

Introduction to Meals/Hospitality in the Bible Small Group Study Fall 2023

Hello St. Philip's Small Group Members,

Starting in November 2023 we'll be doing several sessions on Meals and Hospitality in the Bible. Now, much like the topic we just finished in small groups, you might be feeling like, "Meals?? Really?? I'm sick of having to prepare them every day for me and my family. Why would I want to study about them?" Well, I think that question actually presents its own answer. Meals and welcoming people to meals is something that is so common that God uses what is common to give us an image of what the Kingdom of God is like.

But more than that, meals involve hospitality – both hospitality that we extend and hospitality that is extended to us – and this is really important, biblically. This is because from the very start of scripture, people being invited into relationship with God and one another is centered around being invited. Think about it, when you are invited to someone's house, they are extending you love and grace and welcome. Likewise, when we invite people in, we do so because we love them and want to bless them with refreshment, joy, and our presence. See the connection with what we are invited into as people of God?

Like with water, some of the biggest events in scripture are centered around meals:

- In the Exodus, before the Israelites were freed, they were directed by God to share a meal, which became the Passover Seder – still celebrated today commemorating God's salvation.
- Jesus final act with his disciples is to share the Last Supper with them – we celebrate that meal and the sign of salvation and grace that it creates for us every single Sunday.
- One of the most famous miracles of Jesus was the feeding of the 5000
- When Jesus appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus . . . A Meal was Shared!
- Parables about the Kingdom of God are set as banquet feasts!

In this study we'll be studying the various ways that meals are used to reveal God's grace and love for us in the world. In our six sessions we'll study:

- November 5 – Meals Show Our Need for God
- November 12 – Meals as Eternal Life/Redemption
- November 19 – Meals and Hospitality as Gospel Fellowship
- December 3 – Bad Meals/Bad Fellowship
- December 10 – Meals and Hospitality as Inclusive Grace
- December 17 – Meals/Hospitality Point to Eternity

I truly hope you enjoy these six sessions on Meals and Hospitality. Meals and Hospitality feature in so much of what we do as people of faith and how we understand faith and forgiveness, life and salvation, healing and rescue, creation and redemption.

My hope is that you never look at a meal or party or dinner the same way . . . that you never take for granted that invitation again . . . that you never look at a pot luck dinner the same. For the fellowship we share with people and God is so much more than that.

Enjoy this study . . . always feel free to let me know if you have questions or thoughts along the way.

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor Patrick Downes
November 2023