



CHANGE THE WORLD FROM YOUR KITCHEN TABLE

PASTOR RYAN RUSH ENCOURAGES FAMILIES TO EAT TOGETHER AND INVITE OTHERS IN TO CREATE TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

New Book, *Restore the Table: Discovering the Powerful Connections of Meaningful Mealtimes*, Arrives Easter 2024



KATY, Texas (October 2023) -Recent headlines reveal the lonely state of modern life: “The male loneliness epidemic and how it affects fathers;” “Teens are exhausted by their phone notifications but don’t know how to quit, report finds;” “Bed rotting: TikTok’s latest trend reveals toxic side of self-care.” Whether due to isolation, exhaustion, or a dependence on technology, people simply aren’t spending enough time with each other.

Ryan Rush, PhD and pastor, has for 20 years studied the phenomenon of rising loneliness and dwindling in-person connections. He began to wonder if one simple life change might help reverse the trend: families returning to their kitchen tables. **Pastor Rush** invited thousands of Kingsland Baptist Church members to intentionally schedule sit-down meals with their family members, friends, neighbors, and even strangers. The results were transformational. **Rush’s** new

book, *Restore the Table: Discovering the Powerful Connections of Meaningful Mealtimes* (Forefront Books, March 31, 2024), describes how shared meals can heal families, open doors to powerful conversations, and perhaps change the world.

“Hundreds of people joined our local experiment, and the results were astounding. People reported that marriages were strengthened, moms and dads were less stressed, siblings were calmer and got along better, people who had been fighting addictions for years began to face their challenges head-on, and in more than a few cases, students’ academic grades improved,” **Pastor Rush** reports.

In *Restore the Table*, **Rush** shares stories not only from Texas but also from his travels around the world, which reveal how people are creating change on a large scale by sharing meals together. Statistics confirm that few families share a meal together today – an article published at the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s website reveals that only 30 percent of families eat together on a regular basis.⁽¹⁾

“You don’t need to be a religious person or a scholar to know that mealtimes matter –and not merely for physical nourishment!” explains **Rush**, *“The way we spend mealtimes has influenced our present, and changes to our future mealtimes are positively affecting the people we love as well as our broader communities.”*

¹ [The Benefit of Family Mealtime, Harvard Graduate School of Education](#)

Restore the Table invites readers to consider how intentionally sharing meals with family and friends. **Rush** shares practical insights such as:

- » Biblical perspective on the importance of regular shared mealtimes
- » Real-life examples of people who are making lasting change in their community
- » Inspiration to invite others to gather around the table, even in moments of disaster
- » Prompts on how to start conversations around the dinner table
- » Delicious **Rush** family recipes for all levels of cooking experience.

About Ryan Rush



Ryan Rush, PhD, serves as pastor of Kingsland Baptist Church, a thriving church community of more than 5,000 people, located in Katy, Texas. He has spent more than 20 years working in ministry, and during that time, he has been on a mission to connect church and home life, becoming a national voice for the “Faith at Home” movement. In over a decade serving as Adjunct Professor at Liberty University, he taught more than 1,500 students the course he helped to design, “Theology of the Family.” **Ryan** currently teaches Doctoral students in the Marriage and Family program at Dallas Theological Seminary. He has hosted numerous radio and TV programs on the subject of family life and is the author of three books, *Home on Time: Life Management by the Book*, *Walls: Why Everybody’s Stuck (and Nobody Has to Be)* and his latest book, *Restore the Table: Discovering the Powerful Connections of Meaningful Mealtimes*. **Rush** is a graduate of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and holds a PhD in Christian leadership with a ministry concentration from the Cook School at Dallas Baptist University. **Ryan** and Lana Rush live in Katy, Texas, and have three daughters, Ryley, Regan and Lily.

Restore the Table: Discovering the Powerful Connections of Meaningful Mealtimes

By Ryan Rush

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Contact Pamela McClure, McClure Muntsinger Public Relations, 615-294-5073, pamela@mmpublicrelations.com



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Suggested Interview Questions for Ryan Rush, PhD

Pastor of Kingsland Baptist Church

Author of

Restore The Table: Discovering the Powerful Connection of Meaningful Mealtimes

- ▶ Ryan, in the book you describe a dinner you enjoyed in Somaliland in Africa, an area that has experienced civil war and economic difficulty. Can you please share some of the things you learned about the power of sharing a meal with people who have different backgrounds?
- ▶ You use a phrase to describe the outcome of that meal, “cultivating an openness for an ongoing alliance.” With the division we can see in the news or in our communities on a daily basis, what can you share about the best way to cultivate an openness for an ongoing alliance with others?
- ▶ Let’s talk about the challenge you pose to readers of *Restore the Table* in its early pages. What is it, and why is it important to you?
- ▶ You have three daughters and have been married to your wife, Lana, for more than 30 years. When did you make meals together a priority, and what kind of impact did you see in your own family?
- ▶ There are a number of statistics that validate the need to share mealtimes together. You did an experiment of your own at Kingsland Baptist Church, with very positive results. Can you talk about some of the changes that came about as a result of you issuing the challenge?
- ▶ It’s nearly impossible to talk about decrease in family meal time without recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on social interactions. You’ve said that it was an “unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate a central call of our faith: to love our neighbors.” Can you talk about the relevance of those words today?
- ▶ You’ve called Katy, Texas, where you live and serve as a pastor, “one of the most ethnically diverse communities in America.” How do you see the need for more family meal times making an impact on your community?
- ▶ Eating together and welcoming people into our homes is a fundamental part of the Christian faith. Can you talk about why eating together is particularly important for people who live alone and how that relates to Jesus’s life?
- ▶ You mention that “when you share the table, you find yourself in a position to help redeem someone else’s table.” Can you please expand on that further?
- ▶ In the book, you talk about people you’ve been blessed to meet on an international scale. You even go as far as to say that sharing a meal five times per week might even change the world. Why is that?
- ▶ You include some conversation starters at the end of the book. Can you please talk a little bit about what made you decide to do that?



GUEST: Ryan Rush

BOOK: *Restore the Table: Discovering the Powerful Connections of Meaningful Mealtimes*

AVAILABLE: April 2, 2024

SOCIALS: @ryanrushlive (Instagram)



A Table Reclaimed

By Ryan Rush

Author of *Restore the Table: Discovering the Powerful Connections of Meaningful Mealtimes*

Forefront Books, 2024

Imagine a woman earnestly working in her wood shop. She's arranging the broken pieces of an old wooden table—even those that were damaged, disfigured, or stained—and lovingly preparing to do the hard task of restoration. She sands the marred wood, repairs the broken pieces and, mending them back together where possible, and carefully replaces the hardware. Finally, she covers the finished product with a fresh coat of lacquer, and what once seemed to be lost now comes back to life. In fact, many would consider this “new” table more precious than the former one.

Lana's and my friends, Gene Larson and Joanne White, did this very restorative work in Wimberley, Texas, the town where Lana and I met. For many years, they would seek out used or broken furniture that others regarded as junk. Gene and Joann would rework the marred pieces, sand them down, fix any flaws, and turn them into masterpieces.

Gene and Joann have a rich legacy of restoring what other people may have seen as hopeless situations. Our family has several pieces of Gene and Joann's reclaimed furniture in our home. People who visit our family often see Gene and Joann's craftsmanship and will remark, “What a beautiful piece of furniture!”

“It's better than that,” I'll say. “It is a beautiful piece of furniture that was once on a trash heap, but someone saw it and recognized its potential. With the touch of the master's hand, it has been reclaimed—saved and renewed.”

We're so quick to cast off people, but God pulls people off the trash heap and turns them into masterpieces. Others may see us as junk, but God sees what we can be, not merely what we have been or how we have missed the mark.

That is God's Father-heart. God sees our potential. He not only understands what has happened to you in the past, and what you are working through in the present; God sees the person you will be in the future.

Your mealtimes have the potential to play an important role in bringing restoration to the areas of your life that may seem beyond repair. Day after day, you get to rewrite your legacy around tables, sharing your life story, your concerns, and your dreams with those near you. All of us likely have some wounds from the past that still elicit painful memories, and many of those memories are tied to the table in one of two ways. For some, the table was a reminder of who was not present and should have been. Perhaps the table was a place of tension and unspoken conflict. For other people, even in the darkest periods of their lives, the table was a safe haven. It was a place of encouragement and healing. Regardless, you need to know that God can help you reclaim the table experiences in your past. Better yet, there doesn't have to be pain associated with your family's table in the future. But before the table can be redeemed, it must first be reclaimed. When a family reclaims and “owns” the table, it creates all sorts of opportunities for good things to happen.

BIO: **Ryan Rush**, PhD, serves as pastor of the 5000-member Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy, Texas, outside of Houston. A frequent guest on radio, podcast and TV outlets, Rush is the author of three books, including his latest book, *Restore the Table: Discovering the Powerful Connections of Meaningful Mealtimes*. Rush is a graduate of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and holds a PhD in Christian leadership with a ministry concentration from Dallas Baptist University. **Ryan** and Lana Rush live in Katy, Texas, and have three daughters, Ryley, Regan and Lily.

