

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.

**Series: Come to the Table**

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus shared meals with others. In a world where there is an upsurge of hate and division, and a growing uncertainty about what the future holds. God calls us, as followers of Jesus Christ, to make space for all of God's children at the table. As we sit at the table together, we can learn more about each other and get to know the God who created us all even better.

Message description:

Simon was anxious and excited to have Jesus over for dinner- to question him and dialogue with this so-called prophet. But the fun was interrupted when an unnamed and uninvited guest shows up and begins washing and kissing Jesus' feet. A woman of the city, she had no place among this respectable gathering. But Jesus' mercy shows us that his forgiveness is only good news for those who recognize they need it.

Key Scriptures

Luke 7:36-50

Additional sources for independent study:

- *This Holy Mystery*, a theology of communion in the UMC (pdf):
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources>this-holy-mystery-a-united-methodist-understanding-of-holy-communion>
- The Open Table in the UMC: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/an-open-table-how-united-methodists-understand-communion>
- *An Altar in the World* by Barbara Brown Taylor
- *Grace for the Future*, a podcast hosted by Bishop Leonard Fairley on UMC Communion liturgy:
<https://graceforthefuture.com/>

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. Have you ever shown up to a dinner party uninvited? (Help Rachel feel better ☺)
2. If someone else could hear your inner thoughts throughout the day, what would they hear? What words would you use to describe your inner dialogue?
3. When are you most tempted to jump to conclusions, make assumptions, or make pre-judgements? In what situations in circumstances?
4. In her teaching, Rachel shared the following quotation of our Bishop, Leonard Fairley from the podcast, *Grace for the Future, episode 2*: "Without confession and pardon, righteousness can easily lead to self-righteousness, which is one step closer to oppression, and one step closer to violence..." Do you believe this is true? Where have you seen this happen within the Church?
5. What role should regular confession play in our spiritual lives and community together?

Going Deeper

On Luke 7:36-50:

1. Does any part of this story make you uncomfortable?
2. Which character do you relate to most in the story?
3. Have you ever been willing to risk embarrassment or break cultural boundaries to be near to Jesus, or even to worship?
4. Confession and repentance allow us to turn away from our own ego or selfish tendencies back to God. As a result, we can see ourselves and others rightly; we are all sinners in need of divine grace. Jesus saw the woman in this story for who she was, not for what she had done. Simon, in his moment of self-righteousness and sin, did not. He failed to see the woman or Jesus rightly. In our society today, who do we often fail to see? What opportunities do we have (beyond the first step of confession and pardon) to begin to see and love our neighbors more rightly?

Read Psalm 23 ESV:

23 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

forever.

- What images, words, or phrases stand out to you? How does this psalm speak to you right now?
- The New Living translation of this Psalm begins, “The Lord is my shepherd, I have all that I need.” How does this translation hit you differently than the ESV? Do you believe that right now; that you have all that you need?
- What does it mean to you that God is your shepherd? What comfort or hope do you find there?
- When in your life have you felt that you walked through the valley of the shadow of death? What got you through? What gets you through now?
- What do you think it means that God prepares a table for us, even in the presence of our enemies? When you hear this verse, do you imagine that your enemies are also present at the table? Or is it more that God continues to provide for you or prepare a place for you even in difficult times?
- What does mercy look like in this psalm?
- Considering our conversation on Luke 7 on the woman who washes Jesus’ feet, do you hear anything in this Psalm differently?

For further reflection:

A reflection on Psalm 23- <https://www.umc.org/en/content/helpful-thoughts-when-fretting-over-the-unknown>

Modern prayers of Psalm 23- <https://www.wrumc.org/blog/2020/5/11/modernpsalms>

Application for family:

Consider making Psalm 23:1 NLT a breath prayer this week! Or commit it to memory!

“The Lord is my shepherd, I have all that I need.”