

Global Dinner

“Imagine yourself in this scenarios. You receive an invitation to an international dinner, complete with specific instructions on where to go and when. It also indicates that upon arrival you’re to join the American group. Assume it to be nothing more than a sampling of ethnic foods, you happily show up, ready for some lamb kebabs, mo-goo-gai pan, and perhaps a bit of flan for dessert.

Arriving precisely on time, you enter a large cafeteria with a dozen tables scattered about, each labeled with an ethnic group or geographic region: Korean, Latin American, African, European. Finally, you spot the American table and sit down. Another scan around the room reveals that you know everyone here; they’re all from your church.

When dinner is served, you realize that your assumption of a multicultural smorgasbord is a way off the mark. A team of servers burst through the doors, making a beeline for every table but yours. Only they don’t carry steaming plates of ethnic food. One server roughly tosses a steel tray of lukewarm ham and green beans on the African table. The table labeled East Asia gets only white rice. Latin America received a plate full of candy. Before you have time to absorb all this, another team of servers-six of them-emerges, each carrying a sizzling plate of filet mignon, a plump baked potato, and perfectly steamed green beans. All six come to your table, and instead of just tossing the food in front of you they greet you with warm smiles and elegant hospitality. A napkin is neatly folded and placed on your lap, a tall glass of water filled, a list of fine drinks offered, and the servers-one assigned to each person at your table-stand ready to meet your every need.

Not knowing what to think, you dig in. The steak is perfectly cooked, juicy and pink, with the richest flavor you’ve ever experienced. *This is amazing* you think. Your eyes meet those of the other Americans and you all begin to chuckle. Someone asks, “Why do we get all this?” Another responds through a mouthful of beef, “I don’t know, but I’m glad I’m not over there!”

Within ten minutes you’ve devoured your steak, shared a few jokes about the others’ meals, and sent your server for a warm roll, a damp towel, ice cold Coke in a frosted glass, and a fork to replace the one you intentionally dropped on the floor, just to see what he would do. You’re living it up, thoroughly enjoying this unprecedented blessing. So are the other Americans. Your table is by far the loudest in the room and others are clearly jealous. You respond to their looks of disdain with sarcastic remarks like, “How are those beans, bro?” and “How about some rice with your rice?”

Then something unexpected happens. A woman from the East Asian table stands up and carries her plate of rice over to the Middle East, who have one apple between the eight of them. This triggers others to do the same, and soon the cafeteria is being crisscrossed with offerings of shared food. Feeling a bit ashamed, you and the other Americans join in, only with very little to offer. You’ve consumed it with alarming speed.

Not long after this outpouring of worldwide harmony has begun, as you sheepishly wander toward the Indian table with half of your remaining potato peel, your eyes drift to a door left slightly ajar. You make out something beyond it. Moving closer people sitting silently. No food graces their tables, and they only gaze at you in sad silence.

Filled with sudden compassion, you turn back to the cafeteria and yell, “Hey! Everyone! There are more people over here, and they need food too!” All movement stops as everyone’s attention turns to you. After split second, a wave of recognition seems to sweep across the room, as though everyone were together grasping both the symbolism of the evening and the urgency to get food to the hungry.

Chaos ensues. Groups of people hurriedly grab plates and pans and rush into the side room, doling out handfuls of lukewarm meat and vegetables. As the crowd floods this small room, someone recognizes that there are still others hidden in another adjacent room nearby. Another frantic party moves quickly toward them with whatever food scraps are left, and soon after this the entire crowd is started and silenced by a loud, screeching noise. It is a trumpet blast, and before the blaring has stopped the full recognition of what has just happened hits you.

I get it. This isn't about food. The trumpet blast is Christ's return, the food is the gospel, we are the Christians of the world; and I, an American indulged while others starved. I do this spiritually. I indulge as others perish. I'm blessed abundantly, and I hoard it. I'm indifferent to, or ignore, the people in the world who don't know Christ, nor have the ability to know Him. Why don't I give nearly as much effort to take Him to them as I did in getting these cold green beans to my friends?

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Purpose: A learning exercise to show the spiritual needs around the world. Some people have access to the Gospel more readily than others.

Logistics

Make invitations to an international dinner but do not explain what the real event is. Give each guest a passport of (or put it on the invitation) what country they will be at. Each table will represent a different country and food will represent the gospel (Do not tell them that last detail).

The Tables:

Europe: Serve them a cold plate of a full meal to represent Europe has access to the gospel with its cold and stale. Europeans are often distracted by a variety of things, so you could have lots of activities to do at the table like – painting, philosophy books etc.

Africa: Serve baby food and milk in baby bottles. They have some minor form of protein but are pretty immature, spiritually speaking. It might be good to have them sit on the ground and occasionally “kill” one or two people (to represent the reality of AIDS, famine, war, etc). Once they are “killed” they can no longer participate but have to sit there.

Middle East: Serve 3-4 boxes of plain popcorn. One of the boxes has some cold ham pieces in it. While there’s some truth in the M.E., it’s minimal.

Asia: Cram many people at this table. Serve one large bowl of rice and a pitcher of water, with no utensils. This represents the general lack of knowledge of the Gospel.

Korea: Seat people with this passport within Asia’s borders but instead of sitting on the ground, they will sit on pillows and each receive a plate of hot food because they do have the Gospel and it’s edible.

South America: Serve all the potato chips, candy and sugary snacks they can handle along with room temperature pop/soda (as much as they can drink). This table can be loud and fun. They have the Gospel but it’s not in a nutritious form, not substantive.

North America: Give incredible fanfare, play games, get sparkling juice, massages, pamper them. Parade into the dinner and give them chicken, steak, ham, sides, and desserts. Also have many things to do at the table. Ipads, games, anything fun and loud as a distraction you can think of. This represents the overabundance of resources and access to the Gospel.

Hidden People: Do not serve these people any food and have them sit in a side room the whole time. This represents the reality that they are unreached with the Gospel and are often forgotten.

Rules: Half/two-thirds of the way through the exercise leaders can begin to ask attendees (if they're not catching on), *"Do you think everyone's here? Do you know anyone who said they were coming who isn't here?"* Give hints by asking questions like these if they're not catching on.

The goal is to get them to take their food to others and realize that not everyone is present. You can have a trumpet sound at the end, signifying the rapture and no more time to share the gospel. The whole dinner lasts about 1-1.5 hours followed by 30-45 minutes of debrief discussion.

Have food ready at the end for all who are hungry and didn't get to eat.

Debrief Questions

At each table discuss the following questions:

1. Observation. Just tell us about what it was like where you were at. What did you see? What was your experience like? Who first noticed people were missing? What did you do?
2. Interpretation. How were you feeling in your country? What were you thinking? What did you think about the other countries? About the Americans? How about the hidden people - what were they experiencing?
3. Application. What kind of ah-ha's did you experience? How is the Lord speaking to you?

Sharing

Have someone from each table share in front of the entire group their table's insights.