

Table Talks

“The Final Table”

Week 4 – November 27, 2022

Scripture: John 13:1-17; John 14:25-27; John 16:33; Philippians 4:6-7

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: What is your favorite meal? How often do you enjoy eating your favorite meal?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

Jesus' final meal before he endured the cross is spent with the friends that followed him for 3 years. It was the most powerful perspective meal ever shared. Jesus provided great truths in his final moments; by modeling servant leadership to his disciples, he spoke powerful words they would cling to, and prepared to send them out. If we want to lean into Jesus' heart, we should lean into his final message and promise of hope.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Jesus invites his disciples into a time of redefining what the last 3 years together was about and where he is sending them now. He invites them once again to see the world differently (**John 13:1-17**). In an act of humility emphasizing selfless love, Jesus serves his disciples by washing their feet. How does Jesus' actions make a deeper impression than his words alone?
2. Jesus' invitation comes with a different type of peace, which is different than the world's peace (**John 14:25-27 and John 16:33**).
 - a. What is the world's message of peace? Have you ever chased the world's peace only to find it lacking? Share your experience.
 - b. Describe the hope Jesus offers in **Philippians 4:6-7**. Is the full dimension of God's love and care comprehensible to you? Why or why not? Discuss the peace of God which "guards our hearts and our minds".
3. Servant leadership is about loving and respecting the people in our care, using the authority we've been given with grace. Discuss these qualities of a servant leader. Which of these qualities do you feel strong in? Which of these qualities would you like to grow?
 - a. Integrity – intentional lifestyle reflecting honesty and good character
 - b. Humility – built in space to learn and grow from the experiences and opinions of others
 - c. Flexibility – adapt to unexpected challenges without anger, confusion, or panic
 - d. Resilience – recognize that struggles are real, and life is difficult, but God is in control
 - e. Stewardship – see people as valuable to God and steward time and talents well
 - f. Empathy – do not see people as problems to be solved instead of human beings to be loved

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God for modeling servant leadership for all of us. Thank him for his humility and selfless love. Ask God to help you see where in your life you can serve others, and to do it with love and grace. We are grateful for what Jesus shows us at the "final table" on his way to the cross.

Table Talks

“Flipping Tables”

Week 3 – November 20, 2022

Scripture: Mark 11:15-18

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Have you ever belonged to an exclusive group or club? Describe your experience.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

Too often there are tables formed that make people feel like they can't belong unless they behave in accordance with man-made laws and practices. As a result, we run into obstacles, boundaries, and situations where there is a block. It can happen in life, in business, in church, and for some we can carry the baggage into the church. When obstacles prevent us from experiencing something we long for, hope for, or desire, frustration builds. Jesus flips the table and points to a different type of living and mindset.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Sometimes the story in **Mark 11:15-18** is told in a way to show that Jesus has a righteous anger towards things in this world, but there are other truths revealed through Jesus' passion at this particular table.
 - a. Multiple courts went to the Temple and the temple court here is most likely the Gentile court furthest from the temple. The courts separated the people based upon their value, specifically the “religious” and the “nonreligious”. **Jesus flips the table to REMOVE OBSTACLES for the nonreligious.** In what ways have you felt obstacles that separated you from others based on value?
 - b. Money would be used to exchange for temple approved money and sacrifices, especially for the Israelites who were traveling far distances to come to the celebrations at the temple. At the same time, Herod was known to be working with some of the religious leaders who often ran and permitted these unfair practices. **Jesus flips the table to REMIND the religious of what matters.** Can you see places in your life where you can relate to either the Israelite people or the religious leaders?
 - c. Jesus says “my house” (verse 17). His love is an invitation for all to flourish; a reminder of how God is overturning our past, overturning what we hold onto, and drawing us close. **Jesus flips the table to REFOCUS our hearts on him.** How does this challenge or comfort you today?
2. We are all vulnerable to be blinded by obstacles and need to be reminded of what matters. Jesus calls us to a different type of living and mindset. Sometimes he does so with grace, sometimes he does so with truth. Has there been a time in your life when God wanted to show you a change he wanted for your life? What did this look like?
3. Out of the pain and frustration of not belonging we can be repurposed for the Kingdom. How has God used an area where you felt obstacles and boundaries to impact others? How have the obstacles and boundaries of another been used to impact your life?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that he flipped tables. Thank God for his invitation to see obstacles in our lives, and see Jesus break them down. Praise God we belong at his table.

Table Talks

“Sabbath Table”

Week 2 – November 13, 2022

Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 2:27-28; Mark 2:27-28

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Do you enjoy naps? If so, describe the perfect napping scenario.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

Sabbath is not a commandment we are bound to, it's a promise we are invited to enjoy. Jesus teaches that the Sabbath points to Him... the one whom the prophets promised would come and mercifully restore the rhythm of all creation. Sabbath is a key element to living out God's rhythms for creation. Jesus engages/connects/works/teaches all throughout scripture around tables. Sabbath is no different. Sabbath is a time of rest, but also a time of community, family, and feasting.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Discuss the culture around Sabbath when Jesus stepped into public ministry. Sabbath was originally a time of rest – it was in observance to the 7th day of creation where God rested. Sabbath was observed from Sundown on Friday evening until Sundown of Saturday evening. This was a time devoted to REST. Over time, it morphed into a rigid set of rules and regulations to ensure you are truly 'RESTING'; the Jews were not to perform any 'work' tasks, even to the point of not driving, cooking certain things, or in some instances today even flushing the toilet. Contrast these differing definitions of sabbath. If you are familiar with Sabbath, share your experiences with it.
2. Read **Matthew 11:28-30** and **Matthew 12:1-8**. Jesus offers rest, not just rest from work, but rest for our souls. He goes on to address the core of the issue, the heart of Sabbath over the rules of Sabbath, pointing to himself as Sabbath fulfilled.
 - a. We live busy lives with many responsibilities. What other barriers prevent us from living out Sabbath as Jesus intends?
 - b. What does rest for your soul look like? Do you place importance on this type of rest? Why or why not?
3. The two Hebrew words that are used for the practice of Sabbath paint a picture of what Sabbath is designed to be.

Shabbat = Stop Hard Work; Clear the Calendar

Nuakh = Dwell or Settle; Lean into the Presence of God

We **Shabbat** (stop working and create margin in our life), so that we can **Nuakh** (dwell and settle into God's presence). Sabbath is NOT replacing vocational work with other work, it is intentionally dedicating time and space to sit in the presence of God.

- a. How can you implement Sabbath into your regular rhythm of life?
- b. How could you live out Sabbath around your table?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God 'The Sabbath was made for mankind, not mankind for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.' (**Mark 2:27-28**). Ask him to help us receive the gift of Sabbath and make it part of our regular rhythms. Our souls desire to lean into his presence and rest.

Table Talks

“Messy Table”

Week 1 – November 6, 2022

Scripture: Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 19:1-9

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Describe the dinner table in your house. Is it clean, messy, or somewhere in between? Does it do double duty as an art table, storage table, worktable, or other table?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

Tables are places of connection, conversation, and conviction. It is often at the dinner table that we make new friends and forge deeper relationships. Jesus sat in different environments and at many different tables – with sinners, outcasts, and the marginalized. Jesus invited people to the table for a variety of reasons. For some he flipped their table and others he expanded it. Jesus brings people together and points them to a greater purpose for themselves and others; He redeems their worth and value. He creates tables of BELONGING.

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Tax collectors were hated by many Jews and viewed as collaborators with the occupying empire, yet Jesus invited them to the table. Read **Matthew 9:9-13**. When we look at how Jesus lived in the messy tension, we see his heart. What does it mean that Jesus comes for the sick, not the healthy? What does this say about the character of God?
2. Jesus invites messy people with messy pasts to the table, and he shows us how to navigate messy topics. Read **Luke 19:1-9**. Jesus was expected to behave a certain way and take a certain side, but he disrupted that by “being a guest of a sinner”.
 - a. How do we often box Jesus in, belonging to certain groups, supporting certain politics, and endorsing certain theology?
 - b. What happens when we are confronted with an image of Jesus that is different than what we are comfortable with? How can our preferences impact how we view Jesus?
3. Jesus' message of grace, love, hope, and truth transcends the mess. The Kingdom of God offers messy people with messy pasts and messy beliefs a place at the table to belong, to grow, to doubt, and to discover.
 - a. What about this posture feels risky? What about this posture gives hope?
 - b. How could your personal relationships mirror Jesus' messy table?
 - c. Who do you know that invites messy people to their table? Share who comes to mind and their impact on you.
 - d. What gifts, talents, characteristics, or passions has God created in you that can impact others around your own messy table? Make a list before you share.

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God he sits at messy tables and brings people together. Ask him to help us all create tables of belonging in our own lives. Ask him to lower any barriers that might exist, instead creating spaces of grace, love, and hope so that all people feel welcome.