

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: Living Like Jesus

The start of a new year is full of possibility; places to travel, goals to achieve, changes to make, new habits to create. There is a steady buzz from our world and culture that says you can live your best life *now* if only you buy this certain program or follow these 5 easy steps. And that noise grows even louder this time of year.

What if instead of asking, what can I achieve this year, we ask, how can I be more like Jesus? Join us this January as we explore different values of Jesus as revealed in the gospels and focus the new year on one simple goal: to live and to love like Jesus.

Message description:

Everybody's got to eat. And because of that, sharing a common table can be a powerful opportunity to connect with new people, cultivate true friendships, and tear down barriers that separate us. At the table, we see Jesus live out two of his key values; humility (as expressed through downward mobility) and honoring the human dignity of all people. "Jesus, the lord of the universe, sets aside his power and his privilege and leaves heaven behind to have lunch with a leper!" (Larry Stoess, *Think Red*). And a tax collector, and a Pharisee, and Mary and Martha... and in doing so he included the excluded, listened before he fixed, and honored all people, especially the ones often overlooked and avoided. In order to live like Jesus, we must value the same humility and the same human dignity; and maybe practice that by extending our own tables to new guests.

Key Scriptures

Luke 19:1-10

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. Share about a time you were invited to dinner unexpectedly. How did it make you feel? Included? Valued? Befriended?
2. Why do you think it is important that we see Jesus sharing meals with people so often, especially in the gospel of Luke?
3. What role does listening well to others play for affirming the dignity of all people?
4. Who in our context is invisible to the public eye? Who is overlooked, ignored, or shunned?
5. How can our community affirm their dignity?

Going Deeper:

Read Mark 5:21-43

- Jesus was close to human suffering in this passage. Name some of the people who shared proximity with Jesus in this story.
- How does Jesus' proximity to those who are suffering make a difference in the lives of the people discussed in this story?
- Where are the poor in our community? How might you share presence and proximity with them?

Read Philippians 2:1-12, a powerful summary of the humility of Christ, or what Henri Nouwen calls "downward mobility."

In his book *Here and Now*, Nouwen defines downward mobility as the descending way of Jesus in a world that values upward mobility. He writes, "In a society in which upward mobility is the norm, downward mobility is not only encouraged but even considered unwise, unhealthy, or downright stupid.... To highlight the absurdity of downward mobility, Nouwen [asks]:

- Who would freely choose a low-paying job when a high-paying job is being offered?
- Who will choose poverty when wealth is within reach?
- Who will choose the hidden place when there is a place in the limelight?

If the value of downward mobility were placed on a continuum from one to ten, with one being the descending way of Jesus, and ten being the upwardly mobile way of the world, where would you place yourself on the scale? If you wanted to embrace the value of downward mobility, how could you move your position on the continuum one step towards the descending way of Jesus?" - From *Think Red* by Larry Stoess

Challenge:

Invite someone to lunch or dinner this week.

Practice listening well: to their story, their lives, how they are feeling, their needs.

Slow down and remember the power of connection and friendship over a common meal.