clothes?
- What does it mean to be 'concerned for the Kingdom'?
- What will we do about it?

### Prayer

God of surprises,

surprise us again as we share food and stories

so that these words and tastes may communicate

new things to us about our involvement in your kingdom.

May the insights we gain in this company

help us to get our priorities right.

### MEAL 2: THE GIFT OF FOOD

#### Let me tell you....

We lived in Sheffield, Yorkshire for ten years, next door to a Muslim family. We received many gifts of food from them that we enjoyed. Early on during the time we knew them, one summer evening, Hannah, then about 6 years old, came rushing in from the garden to a meeting Janet was holding in the dining room, shouting excitedly 'Mummy, Mummy, the neighbours are passing tomatoes over the fence'. This was because their fridge had broken down and they wanted us to keep the tomatoes and other food stuffs in our fridge until it was mended. But that was not all: every Ramadan they would bring round the food they used to break their daily Ramadan fast for us to share with them. We were never better fed.

#### Planning the meal

Think about some food gifts you have received or times when you have been invited to eat something unexpected or that you have not tasted before. You might like to invite the participants to bring one thing with them and see what the collection of items is like.

### Bible

Read, retell or recall Jesus inviting himself to eat at Zacchaeus' house at Luke 19:1-10.

Discuss these questions with your meal:

- What kind of atmosphere do you think Jesus found at Zacchaeus' house when he got there?

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- How did Zaccheaus' pledge to change his ways and Jesus acceptance of him make a difference to the meal they eventually shared?
- What do the invitations we offer to others demonstrate about our faith in Jesus?

### Prayer

Inviting God,

as you offer to meet us in familiar and unfamiliar places,  
may our coming together be opportunity to make a new start  
and to forge real relationships of honesty and trust.

Give us the courage to change our everyday habits and attitudes  
for the ones that count with you.

### MEAL 3: MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

#### Let me tell you

When he was single, Bob lived in Manchester, and his neighbours were an elderly Polish couple. Some years ago, after she was widowed, Mrs Salmanolowicz went back to Poland. After Bob and Janet were married they decided to go and visit her and took a train to the Polish city of Lodz where she then lived. She was very excited to see them both, and although communication was limited (a combination of English and Bob's O'level Russian) she had made a lot of food to make them welcome. The whole day consisted of different courses one after another: soups and savouries, snacks and pastries of all sorts. She was determined to make their brief stay at her house something to remember.

#### Planning the meal

What sort of meal would you make for people you had not seen for some time? How would you encourage people to feel at home in your house. Use these ideas to plan this week's meal.

### Bible

Read, retell or recall Jesus talking about being at home with people and his experiences in the home of Martha and Mary at Luke 10:7-9 and 38-42.

Then discuss these things over your meal:

- In what way does sharing food with others demonstrate that 'the Kingdom of God has come near you?'
- Although Martha and Mary are often remembered for disagreeing about how to respond to Jesus, Jesus clearly felt at home with them. What contributed to this sense?
- How can our welcome and sharing show the kingdom of God has come near?

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### Prayer

Jesus the visitor,

as you visited Bethany, so you come to our homes.

May the welcome we offer be a sign of your kingdom.

May we extend it beyond our homes to the other places where we worship you and share the faith.

### MEAL 4: JUST LIKE SCHOOL DINNERS

#### Let me tell you

Janet's friends Iftikhar and Shadida came to visit with their four young children. As they are Muslims we thought carefully about what to serve. We decided to offer jacket potatoes, baked beans and grated cheese followed by jelly and ice cream. Janet brought the food in on our old trolley. When they saw it the children all said 'Look, it's just like school dinners!'

#### Planning the meal

What reminds you of meals from the past, perhaps at school or on church or family occasions? Are these good memories or difficult ones? Use these thoughts help you to plan a meal today.

#### Bible

Read, retell or recall some of the times when Jesus told his followers to feed people in Luke 8:40-56 (note particularly verse 55) and Luke 9: 12-17 (note verse 13).

The discuss these questions over the meal:

- Why did Jesus tell his followers to feed people?'
- What does it mean today to be a follower of Jesus and feed people?

### Prayer

Jesus the feeder,

you know the importance of food to people.

Encourage us in our efforts to feed each other,

to create a world of justice where everyone has enough to eat,

to put food at the heart of discipleship and be ready to follow you.

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### MEAL 5: GETTING READY

#### Let me tell you

On the last day of our morning in South Africa, in order to welcome back the Sparks' family with whom we had been doing an exchange, we got a meal ready for us all to share. It would be our only meal together as they got back from the UK and as we left to fly home. It was the point where our two ministries touched. We wanted to include some British food, so we had steak and kidney pie, and also some local food, so we had jelly made with fruit from the garden and it took quite a long time. Eventually they arrived and we all sat down and ate it together, all ages and races around one table.

#### Planning the meal

As we approach Easter maybe you have a special meal in mind. What influenced the preparation of these meals? How does the story of the preparation of the last meal Jesus planned to eat with his disciples influence your meal?

#### Bible

Read, retell or recall what Jesus said about getting the Passover Meal ready that would be the last supper at Luke 22:7-13.

Then discuss these questions over the meal:

- Why was this meal so important to Jesus before it happened?
- This was a Passover meal. Why was that important to Jesus and his disciples?
- In what way does it influence our meal now?
- What has sharing meal together contributed to Lent for us this year? Share some of your thoughts and experiences?

#### Prayer

Timely God,

we are prepared for sharing and service.

Just as our meals together have been a sign of your kingdom

may we go on to create other imaginative signs of your presence and love

as we journey on.

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### EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

### THE NEXT STEP

If you want more Lent or Easter items please revisit the website. More seasonal items are added during the year. If you want guidance about the methods of using the bible input, then please refer to John's Campbell's Markan Encounters, under the Bible Year menu on the website, where he explains ways of reading, retelling or remembering that you might want to use.

### Acknowledgements

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### HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group about general or website V4L issues via the website or at [admin@vision4life.org.uk](mailto:admin@vision4life.org.uk)

If you have comments and particularly contributions to the prayer year, you can email the V4L prayer year coordinator via [prayer@vision4life.org.uk](mailto:prayer@vision4life.org.uk)

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 1 – Transformed by the Bible: [bible@vision4life.org.uk](mailto:bible@vision4life.org.uk)

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