

Winsome:

HOSPITALITY

GETTING STARTED

In our sermon series entitled “Winsome,” we are encouraged to expect opportunities to partner with the Holy Spirit as we become the hands and feet of Jesus in demonstrating the reality of his Kingdom here in our world. Joining in the work of the Spirit each day involves discerning his presence in ourselves and others during the ordinary activities of each day.

This week, consider how the simple act of slowing to gratefully enjoy a meal creates space for God and others. Consider how the gift of including others who may be different than you communicates the hospitality of the Kingdom of God.

OPENING PRAYER

God of grace, thank you that again this day you have supplied all our needs. Give us grateful hearts for the small spaces and times where we thought of you, welcomed, and shared your presence in an ordinary moment with another person. Bless you for the experience of knowing we are loved by you. We pray in the name of your Son Jesus, our Savior, Lord, and friend, Amen.

STARTER QUESTIONS

1. Do you prefer to socialize at large parties, have a dinner for four, or spend a quiet evening with a friend? Why?
2. What was one of your best parties? How so?
3. How does a shared meal with a friend refresh your life?

READ ALOUD

Consider reading the passage twice in different translations.

Luke 14:15-24

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the Kingdom of God.”

16 Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

18 “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

19 “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

20 “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

21 “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

22 “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘What you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

23 “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think the “great banquet” (v. 16) represents?
2. What excuses did the invited guests give for not coming to the banquet? What do their reasons tell us about the invited guests? Do we ever resemble the guests? How?
3. How would you feel as an outsider, (“the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” v. 21) to get invited to the great banquet?
4. How does your table honor Jesus and create community with others by how you prepare your table, the kind of food you serve, and your conversation at mealtime?
5. How does your table serve as a welcoming and winsome place for those who don’t know Jesus?
6. How does the slowing pace of a meal with others build relationships with others and open hearts to God’s presence?

PRAYER MINISTRY TIME

Encourage people to settle into a comfortable position and pray, "Come, Holy Spirit." Wait. Have people share if they heard the Lord speak, give space for the Holy Spirit to move. Consider these ideas below and wait for the the Lord to show you who he wants you to connect with in this season.

- Ask the Lord who he would like you to extend an invitation to dinner in our church.
- Ask the Lord to reveal where he highlighting a person in your relational network, (friend, relative, acquaintance, neighbor or co-worker) and asking you to extend an invitation to dinner this month.
- Ask the lord to reveal someone in your life who is struggling and in need of your prayers and compassion this week.

Stay together in a large group or break up into smaller groups to pray about how you sensed God speaking in this time.

FURTHER REFLECTION & ACTION

As you prepare to depart from this time, here are some ways you can put your reflections into practice this week:

- Ask the Lord to remind you and give you the obedience to invite the person or people he brought to mind to a meal this week.
- Consider praying for one or two people each day who are lonely or isolated in our church or who dont know Jesus. As you pray, allow time to listen for God's leading. Ask the Lord to encourage you with the gifts of discernment and hospitality for those outside of his Kingdom.
- Also, ask God to give yourself grace as you grow in extending hospitality to strangers and the those outside of a relationship with Christ. Ask that the Lord would supply your need for courage to invite others into relationship over a meal, communicate genuine curiosity and interest about their life, and share your warmth of heart to a person made in the image of God.