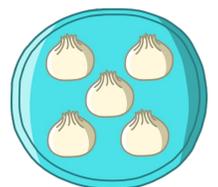




HAVE YOU *Eaten Yet?*

SMALL GROUP SERIES | MARK 2

FOR ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS



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 InterVarsity
ASIAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES

HAVE YOU EATEN YET? | MARK 2

Read the story individually or aloud. Then discuss the warm-up question.

An interview with Kathy Moua, a Hmong American, child of refugees, born and raised in the upper Midwest, sharing stories about foods she grew up with and the significance of them to who she is.

What foods are associated with childhood memories? What foods are tied to your heritage?

Mov kua di, mov ntse dej, nqaij npuas nrog zaub, and nqaij qaib hau, these are staples for our Hmong community because we didn't have much. It was part of our survival, but it's also the simplicity of who we are. We knew what it was like to have enough and to know that even the simplest things are abundant and good. We never went hungry. Even if it was just mov ntse dej, it's more than rice and water for us. It carries our parents' journey and we receive it through eating and remembering their story.

What does having or sharing a meal mean to you?

When sharing a meal with someone or providing a meal for someone, it's a simple act that fulfills the basic need to eat. When someone cooks or provides for you, it's an act of love. Whether they are cooking a food of their people or your peoples, it's just a very vulnerable thing to share. It's like saying, "I trust you, do you trust me?" It is an act of invitation, and it heals because it provides a connection. It's creating a bond and creating trust through a vulnerable moment.

What would it be like to invite Jesus into your home and share a meal with him?

To invite Jesus into my home and share mov nste dej with him would be really sacred for me. I'm sharing a piece of not just me but the people that I represent, the people that I inherited all of these things from and who have formed who I am. I also wonder if Jesus would be honored that I wouldn't be ashamed of sharing mov nste dej with him. It would almost be like he would receive, rejoice, and celebrate with me.

Now if Jesus invited me into his home, I feel like because Jesus knows and honors us, he would make the food of our people. He's hospitable, loving, thoughtful, and kind. The way he would welcome us is with food that reminds us of home and of who we are.

Warm-up Question

What foods are associated with childhood memories? What foods are tied to your heritage? If Jesus came over, what food would you share with him?

Context: Grasping the Gospel of Mark

Tax Collectors

Tax collectors were not only deemed outsiders but also the worst of sinners. They were contracted by the Roman government to collect taxes from their own people and were known to over-collect and keep the extra for themselves. The Israelites saw them as traitors and regarded them as ceremoniously unclean because of their close contact with Gentiles or non-Jews.

Levi/Matthew's story

Levi the tax collector is also known as Matthew. In this passage he becomes one of Jesus' disciples and later writes the Gospel according to Matthew. This Gospel was written and contextualized primarily for Jewish Christians to demonstrate how Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Pharisees and Jesus

The Pharisees are portrayed as the antagonists to Jesus in the gospel accounts. They were a small influential group of men who were committed to observing traditions and religious practices. Though not scholars themselves, they were zealous about the law and relied heavily on early rabbinic interpretations of the law. Jesus didn't reject their doctrinal beliefs per se, rather the main conflict was that the traditions the Pharisees enforced missed the mark and weren't God's commands. In their zeal for preserving tradition, they lost sight of what actually honored God. Read more in Mark 7:1-13.

Sickness, Doctors, and the Messiah

It was widely understood that physical and spiritual health were closely connected. While this was not a rule, sickness was closely associated with sin, and physical healings were associated with having faith. There was a rich understanding between the body and one's relationship with God.

Little is mentioned about doctors and physicians, but they did exist and treated the sick. In this passage Jesus uses the imagery of a doctor treating the sick to refer to the prophecy and promise that the Messiah would come to heal physically and restore people's relationship with God.

Mark 2:13-17 (CEB)

¹³ Jesus went out beside the lake again. The whole crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. ¹⁴ As he continued along, he saw Levi, Alphaeus' son, sitting at a kiosk for collecting taxes. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Levi got up and followed him.

¹⁵ Jesus sat down to eat at Levi's house. Many tax collectors and sinners were eating with Jesus and his disciples. Indeed, many of them had become his followers. ¹⁶ When some of the legal experts from among the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples, "Why is he eating with sinners and tax collectors?"

¹⁷ When Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. I didn't come to call righteous people, but sinners."

Discussing the Story in Mark:

1. What do you notice about the passage? What are your first impressions?
2. Make a list of social norms and the taboos in this passage. Compare and contrast the different lists.
 - a. What can you assume about how the Pharisees might view Levi, tax collectors, and the sinners?
 - b. How do the social norms dictate their interactions with each other?
3. What would it have meant for a Pharisee to be a guest of a tax collector or sinner? Why did the Pharisees criticize Jesus?
4. What was Levi's social identity to the community?
 - a. What could Levi have believed about himself? What might others have thought of him?
 - b. How did the Pharisees use their influence to reinforce these perceptions in the community?
 - c. What do you think eating with Jesus means to Levi and the ?
5. Jesus overhears what the Pharisees say to the disciples and responds to the Pharisees, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. I didn't come to call righteous people, but sinners."
 - a. Who did the Pharisee's think Jesus should be eating with?
 - b. What is Jesus calling them out for? Why does Jesus do this?
6. Why does Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners? How does Jesus invite the Pharisees to think differently about the people in their community?

Experiencing God's Hospitality

Jesus receiving the hospitality of a tax collector was more than just having a simple meal, it was shocking to the Pharisees and those who had social influence. In this passage hospitality honors people, restores dignity, heals relationships, and influences change. Hospitality can be a simple meal that invites us to imagine fellowship beyond social norms.

Gleaning and Growing from Stories

1. What are the social norms or cultural taboos on your campus or community? How is Jesus inviting you to think differently about your community?
2. What would it be like to invite Jesus into your home and share a food that is special to you? What would that experience be like for you?
3. As an Asian American, how do you fit or belong to Asian America? How does God value you and your story? How do you understand your belonging to God's kingdom?

Activity Response (Consider one of the following):

- Share a meal with someone you want to get to know more.
- Cook for another and share the significance of the dish.
- Share a meal that is more familiar with the other person's heritage.
- Let a group share their cultural foods with you.

Check out questions:

What is something you are taking from today? Or what is something you want to keep digesting or chewing on this week?