

## The Sacred Meal

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Since the beginning of the early Christian church, Christians have gathered to share their meals together and in so doing they have transformed a common moment into a sacred one. Jewish tradition lifts up the Shabbat meal on Friday evenings to mark the beginning of the Sabbath. The design of this sacred meal borrows from that tradition and helps families create the practice of a sacred meal that the whole family will look forward to. Too often families are eating on the run or at different times. The sacred meal is an opportunity to slow down, enjoy one another, and make each other a priority.

### Designed for Ages 3+

#### Materials

1. Unscented pillar candle with candle holder
2. Special dinner accessories that aren't present on the everyday dinner table; some examples include:

- Linen tablecloth
- Special dishes (or a special dish or platter)
- Fresh flowers
- Table centerpiece
- Cloth napkins and placemats

**Time Investment:** 30 minutes—1 hour, plus set up and clean up time

#### How To

1. Decide as a family how often you will celebrate a sacred meal. Weekly is a wonderful practice, though it does not work for all families. Bi-monthly or monthly is another option. Sunday afternoon or evening creates a connection between Sabbath and the sacred

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meal. The only requirement to create this spiritual practice is a consistent time.

2. Make the sacred meal a required family moment that will not be moved or changed without careful consideration. Part of the beauty of it is the commitment to it as a practice.
3. Before the meal, involve the whole family in setting the table, getting out the linens, arranging the flowers, etc.
4. At the beginning of mealtime, after all are seated, have someone light the candle in the center of the table and say, *“God, we thank you for this food and this time together. Bless our meal, we pray. Amen.”*
5. The meal itself should be a time of conversation and enjoyment of the meal that has been prepared. Consider adding a special element to the food or drink that is not common practice in your home (sparkling juice to drink, or a special dessert served on a special plate, etc.)
6. At the end of the meal, all share in the washing of dishes and cleaning up as part of the practice together.

#### Notes

- This practice takes a bit of planning, work, and time investment. Yet, it also offers a great reward to those who put in the effort. Time spent together around the table will yield rich memories and strong connections for your family.

- Do not shy away from this practice if there is no one in your home who enjoys cooking. Allow the other special touches to help make even frozen pizza into a feast.

**Variations**

- Instead of a dinner, try breakfast.
- Invite a special or honored guest each time to experience the sacred meal. Alternate who is allowed to invite the guest.
- Include another spiritual practice at the conclusion of the meal. (See some of the other ideas in this chapter.)