

Dwelling with God: The Architecture of Intimacy

Study: Come to the Table (Exodus 25:23–30)

"Put the bread of the Presence on this table to be before me at all times." —Exodus 25:30

Getting Started

1. Think about your own home. What is the most significant piece of furniture to you, and what kind of relational memories are tied to it?
2. Andy Stanley once observed, *"A guest makes it into your foyer, a friend into your living room, but family lives in the kitchen."* In our fast-paced culture of drive-thrus and rushed schedules, what makes regular table fellowship so rare—and so vital?

Context & Setting

As Israel journeyed through the wilderness, God gave Moses precise architectural instructions for the Tabernacle—the sacred tent where He would dwell among His people. Immediately after commanding the construction of the Ark of the Covenant, God directed Moses to build a small table made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold: the Table of Showbread.

Upon this table sat twelve substantial loaves of bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Called the "Bread of the Presence" (literally, *Bread of the Face*), these loaves were set out continuously just outside the Holy of Holies. While pagan deities were thought to require food from humans for nourishment, Israel's Table declared the opposite: God is the gracious Host who sustains, sees, and welcomes His people into intimate covenant fellowship.

Investigating the Text: Exodus 25:23–30

23 "Make a table of acacia wood—two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. **24** Overlay it with pure gold and make a gold molding around it. **25** Also make around it a rim a handbreadth wide and put a gold molding on the rim. **26** Make four gold rings for the table and fasten them to the four corners, where the four legs are. **27** The rings are to be close to the rim to hold the poles used in carrying the table. **28** Make the poles of acacia wood, overlay them with gold and carry the table with them. **29** And make its plates and dishes of pure gold, as well as its pitchers and bowls for the pouring out of offerings. **30** Put the bread of the Presence on this table to be before me at all times."

1. **Observation:** What specific materials and design elements were required for the table, its carrying poles, and its accompanying vessels (vv. 23–29)? What does this level of craftsmanship convey about its purpose?

2. **Interpretation:** Verse 30 commands that the bread remain before the Lord "at all times." Leviticus 24 notes that these twelve loaves were replaced every Sabbath, likely loaf-by-loaf so the table was never bare. What did this constant display communicate to Israel about God's watchfulness over each of the twelve tribes?
3. **Contrast:** Ancient Near Eastern neighbors set food out to appease hungry idols. Theologian Philip Ryken notes, *"The bread was in God's presence, but not for God's benefit, rather for the Israelites' benefit."* How did this table redefine the relationship between God and His people compared to surrounding pagan religions?
4. **Connection:** In Exodus 24:9–11, the elders of Israel went up Mount Sinai, saw God, and "ate and drank" in His presence without fear of destruction. How does the Table of the Presence serve as an enduring symbol of that covenant meal?

Exploring the Core Themes

1. The Meal Table: Sustenance & Gratitude

- **Read Mark 6:41–43 and Matthew 6:11.** Jesus consistently paused to give thanks before eating, directing people's hearts to the true Provider.
- *Discussion:* When was a time God provided for your family or personal needs in an exact, unmistakable way (much like the manna in Exodus 16)? How does regular thanksgiving at everyday meals protect us from spiritual amnesia?

2. The Devotional Table: Seeking His Face

- **Read Matthew 4:4.** Jesus answered the tempter: *"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God."*
- *Discussion:* The Hebrew phrase for "bread of the Presence" literally means *bread of the Face*. What is the difference between treating daily Bible reading as a checklist obligation versus approaching the scriptures as a seat at the "devotional table" before God's face?

3. The Lord's Table: Covenant Fellowship

- **Read John 6:35 and 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.** Jesus declares that He Himself is the Bread of Life, providing His body and blood for our redemption.
- *Discussion:* Musician Michael Card shared that he finally understood Holy Communion when his pastor bluntly named deep sins, and then announced: *"If you are guilty... then this table is for you."* Why does an acute awareness of our unworthiness turn the Lord's Supper from a somber ritual into an experience of relief, joy, and grace?

Applying the Word

1. **Examine Your Appetite:** Are you currently living on the "spiritual fast food" of hurried, distracted routines, or are you lingering at the Lord's table? Which area of your life feels most malnourished right now: thanksgiving, daily time in the Word, or rest in Christ's forgiveness?
2. **Practical Step:** What is one concrete adjustment you can make this week to intentionally "come to the table"?
 - *The Meal Table:* Introducing intentional prayer and unhurried meals with family, roommates, or friends.
 - *The Devotional Table:* Setting aside a distraction-free window each morning to feast on Scripture.
 - *The Lord's Table:* Approaching your next corporate Communion not with self-condemnation, but with grateful faith in Jesus' complete pardon.

Prayer Focus

- **Praise:** Thank God for being our Provider who sees every need and never leaves His table empty.
- **Confession:** Acknowledge the busyness and self-reliance that lead us to settle for fast-food spirituality rather than resting in His presence.
- **Petition:** Ask the Holy Spirit to renew your appetite for daily Scripture and to give you deep, reverent joy whenever you gather to break bread with His people.

Which of the three tables—the everyday meal table of gratitude, the devotional table of Scripture, or the Lord's Table of communion—do you feel most drawn to cultivate this week?