

# KASHRUT - FITTING FOOD

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Handouts (Background Info, Questions For Reflection, Activity)
- Small blank journals (one per person)
- Pens

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## BACKGROUND INFO

- Kashrut, or kosher, means 'fit, proper, or correct'.
- Lauren Winner tells us that, "humanity's first sin was disobedience manifested in a choice about eating."
- Jews observe kashrut/kosher laws because the Torah told them to. Laws about food are a 'call to holiness' and require self-control. Eating therefore becomes a religious ritual.
- Rabbi's do not 'bless food' to make it kosher. They ensure that food is kosher, or 'fit', for consumption. Vegetables from your garden, if they are without blemish, are already kosher. The rabbi oversees food practices because of the many ways in which food is handled and treated before it comes to the table. With kosher meat there has been compassion taken in the method of killing.
- Keeping kosher encourages Jews to 'eat attentively'. When Jews cultivate profound attentiveness to their food they must think carefully about the food they eat. They must be intentional about what they are going to eat, and in how their food is prepared. When thoughtfulness is paid to the food, thoughtfulness is also paid to the hospitality of the table.
- When you keep kosher "the protagonist of your meal is not you; it is God." Food is a part of God's creation. A right relationship with food points to a right relationship with God.

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- In what ways is a diet (Atkins, Weight Watchers, etc.) different from eating 'kosher'?
- What is your relationship with food like? Do you fear food? Is it a medication? A crutch? A comfort?
- What is society's relationship with food?
- How are you aware and intentional about what you eat? or, do you eat without tasting, thinking, or thankfulness?
- Where does your food come from? (Don't just say the store!) Does this matter to you?
- Is your table one of hospitality and/or evangelism? How could you make hospitality a primary focus of your meals?
- Who is the protagonist at your table? When God is a guest at the table how does that change your understanding about the activity of eating?
- The table is not only a place where we can become present to God, the table is also a place where God becomes present to us. Discuss how you prepare yourself for the Lord's Supper/ Communion. Is there anything you might do to change your approach or deepen your awareness of its importance? If you are involved in the preparation of the elements for communion how might the meal be prepared fittingly and with thankfulness? How do you experience God through communion?

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## ACTIVITY - KEEP A JOURNAL

- Many people keep track of their food, counting calories, assessing ingredients, and/or keeping points in line with the dictates of their prescribed diet. Jews are attentive to their food, ensuring that it is fit for their consumption. Such detailed planning of meals also affects how the meal is consumed and with whom.
- Jot down on the first page today's date and everything you have consumed today. Take note of what you ate, when you ate, with whom you ate, and what you were feeling while you ate. Were you aware of each flavour that flowed from you food?
- Note how much money you spent on your food for today. Was there money wasted? Was there food wasted?
- Note where the food came from. How many hands did your food pass through before it came to your table? What are the circumstances of the countries (provinces, towns) from which your food came to you?
- Keep track of your daily food for the rest of the week. Look back on your week and note how many times you had fast food. Remember your favourite meals. Note the meals that were wonderful rituals of hospitality. What conversations were had over these meals? Was God particularly present during any of these meals? Why?

(over)

- Make plans to increase your meals which your experience as a spiritual practice and decrease your meals which are bereft of attentiveness to God and others.
- Make plans to have a hospitable table at least once a week , inviting strangers to your table and sharing in a ritual of thanksgiving and conversation.