

Friday night fellowships - reasons and such

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Context

When I became a believer in Fall of 2017, I flipfopped from going into seminary fulltime, to exploring various mission options to going away from the secular job world and the likes, as I felt that what I was doing was not Godly. Soon, I realized that these were my desires and not the will of God. I started to pray with my wife on where we can be useful as a family and where I can serve God.

The more I read the Bible and understood personalities like Paul, Boaz, Naaman, Bezaleel, Amos, David and my Lord Jesus, it started to become apparent that I need to serve God wherever I was called to be, even if it meant to be in product management at a tech company.

The need

The Galveston Island is unique in that, its a haven for tourists (beaches, history and cruise ship port) and 2 major and 1 minor academic institutions in - A&M , UTMB and GC

This means there is enough transitional population of students on the island, who are stuck here for anywhere from 2-7 years based on their schooling.

Stef and I started looking around where there was a need in our church and in our community and felt the college-aged students had need

- the college ministry is great at our church, but its ministering within the college population. We felt like they needed to be plugged into some part of *the grown up* world of family as that will be their next stop
- we also knew there were several students who were first timers away from their families on the island and were home sick. We wanted to see if we

can offer some consolation, as trivial as it may be, to get their mind of their home sickness

- having teenage boys who eat anything and everything, we knew a good home cooked meal was always a nice way to warm any college student's heart
- there was also minimal outlets for biblical fellowship during the week. Although, there are several churches on the island with varying degree of doctrinal soundness, due to timing and ambiance, the options for Bible study was few and far between. There was also nothing catering specifically to college aged students, other than what the students self-organized
- knowing how academic pressures, lethargy, new-found-freedom and social life in school, might take time away from getting in The Word, we wanted to provide an opportunity for them to read their Bible even if it was only once a week
- we knew the party started early on Fridays as the students unfolded on their weekend escapades. We wanted to provide a reality check and reset using God's Word.
- not many have read the Bible in its entirety, so we decided to start that not only for the college students, but also for us as a family.

So what did/do we do

Hence we prayed and talked to our sons and decided to do the following, which has been going since this summer. . . .

- starting summer 2018, we open our home for college aged students and some singles who dont have an outlet during the week for biblical fellowship due to work/life etc.
- this is every Friday, except the first Friday of the month, as we go to the college worship service at our church and then to for icecream
- my wife cooks a full meal, typically some salad, chips/dips to a main course and some dessert. Folks are open to bring any item that complements the menu, but its only optional
- we setup the meals on the counter for self-serve
- we start gathering around 1800 hrs for social fellowship
- we start self-serving around 1830 hrs after prayer
- we take a break around 1930hrs to retire to gather in the living room and start Bible reading
- we take turns reading - either a full chapter, few verses or skip the turn as people are comfortable
- we do a break around 2030/2100hrs with tea and dessert and some leave and few stay
- we continue reading until its 0000hrs or we have completed a book or everyone has had their turn

- after every person reads, we either have a small discussion or answer any questions as a group. We use Strongs Concordance, the Latin Vulgate and various English translations as means of understanding what we read. The best way to interpret the Word is using the Word.
- we really encourage to read a physical copy of the Bible, instead of on a digital media. If you dont bring a Bible, you can use one of the many we have in our home.

As of this writing, we have completed Exodus and starting Leviticus this coming Friday.

What do I need to bring

We expect you to

- let us know that you are coming, so Stef can plan accordingly
- inform if you are going to bring any item
- **optionally** bring your own Bible if possible (if not we have plenty at our home)

Our own desert crossing

I wanted to highlight some of our *desert crossing* moments as we had to trust God in what He is leading us into. . .

- get over our hangups on having strangers over to our house
- I hate being social and had to ask for the Spirit of God to minister to me
- get over my immigrant awkwardness
- budget better around how much money we spend in groceries
- get over the worries about being perfect hosts
 - not having enough space
 - running out of food
 - house not being perfect to have guests over
 - dogs and how they will act to a group of people
 - our penchant for efficiency

Some frequently asked questions

- Do I have to be a college student to come?

Yes. But we make exceptions to singles who have a hard time with challenges of a student (sin problem on Friday nights) or work schedule that make it hard to fellowship in the middle of the week.

- Can I bring a friend?

Yes, as long as we know this person or can get to know them before they come into our home.

- Why aren't you having your age group families over?

As stated above, this is geared for college-aged singles and early couples. The need we are trying to serve is outlined above. There are other life-groups on Sundays that we belong to, where we have the opportunity to fellowship with *our age* families.

- What if I am not a student but fit some of the characteristics?

Yes, by all means connect with me or my wife or one of the regulars.

- What if I am not a believer?

We welcome non-believers, as long as they can participate in listening to the Bible reading or even read the Bible. But the same criteria apply, see **can I bring a friend** question.

- What if I don't attend GBC?

Again, we welcome other church members, as long as you fit the characteristics and we get to know you, before opening our home to you.

- What if I don't want to stay for the full reading?

We ask that you at least contribute to reading a verse or chapter before heading out. We don't follow set order in reading. It's basically who ever leaves first, reads first.

- What if I want to only come for the reading?

Yes absolutely, but please see the above questions on meeting the characteristics, us knowing you etc.

- What if I want to just come for the meal?

If you are part of our church and we know you and you are a college student, we can accommodate that. But check with us before showing up. Stef likes to know how much she needs to cook based on folks coming.

As more Fridays go by, I will add key lessons from the learnings & readings. . . .