

Jesus's Meals

Bible Studies and Discussions designed with Spiritual Seekers in mind

Meals in the Biblical world were events that had far greater implications than just nourishing one's body with food. Who would be invited? What would be served? Meals defined one's social class in a society too wrapped up in status. Sharing a meal with someone would also connote intimacy and friendship. Fast food and frozen dinners that define today's common meal would have been unthinkable during Jesus' time. This short GIG series is an attempt to show a picture of Jesus at his most intimate moments—his meals.

The Studies

I have divided this series into five studies:

- Jesus and the Tax Collector
- Jesus and the Sinful Woman
- Jesus and the Crowd
- Jesus and the Proudful Guests
- Jesus and His followers

Each of these studies will paint a unique portrait of Jesus—a portrait that perhaps is not readily practiced among the religious of today.

1. **Jesus and the Tax Collector:** Through this study, we see Jesus interacting with the outcasts of society. Imagine seeing a local pastor at a gay club or a Sunday School teacher walking into a sleazy bar. Unfortunately, our minds jump to many conclusions, questioning the integrity of the leader. Unlike his contemporaries, Jesus—the religious guy—attends a party with the outcasts.
HOPE: To show that Jesus was not about the religious folks.
2. **Jesus and the Sinful Woman:** In this study, Jesus allows a local prostitute to bathe him. Her very assets that seduce people—her hair—become assets that worship the Lord.
HOPE: To illustrate that all are welcomed in Jesus' family.
3. **Jesus and the Crowd:** In this study, Jesus shares a meal with the common person, the crowd. While the disciples see the crowd as a nuisance, Jesus sees them with compassion. He feeds them so that they have eaten abundantly. The little the disciples have, he converts to feed many.
HOPE: Jesus takes the little we have to do make an amazing miracle, and Jesus offers us a life of abundance not survival.
4. **Jesus and the Proudful Guests:** In this study, Jesus is seen reprimanding those who pursue greatness by means of pride. Jesus exhorts his friends to choose humility as the path to greatness (something Jesus exhibits).
HOPE: This study has very practical applications, allowing the participants

to see what it would be like if they were to choose humility. Would Jesus come through?

5. **Jesus and His Followers:** This Passover meal is Jesus' final meal before his trial and execution. This study foreshadows and illustrates the Gospel—Jesus as the perfect Passover lamb.

HOPE: To encourage participants to trust in the blood of Jesus for their salvation.

The Format

I have divided each study into six components (some adapted from John Teter):

The Hook: This section is more or less an ice-breaker, to help the group feel comfortable with one another. In this section, we will also revisit the previous week's application to discuss how people are applying the message of scripture and to ask a question that will introduce us into the text of the week.

The Message: In this section we are studying the text. I understand that in a GIG people will be asking questions and we may follow a different route than the questions that I have written. In this section, I want people who are skeptical about Jesus to be open to how Jesus may be speaking to them.

Modernizing the Message: I would like participants to see these stories as working out today. The stories of scripture are not just great stories that happened then, but to see how this story would make sense to us in today's language.

Lessons: This section allows the summarizing of the message. What are the important lessons we can draw from this section of scripture?

Personal Testimony: This section is the most important and perhaps the most difficult to do. How have I seen these lessons play themselves out in my life. The more specific the story, the better impact it will make on the group. The group will only go as far as I go in terms of vulnerability.

Application: These GIGs are not just a spectator sport, but an opportunity for us to participate together and basically practice the faith for a few weeks to see if it actually works.

Jesus and the Tax Collector

Jesus' Meals 1/5

Luke 5. 27-32

The Hook

- When was the last time you felt as an outsider? How did you feel?
- What do you think Jesus thinks of outsiders?

The Message

- Describe a party if Jesus were the guest of honor. Who would be there? What kind of food is served? Music?
- Read Luke 5.27-32
- Explain terms: Tax Collector, Pharisee, Teacher of the Law
 - Many tax collectors were crooks and traitors. They were traitors because they were collecting money on behalf of the Romans (the oppressors), and crooks because they usually collected more than the tax and kept the extra for themselves.
 - The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were the religious elite of Ancient Jewish society. They kept and encouraged high morals.
- How was Levi viewed by his society?
- Who is invited to Levi's feast?
- Why do you think the religious elite complained?
- What was the danger in identifying and feasting with the outcasts of society?
- How does Jesus respond to the criticism of the elites?
- Who is "sick" in this passage? Who is respectable?
 - The religious elite were also sick, but they did a good job covering the outside to make them look respectable. Jesus came to especially party with the non-religious.
- With whom do you identify in this passage?
 - Levi—left everything to follow Jesus
 - Levi's friends—checking out this Jesus guy
 - Pharisees—Relying on tradition as a religious experience

Modernizing the Message

- How would you tell this story in the 21st Century? Who would be the tax collector? Pharisee?
- How would you change your description of the party with Jesus as the guest of honor?

Lessons

- Jesus came for those who are sick.
- Jesus is not only for the religious people.
- We are all sick one way or another—even us religious elites
- Jesus seeks to identify with the "outcasts". (He spends his time with Levi and not the Pharisees)

Personal Testimony

- How have I seen Jesus outside of “religion”? Tell a story at how Jesus met you somewhere where we wouldn’t expect him to be (i.e. outside of the church).
- How has Jesus identified with you when you were “sick”?

Application

- What needs to happen for you to be like Levi—leave everything and follow Jesus?
- Index Cards
 - What is a question about God or the Bible you are thinking about?
 - What is an area of your life you are struggling with that I can be praying for?

Luke 5.27-32

²⁷ After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting in his office. Jesus said to him, “Follow me.” ²⁸ Levi got up, left everything, and followed him. ²⁹ Then Levi had a big feast in his house for Jesus, and among the guests was a large number of tax collectors and other people. ³⁰ Some Pharisees and some teachers of the Law who belonged to their group complained to Jesus’ disciples. “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and other outcasts?” they asked. ³¹ Jesus answered them, “People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call respectable people to repent, but outcasts.”

Jesus and the Sinful Woman

Jesus' Meals 2/5

Luke 7.36-50

The Hook

- How have you seen Jesus work outside the religious box?
- What do you think it will take for someone to approach Jesus?
- What is the secret to loving others? (Why can some people love more than others?)

The Message

- Read Luke 7.36-50
- Who are the characters in this story?
- What can we speculate about this woman?
 - Because the text says she led a sinful life, it is fair to speculate that she was a prostitute
- How would you feel if you were Simon and you saw this scene at your home?
- How do you think the woman felt?
- Describe the scene.
- How would you compare Simon to the woman?
 - Pharisee \leftrightarrow Prostitute
 - Name \leftrightarrow Nameless
 - Respectable \leftrightarrow Sick
- How does the woman worship Jesus?
 - Rather than keeping her hair in tact, even covered, this woman uses her scandalously long hair to wipe Jesus' feet. What she has used as a seductive tool to solicit clients, she is using to worship Jesus. Her hair is perhaps her greatest asset. For too much time she has used it for sin, and now she is using it for glory.
- What is Jesus' purpose in telling Simon the story of the canceled debt?
- How does the story (parable) relate to the situation? Who is in a greater debt?
 - Note that both have a debt that needs forgiveness!

Modernizing the Message

- How would you tell this story in the 21st century? Who would be the woman? The Pharisee?

Lessons

- Jesus wants us to use our assets for good
- Jesus accepts us in our worst state
- Being forgiven has a direct correlation on how we love others

Personal Testimony

- How have you lived as one who loves much? Share a story about how Jesus has forgiven you your many sins.
- How have you used your assets for sin? How has God redeemed them for good?

Application

- What would you need to go to Jesus like this woman?
- What are some of your assets that you could turn to good?
- Index Cards
 - What is a question about God or the Bible you are thinking about?
 - What is an area of your life you are struggling with that I can be praying for?

Luke 7.36-50

³⁶ A Pharisee invited Jesus to have dinner with him, and Jesus went to his house and sat down to eat. ³⁷ In that town was a woman who lived a sinful life. She heard that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee's house, so she brought an alabaster jar full of perfume ³⁸ and stood behind Jesus, by his feet, crying and wetting his feet with her tears. Then she dried his feet with her hair, kissed them, and poured the perfume on them. ³⁹ When the Pharisee saw this, he said to himself, "If this man really were a prophet, he would know who this woman is who is touching him; he would know what kind of sinful life she lives!" ⁴⁰ Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Yes, teacher," he said, "tell me." ⁴¹ "There were two men who owed money to a moneylender," Jesus began. "One owed him five hundred silver coins and the other owed him fifty. ⁴² Neither of them could pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Which one, then, will love him more?" ⁴³ "I suppose," answered Simon, "that it would be the one who was forgiven more." "You are right," said Jesus. ⁴⁴ Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your home, and you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not welcome me with a kiss, but she has not stopped kissing my feet since I came. ⁴⁶ You provided no olive oil for my head, but she has covered my feet with perfume. ⁴⁷ I tell you, then, the great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven. But whoever has been forgiven little shows only a little love." ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven you." ⁴⁹ The others sitting at the table began to say to themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ But Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Jesus and the Crowd

Jesus' Meals 3/5

Luke 9.10-17

The Hook

- How have you seen Jesus turn your assets into good this past week?
- What is your favorite food? Describe your most satisfying meal of all time?

The Message

- Read Luke 9.10-17
- Describe the crowds that are following Jesus
- How do the disciples view the crowd?
- How does Jesus view the crowd?
- What would it take to feed 5000 people?
- How does Jesus expect his disciples to feed with so little?
- Describe the miraculous feeding as if you were one of the crowd who was fed
- Describe the feeding as if you were one of the disciples
- Why are twelve baskets left over at the end?

Modernizing the Message

- How would this story look like today?
- What is a modern day example of what Jesus' popularity might look like?

Lessons

- Jesus provides abundantly so that his people can eat all that they want
- Jesus takes the little we have (five loaves) to make great things happen

Personal Testimony

- Tell a story about how Jesus has taken the little you have to make great things happen
- Tell a story about the life you have with Jesus is one of abundance and not just survival.

Application

- What amazing things do you want Jesus to do with what you have?
- Practical steps you can take to trust in Jesus with the little you have
- Index Cards
 - What is a question about God or the Bible you are thinking about?
 - What is an area of your life you are struggling with that I can be praying for?

Luke 9.10-17

10 The apostles came back and told Jesus everything they had done. He took them with him, and they went off by themselves to a town named Bethsaida. 11 When the crowds heard about it, they followed him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about the Kingdom of God, and healed those who needed it. 12 When the sun was beginning to set, the twelve disciples came to him and said, "Send the people away so that they can go to the villages and farms around here and find food and lodging, because this is a lonely place." 13 But Jesus said to them, "You yourselves give them something to eat." They answered, "All we have are five loaves and two fish. Do you want us to go and buy food for this whole crowd?" 14 (There were about five thousand men there.) Jesus said to his disciples, "Make the people sit down in groups of about fifty each." 15 After the disciples had done so, 16 Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, thanked God for them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. 17 They all ate and had enough, and the disciples took up twelve baskets of what was left over.

Jesus and the Prideful Guests

Jesus' Meals 4/5

Luke 14.7-14

The Hook

- How have you trusted Jesus with the little you have?
- What is the secret to greatness?

The Message

- Read Luke 14.7-14
- If you were a fly on the wall, how would you describe this feast?
- Why does Jesus tell this story?
- What is this story about?
 - Especially in Middle Eastern Culture, where one sits around the table has great implications of his or her prominence. This is not only a story about humility, but a call to being counter-cultural.
- What is Jesus' secret to greatness?
- What does it mean to humble yourself?
- How do Jesus' words to the host correlate with his story?
- How would society view the poor, crippled, lame and blind?
- How does Jesus view the poor, crippled, lame and blind?

Modernizing the Message

- How would you tell this story in the 21st century?

Lessons

- Jesus humbles himself to die on a cross, yet is raised to greatness
- Jesus will raise us in greatness, if we spend more of our resources caring for others rather than for ourselves
- Jesus is about social justice

Personal Testimony

- Tell a story at how you saw Jesus care for you when you prioritized others over yourself.

Application

- What are ways this week you can prioritize others in your life? Pray that you would see Jesus care for you as you care for others.
- Index Cards
 - What is a question about God or the Bible you are thinking about?
 - What is an area of your life you are struggling with that I can be praying for?

Luke 14.7-14

⁷ Jesus noticed how some of the guests were choosing the best places, so he told this parable to all of them: ⁸ “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place. It could happen that someone more important than you has been invited, ⁹ and your host, who invited both of you, would have to come and say to you, ‘Let him have this place.’ Then you would be embarrassed and have to sit in the lowest place. ¹⁰ Instead, when you are invited, to and sit in the lowest place, so that your host will come to you and say, ‘Come on up, my friend, to a better place.’ This will bring you honor in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For everyone who makes himself great will be humbled, and everyone who humbles himself will be made great.” ¹² Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your rich neighbors—for they will invite you back, and in this way you will be paid for what you did. ¹³ When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they are not able to pay you back. God will repay you on the day the good people rise from death.”

Jesus and His Followers

Jesus' Meals 5/5

Luke 22.14-23

The Hook

- How have you prioritized others this past week?
- How have you seen Jesus care for you as you cared for others?
- If you knew that you were about to die, how would you spend your final hours?

The Message

- Read Luke 22.14-23
- Explain Passover
 - The Passover is a celebration and remembrance of how God delivered the Israelites from the oppression of the Egyptians over a thousand year before Jesus. In Exodus, the Israelites were under fierce oppression. Moses came to Pharaoh demanding the release of God's people. When Pharaoh refused, the final curse was that the angel of death would pass over the entire land and that every firstborn infant would die. Only the households that killed a lamb and put the blood on several posts in the house would be spared. During this meal, the Israelites remember God's mercies.
- This meal comes the day before Jesus is tried and executed.
- Who is sitting at this table?
- What does this final meal with Jesus consist of?
- What is the significance of the bread?
 - Jesus' body would soon be broken for all. Every person who has lived since Jesus will have the opportunity to accept Jesus' body—broken so that we may become whole!
- What is the significance of the wine?
 - Like his body, Jesus' blood has been shed for all of us. Just like the lamb's blood during the Passover would shield the Israelites from coming death, Jesus' blood shields us from coming death and judgment.
- How would you describe the tone of this meal?
- Imagine yourself at the table. Describe what you are seeing and feeling.
- What must it have been like for Jesus to share a final meal with his betrayer?

Modernizing the Message

- How would you tell this story in the 21st century?
- How would someone spend his final hours?

Lessons

- Jesus is the fulfillment of the Passover lamb. We are all under the power of sin and the judgment on our lives is death. But, we can be shielded from this judgment, by trusting in Jesus.

- Jesus spends his final moments with those he loves, including his betrayer.

Personal Testimony

- Tell a story of how you have trusted in the blood of Jesus (i.e. testimony of God's intervention in your life).

Application

- This is study #5, perhaps having studied the life of Jesus for nearly a month. What would it look like for you to trust in the blood of Jesus for your salvation?

Luke 22.14-23

¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus took his place at the table with the apostles. ¹⁵ He said to them, "I have wanted so much to eat this Passover meal with before I suffer! ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will never eat it until it is given its full meaning in the Kingdom of God." ¹⁷ Then Jesus took a cup, gave thanks to God, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸ I tell you that from now on I will not drink this wine until the Kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ Then he took a piece of bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in memory of me." ²⁰ In the same way, he gave them the cup after the supper, saying, "This cup is God's new covenant sealed with my blood, which is poured out for you. ²¹ "But, look! The one who betrays me is here at the table with me! ²² The Son of Man will die as God has decided, but how terrible for that man who betrays him!" ²³ Then they began to ask among themselves which one of them it could be who was going to do this.