

Some of my fondest memories are memories of my family, or church friends, sitting around a campfire. The campfire was that warm place of comfort where we gathered to socialize, encourage one another, pray, sing, have devotionals, tell stories, and do a lot of laughing.

The campfire was also the central location for entertaining our guests. Somehow, no matter what was going on we always ended up circled around the campfire.

But often the campfire was for meals too. A chance to eat together. Oh, and don't forget the smores!

When I think church, I like to think of the church as a campfire. A warm place of love, trust, and fellowship. A place to share, a place to learn, a place to entertain, and a place to be fed.

### **The Church is Like a Campfire Where People Come to be Spiritually Fed**

When Jesus finished feeding the 5000, the people asked for a sign that he was the Messiah!

**John 6:32-35 Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.**

**33 For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."**

**34 "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."** (These crowds were thinking about *physical food* and Christ was talking about spiritual food.) **35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life.**

**Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.**

Jesus the Bread of Life, the true source of life! He will satisfy, not physical hunger, but true soulsh hunger forever and ever and ever. Just like we would serve everyone some food around the campfire, Jesus' church is serving the ultimate Bread, the "Bread of Life".

### **The Three Chairs Around the Campfire**

Sitting around this campfire we have three chairs. The chairs represent three different types of people that should be at every meal. A healthy church should be made up of thirds.

### **One Third- The Mature / One Third- The New Christians / One Third- The Hell Bound**

All three chairs represent a healthy church. You will hear people say, "The healthy church is full of mature Christians." Or "A healthy church should just be full of New Christians."

But healthy churches have all three chairs.

### **Why Three Chairs?**

**One Chair – The Lost, the Hell Bound, the Seeker.** We know that Lost People Matter to God, therefore they matter to us. **Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."** Jesus loves sinners and he always wanted them at the table with him to eat and receive the bread of life. We want lost people hear at Believers Church so that can ingest the Bread of Life and be born again.

**One Chair – The New Christians, or the Baby Christians.** When lost people eat the Bread of Life and become new in Christ we want to help them learn to continually feed on the Bread of Life. They have a lot to learn, and we are here to help them eat and grow.

**One Chair - The Mature.** This is our goal for all believers! That we all grow into the image of Christ Jesus and become mature in the ways of God.

In the Bible Belt there are a number of bible studies and churches that are diet driven. They feed on Scripture, which we should do. BUT what does the medical community say about being healthy? If you want to live a long healthy life, do what? **Diet and Exercise**

**So, it is the same with our spiritual lives. We need a balanced diet and exercise.**

- We must eat the right food. We've got to get into the Word. We've got to study.
- But also, we must push back from the table, stretch our spiritual muscles and exercise!

**James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**

- Believers are fed here at Believers Church. They consume the Bread of Life. But they don't just eat and get fat saying, "Feed me, feed me, feed me." Getting spiritually bloated.
- We feed believers, and we get them to push away from the table, and exercise as they serve seekers! And then the seekers come to the table, they get fed.

Now as the mature grow into the image of Jesus, thinking like Jesus, having a heart for the same things and people that Jesus has a heart for; they begin to work and partner with Jesus to **"seek and to save the lost,"** by introducing them to Christ.

- The Mature are bringing in the unsaved and these hell-bounders are becoming Christ followers, and then they are moving to the new or baby Christian chair.
- As these baby Christians feed on the Bread of Life they become mature Christians.
- As mature Christians they push away from the table and serve seekers and the process repeats.

Now, if we are expecting guests and new people to join us around the campfire and be blessed, we are going to have to think about three things.

## **THE INVITATION / THE PREPARATION / THE PRESENTATION**

### **THE PRESENTATION**

At Believers Church we have the opportunity week in and week out to serve the Bread of Life, and the ultimate food deserves the ultimate presentation.

- We want to serve the bread of life in a *creative* and *compelling* way.
- We must serve the food in such a way that people can get it and *understand* it.

So, we are going to do our best to do what Jesus told us to do. **John 21:17 "Feed my sheep."**

### **We Must Talk to All Three Chairs.**

Here's the question. Here's the tension that should always be in the church:

- How much do you angle something towards Mature believers?
- How much do we angle something towards the New Believers?
- And how much do you angle something towards the Lost and the Seekers?

Some churches are overboard on ministering to the believers. It's all about them.

Other churches have gone overboard catering to the seeker and the new believers are not maturing.

I've grown up in the church. I was a church mouse. Many of you did, too. We live in the Bible Belt, but we need to remember to present the "Old Time Gospel" in a way the 21st Century people can get it!

- Every Sunday there are a lot of people who are totally outside the family of God.
- Every Sunday there's a lot of people who are in church, but don't even know Christ personally.

**Creative Communication.** Jesus was a highly creative communicator who didn't always communicate in the same way. His theology was the same, but his methodology changed. He drew in the sand, sat on a boat bow, picked up a child, pointed to a Sower, and talked about a building falling over. He used parables, word pictures, and humor. We want to be creative because creativity helps people remember the good news.

**The Bottom Line.** Our goal is to drive home a key concept, spiritual truth, or bottom line in everything that we do here at Believers. If at the water cooler on Monday, someone asks, “Hey what was the sermon at your church about yesterday?” I want you to be able to say, “It was about \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_.”

**The Sunday Meal.** Just like it used to be in the South, Sunday was always the big family meal of the week, so it is at Believers Church. It’s all about Sunday, the big meal, the big presentation of the Bread.

- All the other activities are important and vital (Life groups, youth and children’s ministries), but the weekend is that corporate time around the campfire, for the ultimate presentation.

*NEXT STEP: I will eat the Bread of Life and get up from the campfire to serve others.*

## THE PREPARATION

*The ultimate presentation requires the ultimate preparation.*

- I am amazed at the time, energy, and countless hours that Janet will put into the preparation of a meal that the guests will devour in fifteen minutes!
- This is true here at Believers Church too. We work hard during the week —and we love doing it—to prepare the meal, to prepare food for the ultimate presentation.

So, here at the church we work extremely hard to prepare the food for Sunday, for the big meal and *so should you, as Christ’s followers.*

- Pray about Sundays, because lives are hanging in the balance. And as the Holy Spirit works, as the Word is presented, great things occur.
- Consider how you can get involved in the preparation process. Volunteer during the week or prepare at home to make things happen on Sunday.
- Consider joining a Ministry Team.
- Hand out samples of the Bread during the week and invite people to dine with us on Sundays.

Here at Believers Church, we are trying to explain the gospel in a way that people can get it.

- We want our music to be music that people can connect with and understand.
- Because remember, it’s about the thirds, the three chairs.

### **The Preparation Takes Work**

**Matthew 9:37 “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”**

Those of you that work so hard and volunteer your time and energy here at Believers Church, I applaud your work ethic. You energize me when I get discouraged trying to distribute the Bread of Life. I am encouraged by you!

We need not understate what and honor it is to serve people in Jesus’ name,

**IT IS AN HONOR TO SERVE ON THIS TEAM. THANK YOU JESUS FOR CHOOSING ME**

*NEXT STEP: I will volunteer to serve on a ministry team, doing my part to make Sunday the ultimate presentation for the Bread of Life.*

## THE INVITATION

**For example:** Teriyaki Chicken samples in the Savannah Mall.

Handing out samples is good, but I saw one employee handing out samples to people that were already sitting down and eating their food.

That is where so many churches are in our culture today!

We are feeding the already fed rather than handing out samples to the hungry and inviting them to the ultimate campfire, the church, where they could find and dine on the Bread of Life.

This invitation is especially important because people must be invited to come and dine.

Jesus said, **“My food...is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work.” John 4:34**

That’s what’s going to fuel us! Do the work of Father God!

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. We are doing His work.

We are honored to work with Jesus by passing out samples of the Bread of Life and inviting people to come and eat.

This invitation process helps us get more involved in the entire process, realizing that we are the church.

### **WE CHOOSE TO BE SPIRITUAL CONTRIBUTORS NOT CONSUMERS**

- **The church does not exist for us.**
- **We are the church and we exist for the world.**

Who do you know in your life right now that’s hungry?

What are their names?

Maybe it’s your neighbor, co-worker, a friend, a family member.

Pray for those people. And pray to God, that he would give you the opportunity to share and give those samples out to people who are so very hungry.

***NEXT STEP: I will give samples of the Bread of Life to the lost and invite at least four people to be my guest at church next Sunday. I will also begin inviting families to “Family Fun Day!”***