

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:

Who is on your guest list? Who is invited to your table? Throughout scripture we find examples of hospitality and know that it is one of God's first instructions; to welcome the stranger and to provide for the widows and orphans in our midst. But in Luke 14, Jesus takes it to the next level to teach us about radical hospitality. Most would agree to share meals with individuals who are familiar to them or with those they know the best. Yet, Christ contends that the table is less about familiarity and more about hospitality and care.

Key Scriptures

Luke 14:15-24

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. How do you define hospitality?
2. Toward whom should we direct our hospitality?
3. Is there a difference in hospitality and serving? Entertaining?
4. If we're being honest, how does the thought of opening our lives to strangers make us feel?

Going Deeper

Read Hebrews 13:3

- According to these verses, what does love look like?
- What do you think it means to "entertain angels?"

There are three stories within the Old Testament where people "entertained angels without knowing it:" Abraham (Genesis 18), Gideon (Judges 6), and Manoah (Judges 13). In each event, the guest they hosted was an angel of the Lord, a divine messenger delivering an important message regarding God's will. *Consider reading this part of the story of Abraham and Sarah again, Genesis 18:1-33.*

- What stands out to you about the response of Abraham and Sarah to these three visitors?
- Is it clear that Abraham and Sarah know who they are?
- If you had an opportunity to "host" God, or even to share a meal with Jesus, how would you prepare? How would you respond? Do you think you would move with the same urgency and eagerness of Abraham?
- Does it make a difference knowing the guests are messengers of the Lord and not just three random strangers? Why or why not?

Read Matthew 25:31-46

This is a difficult passage that reflects a Matthean theme of judgement and damnation, which is not part of this study on hospitality. Be careful not to draw too many conclusions on what we think judgement *must* look like (or even, God forbid, identifying sheep and goats), remembering that God alone is judge. Instead, ***focus on vv 44-45 and ask, in response to this passage:

- Is it possible to entertain angels like Abraham today?
- Where do we have opportunities to do so?
- Why do we sometimes miss these opportunities?

Family-Oriented Questions:

- When have you seen God show up in the breaking of bread in the last three weeks?
- Where do we have opportunities as a family to welcome others through the sharing of a meal this week?
- When you do so, challenge one another to see Jesus in the eyes of your guest.

"Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance." - Verna Myers
Thanks be to God that there is room for all at the banquet of God!