

# THEOLOGY OVER PIZZA: Slices of Shalom

By Shiao Chong, CRC Campus Minister, York University

A Christian, a Jew, a Muslim and an Existentialist walked into a room and had a discussion on abortion over slices of pizza. No, this is not the start of a joke. It really happened one evening at York University.



*Some participants of Theology Over Pizza*

Every Thursday nights, I run a program called "Theology Over Pizza" through my student club, Leadership, Culture & Christianity. My hope was to foster a sense of community for students, an informal, safe place for people to hang out, relax, share ideas, concerns, and questions—even deep doubts—about anything that touches on faith and life. Many university students are examining their faith in new and deeply personal ways. They need a community that gives them that space to explore and find their own answers to their faith questions. Theology Over Pizza tries to create that space for them.

People are free to come and go as they like/can (some have evening classes). The crowd can be as small as four or as big as twelve. Anyone is welcome. That evening, the Jew and the self-proclaimed Existentialist walked in out of the blue, curious about us, and the Muslim was invited by a Christian friend. And these strangers felt at home enough to participate vigorously and openly in the discussions on abortion with Christian students. It wasn't a debate; it was a genuine dialogue. Christians and non-Christians alike learnt from each other that night. There were surprises on both sides. Stereotypes were broken. The Existentialist was the most passionate pro-life advocate that evening! People related to each other as individuals, with respect and love, not as labels.

*If you wish to volunteer  
for Theology Over Pizza,  
contact Chong  
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Although the Jew, the Existentialist and the Muslim did not come back—they normally were busy on Thursday nights—other strangers, non-Christians, seekers, former Christians, new Christians would drop by over the weeks. Some of the Christian students come back as regulars. Once, a seeker came by, and after a discussion on a biblical passage, remarked that he wished his Christian friend's bible study group would be more like Theology Over Pizza, i.e. more open to questions, tackling relevant social issues, and open to learning from him, a non-Christian. On another evening, we had an extended prayer time over one Christian student struggling with a guilty conscience. He needed a support group that evening, and we became that for him.

It was more than just good pizza that we tasted on these Thursday evenings. We also tasted slices of God's shalom—God's grace and peace in community.

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## Dishwashing as Discipleship: Why Jesus Would Tell Us We Ought to Wash Each Others' Dishes

By Geoff Wichert, CRC Chaplain, U of Toronto



Food is at the heart of our ministry. While the Graduate Christian Fellowship group makes and eats dinner together on Thursday nights, Wine Before Breakfast shares breakfast together after a communion service every Tuesday morning. And where there is food there are dishes. And so dishwashing is also at the heart of our ministry. Recently Geoff Wichert got to thinking about a “theology of dishwashing”. Here is a part of a longer piece that you can read at our website (<http://crc.sa.utoronto.ca/>).

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I believe that washing dishes is the closest analogy we have to footwashing. It's the lowest ranking job in the kitchen. Touching the remains of other people's food

with our hands is considered a menial role; hot, messy, physical labour usually relegated to machines.

In the ancient world footwashing was an essential act of hospitality (e.g. Gen 18; Lk 7:36ff). It was always done by a servant, but that person couldn't be Jewish, because touching another person's feet made you unclean. So try to imagine the disciples' shock and horror when, at the Last Supper (Jn 13), Jesus took off his robe and washed their feet! Their revered Teacher did a humiliating servants' job.

When we wash dishes we perform an act of essential service toward each other. It is not only physical (“hands-on”), tiresome and dirty, it is also profoundly spiritual and symbolic – an act of menial (a.k.a. humble) service. And so I offer you this paraphrase of John 13:12-17:

*After he had washed their dishes, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your dishes, you also ought to wash one another's dishes. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.'*

Are you or someone you know a student (undergrad or graduate) at the University of Toronto this year?

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