

Sharing a Meal with Jesus

Throughout the Gospels we read of Jesus going to a meal, at a meal, or coming away from one. And these gatherings weren't just social events – they were recorded because they were important moments in his life and active ministry. Jesus used food to embody the kingdom of God - offering grace to outsiders, challenging social and religious rituals and rules, as part of his mission, and deepening and restoring relationships.

Study 1 – A Table of Welcome (Luke 5:27–32)

A Question:

When have you felt most welcomed or included around a table? What made that moment special?

Introduction:

This passage begins with Jesus calling Levi, a tax collector, to follow him. Tax collectors were seen as corrupt collaborators with the Roman Empire—social and spiritual outcasts. Yet Jesus doesn't just call Levi; he joins him at his table. Levi throws a banquet, and Jesus sits among tax collectors and their friends. The Pharisees couldn't believe their eyes, because this wasn't their way of interacting with such people.

The table here becomes a symbol of grace. Jesus doesn't wait for Levi to clean up his life or prove his worth. He meets him in his brokenness and offers fellowship. In doing so, Jesus redefines who belongs. The religious leaders are scandalized: 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' But Jesus responds, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

This moment reveals the heart of Jesus' ministry: a table open to the outsider. He doesn't use meals to reinforce status or purity codes. He uses them to break barriers. The table becomes a place of healing, calling, and transformation.

A) The Call to the Table

Read: Luke 5:27–29

Discussion Questions:

1. What strikes you about Levi's immediate response to Jesus' invitation?
2. What might Levi's banquet say about how faith expresses itself in hospitality?
3. How does the presence of Jesus at this meal redefine who belongs?

B) The Question of Association

Reading: Luke 5:30–31

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think the Pharisees objected to Jesus eating with tax collectors?
 2. How do our own communities sometimes mirror this attitude, if not in having an open table, then in other ways?
 3. What does the willingness of Jesus to join this meal teach us about God's heart?
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C) The Table as Mission

Reading: Luke 5:32

Discussion Questions:

1. How does this meal illustrate the mission of Jesus 'to call sinners to repentance'?
 2. What might repentance look like in this context of shared table fellowship?
 3. How might our tables today become places of mission and grace?
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Food for Thought:

Jesus turns a celebration party into extraordinary moment of grace and inclusion.

Follow-up & Prayer:

Always be ready to invite someone unexpected to your table. Pray for open eyes to see God's mission in everyday hospitality.

Study 2 – A Table of Abundance (John 6:1–14)

A Question:

What's a time when you've felt God provide more than you expected or needed?

Introduction:

This is the well-known story of Jesus feeding a huge crowd with just a handful of food. The crowd had followed him for some distance and were now hungry for healing and teaching. As evening approached, the subject of food may well have already been broached, but Jesus already had a plan, taking a young boy's packed lunch and sharing it among the crowd. We're told that everyone ate as much as they wanted, and there was plenty of leftovers.

This passage had been interpreted in different ways but at its heart is a miracle, and more than simply one of logistics. It's a sign of God's abundant provision. Jesus doesn't just meet the need—he exceeds it. The crowd doesn't get crumbs; they get a feast. In a world often marked by scarcity—of food, compassion, justice—Jesus reveals a kingdom where there is more than enough.

The setting matters too. Jesus tells the people to sit on the grass, echoing Psalm 23: 'He makes me lie down in green pastures.' It's a moment of rest, nourishment, and fellowship. The hillside becomes a table, and the crowd becomes a community.

Importantly, the abundance begins with something small. The boy's lunch seems insignificant, but in Jesus' hands, becomes a banquet. This reminds us that God can use what we offer—no matter how little—to bless others.

A) The Need at the Table

Read: John 6:1–6

Discussion Questions:

1. What needs do you see in this crowd?
2. Why might Jesus ask Philip where to buy bread, knowing what He would do?
3. How does Jesus invite us to recognise the needs around us?

B) The Gift in Our Hands

Read: John 6:7-9

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think of Andrew's comment about the loaves and fish?
 2. How does this reflect our own doubts about what we have to offer?
 3. How does God use small offerings for great purposes?
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C) The Miracle and Meaning

Reading: John 6:10-14

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you picture this moment of abundance?
 2. Why do you think the leftovers were gathered?
 3. What does this meal reveal about Jesus' character and the nature of His Kingdom?
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Food for Thought:

At the table of Jesus, scarcity becomes abundance — and a little becomes more than enough.

Follow-up & Prayer:

Bring your 'loaves and fishes' to God this week — small acts of generosity or faith. Pray to trust God's ability to multiply them.

Study 3 – A Table of Transformation (Luke 24:13-35)

A Question:

Have you ever had a moment when something suddenly ‘clicked’ and you saw things differently?

Introduction:

This passage unfolds after the resurrection, as two disciples walk the road to Emmaus, confused and heartbroken. Jesus joins them, but they don’t recognize him. He listens to their grief and then shows them how all the Scriptures point to how the Messiah had to suffer and rise again. Still, they remain unaware—until they reach their destination and invite him to stay for the night and join them for a meal.

Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them. In that moment, their eyes are opened and they recognize him. Then he vanishes. The table becomes a turning point. What was just a meal is now a moment of revelation. The disciples move from despair to joy, from confusion to clarity, from blindness to sight.

This is a table of transformation, not flashy or dramatic but simply sharing bread together. But in that ordinary act, Jesus revealed himself. The same pattern of take, bless, break, and give, echoes the Last Supper and anticipates the celebration of Holy Communion. Jesus makes himself known, through shared bread, worship, and open hearts.

The disciples’ response is immediate. They rush back to Jerusalem, excited, renewed, and with a real purpose.

For us, this passage reveals that transformation often happens in quiet moments. When we welcome others, share meals, and open Scripture together, Jesus meets us.

A) Walking in Confusion

Reading: Luke 24:13–24

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you relate to the disciples’ confusion and disappointment?
2. What does their openness to conversation show about their faith, even in doubt?
3. How might Jesus walk with us in our own times of uncertainty?

B) Learning at the Table

Reading: Luke 24:25–29

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does Jesus interpret Scripture before revealing Himself to the disciples?
 2. How can Scripture open our eyes even when understanding seems slow?
 3. What helps you stay open to God's voice along the journey of faith?
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C) Recognition and Response

Reading: Luke 24:30–35

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think their eyes were opened at the moment of breaking bread?
 2. What does this teach about encountering Jesus in ordinary acts?
 3. How can we share what we've seen and experienced of Jesus with others?
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Food for Thought:

At Jesus' table, confusion turns to clarity and disappointment to joy.

Follow-up & Prayer:

Take time this week to share a meal or a conversation about faith with someone. Ask God to open your eyes to His presence.

Study 4 – A Table of Restoration (John 21:1–14)

A Question:

When have you experienced a new beginning after failure or disappointment?

Introduction:

After the resurrection the disciples return to fishing, which was where their amazing journey with Jesus began. They fish all night but catch nothing, until a voice from the shore suggests throwing the net on the other side of the boat. They don't recognise Jesus, but with nothing to lose they follow the suggestion. Suddenly the net overflows with fish and John realizes who is on the shore, 'It is the Lord!' Peter, impetuous as ever, jumps into the water to reach him.

When they arrive, Jesus has already prepared breakfast—fish and bread over a charcoal fire. He invites them: 'Come and have breakfast.' This simple meal is deeply symbolic. It's not just about food—it's about restoration.

Peter, after denying Jesus three times, now finds himself at a fire—just like the one where he denied him. But this time, Jesus doesn't accuse. He feeds. The table becomes a place of healing and restoration. The abundance of fish echoes earlier miracles, reminding them of their calling. The meal reminds them of grace.

For us, John 21 invites reflection: Where do we need restoration? Where have we felt like failures, unsure of our next step? Jesus doesn't wait for us to get it right—he meets us on the shore, prepares a meal, and invites us to sit and eat.

The table of restoration is quiet, personal, and full of grace. It's where broken disciples become renewed witnesses. And it's where we, too, can find healing and purpose again

A) Returning to the Familiar

Reading: John 21:1–3

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Peter and the others return to fishing?
2. What does this reveal about how we cope with failure or loss?
3. How does Jesus meet us in the ordinary rhythms of life?

B) A Miracle and Invitation

Reading: John 21:4–8

Discussion Questions:

1. Does this moment in the disciples' journey of faith echo other miracles?
 2. How does recognition dawn in Peter and the others?
 3. What does this scene show about Jesus' patience and persistence?
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C) A Meal of Restoration

Reading: John 21:9–14

Discussion Questions:

1. What does this breakfast mean to Peter and the others?
 2. How does Jesus' act of serving them food communicate grace?
 3. How might shared meals be a place for restoration in our own relationships?
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Food for Thought:

At Jesus' table, failures are forgiven, and relationships are renewed.

Follow-up & Prayer:

Reflect on where Jesus might be inviting you to restoration. Perhaps share a meal this week as an act of gratitude.

There are around 70 small group Bible studies, with full-colour artwork, extra resources and commentary, and with plenty of discussion questions, available from www.faithandworship.com,

You will also find hundreds of prayers and other worship resources, freely available to use.