

Week 1: An Open Table

We have been invited to the grandest table there is, Jesus' table. He calls us to come and feast with Him on the things He has prepared for us. We are invited not because we have earned a place, but because He made a place specifically for us. His love precedes us and calls us by name. He invites us to come and receive just as we are, because we are loved by Him. His table is more than provision, it is the sharing with Him. Jesus' table is a place of joyous intimacy, nourishment, and communion.

Each of us has our own table where we have the joy of giving place to another.

The imagery used to describe the church in the New Testament paints a picture of relational community, yielded interdependency, outreach, and love. There is a unity not because of our similar personalities or shared hobbies, but because the same Holy Spirit that lives in me also lives in you, and we share together in eternal fellowship with the triune God. That holy binding together invites us into a relational space with one another that the world cannot fully understand.

The church gathers together in sacred assembly and in daily life.

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:23-25.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:42-27

1. What other scripture or imagery comes to mind about how the church is to look, act or function?

Our table, in the heart of our home, represents a personal and practical place of community. Is the church in our living rooms, in our conversations, in our circumstances, eating at our table?

Welcoming someone to a place at our table isn't always natural or easy. Extending invitation risks rejection.

Welcoming someone into our home risks their judgement. There are hurdles or barriers we may have to overcome. Busyness, fear, rejection, pride/insecurity, personality differences, social anxiety, physical or emotional pain can all rally for our pause. Before we invite someone to a place at our table, we naturally evaluate ourselves and the cost involved. Do we believe the cost is worth it, and the burden not too heavy to bear?

The responsibility to build and carry relationship is not fully rested on our shoulders, in our own strength. God is the source and sustainer of life. We are merely the well built on the Source where people can draw His water. It is not our duty to define what each relationship should become. God knows the purpose, time, and season for everything. We are committed to personal relationships with one another not because we believe all of our expectations will be met, but because we believe God's design is good. We chose to be together for His Kingdom's sake. We let agendas come off, and Kingdom life take shape.

<p>2. What are the obstacles/hindrances that make it hard for you to invite others to your table?</p> <p>Are any of those hindrances lies in your mind? If so, what is the truth?</p>	<p>3. Is there a specific person or family in the church God has put on your mind recently that you felt the nudge or desire to know more?</p>
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Adding something new to our lives can be challenging. When we keep adding things, eventually, we reach capacity. We need vision and creativity for how to build into our lives continual room for community, and how to leave space for interruptions.

<p>4. What does it look like for you personally to make room to keep your table open for church community?</p>
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Our hope is when we invite the lost to relationship with Jesus and relationship with His church that they find themselves immersed into thriving biblically based community that gathers in many intimate and public places, knowing and loving one another well. Our place at one another's table gives us something grand to invite the unsaved to!

While our lives will be primarily taken with our own families, friends, and body-life relationships, God has always made provision for the poor and the outsider. We also need to hold space for those in need outside of the church, the unsaved and hurting. Can our tables welcome the lost just as they have harbored the found?

Practical Convo: What are ways to make someone feel comfortable in your home? Reduce stress/anxiety over something new?