

TABLE

Conversations



LIFE GROUP MATERIAL

Bracken Ridge
BAPTIST CHURCH

rightnow MEDIA



Table Talks

BIANCA JUÁREZ OLTHOFF

Have you ever thought about the central role the table plays in the lives of Christians? The Bible is full of references about food, drink, eating, and fellowship. Jesus knew the power of the table and used it to teach and embody truth about himself. And when we sit down for a meal with others, we get to know them better while we nourish our bodies and souls. In this seven-session series, complete with simple yet delicious recipes, Bianca Juárez Olthoff leads us through Jesus's interactions around the table, inspiring us to invite people into our homes, open the Word of God, and break bread together.

Accessing The Material

On the following pages you will find all of the information needed to go through the Table Talks Life Group Material. There are corresponding videos that can be accessed through our "RightNow Media" account with the church. If you don't have an account, go to rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/BrackenRidgeBaptistChurch. After creating an account search "Table Talks" to access the 7 weeks.

rightnow MEDIA

If you are unable for some reason to access the material through these different means, please simply email office@brbc.org.au or call 07 3261 5045.

Bracken Ridge
BAPTIST CHURCH

Session 1



Chef Derick's Baked Ziti

Ingredients

- » 2 quarts of tomato sauce (jarred or homemade)
- » 1 lb. of cooked Penne Pasta
- » Italian sausage
- » Pepperoni slices
- » 1 bunch of fresh basil, roughly chopped
- » 1 cup shredded mozzarella
- » 15 oz ricotta cheese

Set your oven to 350°.

In a deep glass or metal dish, layer all of your ingredients.

First your cooked pasta, then your sauce and sausage. Next lay out a thin layer of pepperonis and top with your roughly chopped basil. Be sure to spread all your ingredients evenly so every bite has every flavor. Using a spoon, take dollops of ricotta and deposit them throughout the dish. Finish off by sprinkling a layer of shredded mozzarella cheese. Toss in the oven and cook for about 30 minutes. Check your pasta at 10–15 minutes—if your cheese is already browning, consider putting a layer of foil on top for the remaining time.

★ “Level It Up” Homemade Tomato Sauce (Session 1)

- » 1 large yellow onion, finely diced
- » 5 cloves of garlic
- » 1/2 cup of olive oil
- » 1/2 cup of balsamic vinegar
- » 1 cup of red wine
- » 1 10-oz can of tomatoes
- » 2 bay leaves
- » 1 tsp. of chili flakes
- » salt and pepper
- » 2 bunches of basil, rough chopped

Take one large finely diced yellow onion, five cloves of garlic, and a half a cup of olive oil, and sauté for five to eight minutes on medium low heat. Cook until the onions are soft and translucent. Add a half a cup of balsamic vinegar and one cup of red wine. Reduce until almost evaporated. Then you're going to add pared tomatoes or whole tomatoes, broken up, two bay leaves, and a teaspoon of chili flakes. Simmer on low heat for about an hour. Close to the end, season with salt and pepper and add two bunches of basil, rough chopped.

SESSION 1: DO I HAVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE?

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: No weakness, fault, or pain can uninvite us from Jesus's table. Because he welcomes each one of us, we are empowered to invite others, no matter their struggles, into our lives.

Head Change: To know that Jesus has invited us into a relationship—community—with him

Heart Change: To feel relief that we don't have to earn our place in God's family.

Life Change: To stop making excuses about why we aren't good enough for God, and to accept his invitation to sit at his table.

Each session in *Table Talks* corresponds to a video segment featuring a recipe. Feel free to watch the video as a group, make the recipe together, and use the icebreaker question below to spark conversation while you eat.

OPEN

What groups do you belong to? What do you like about participating in those groups?

We all have a need to belong. Perhaps to an organization, or to a family, or to a person. We need to know we are accepted and have a place we can call home. In this seven-session series, author and teacher Bianca Juárez Olthoff explores the motif of the table in the book of Luke as a metaphor for belonging, fellowship, and community to teach us about Jesus and ourselves. In this first session, she focuses on the largeness of Jesus's table—his supremely welcoming invitation for all sorts of people to join him.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Bianca Juárez Olthoff's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

What is the proverbial question Bianca has been asking all her life?

Whom does God welcome to his table?

Show Session One: *Do I Have a Seat at the Table?* (8 minutes).

REVIEW

Bianca opened with a reflection on the centrality of food to the Christian experience. As food and drink satisfy the body, so fellowship around a table satisfies the soul. When we eat with others, we become a community. **What do you enjoy about sharing a meal with friends? In what ways has eating and drinking together helped smooth over the awkwardness of meeting new people?**

Jesus's willingness to share a meal with a wide variety of people garnered him both praise and scorn. He maximized his experiences reclining at a table with friends and enemies alike often by teaching truth, usually through stories. In this session, Bianca focused on Jesus's parable of the banquet in Luke 14.

Read Luke 14:16–24.

The parable opens with a master planning a banquet, inviting many to come celebrate with him. He was opening his home to others joyfully. Bianca recalled her childhood memory of wondering if she would be able to claim a seat at the family table rather than squeezing in, relegated to the extra "nub" of a chair. **In what ways can you relate to her feelings of not being old enough, accomplished enough, or smart enough to be fully included in your family?**

Our heritage, economic status, skin color, and other identifications give us a sense of who we are, but those "qualifications" are not what God looks at when inviting us to his table. He welcomes everyone who is willing to come. **What about God's wide-open invitation is appealing to you? Is there anything about the inclusive nature of his "table" that makes you uncomfortable? Why or why not?**

No matter our qualifications, we can sometimes wonder if we are worthy of being a part of a group. We may feel the need to fight to retain our place or to work harder to solidify our membership in the group. But God does not focus on our shortcomings—he knew our faults and chose us anyway. **In what ways, if any, have you felt out of place or unworthy at God’s “table”? What does it look like to accept the truth—that God loves us, chooses us, and does not count our sins against us as his children?**

In the parable, the invited guests made excuses when it was time for the feast. So, the master, determined to share his bounty, opened up the party to anyone who was willing to attend. **How does the master’s exuberance for hospitality echo God’s generous love?**

When has someone showered you with unusual, exorbitant generosity? How did you respond?

Scripture shows us that God has a place for any kind of person to join his kingdom—rank and ability count for nothing. Consider Moses, a stuttering murderer (Exodus 2:11–15; 4:10–11), or David, who stole his friend’s wife and then had his friend killed (2 Samuel 11). Moses went on to deliver Israel from slavery, and David was forgiven and restored to lead his people. **What sort of shortcomings have made you feel disqualified to serve God? What happened to show you that God had a place for you in his work?**

Everyone who trusts in Jesus comes to faith in different ways. Think of your faith journey. Whether it was a slow-growing belief from childhood or a dramatic turnaround from a destructive lifestyle, you said “yes” to Jesus’s invitation. **What made you accept him? How can you encourage someone else today by sharing your story?**

Bianca ended her teaching with a challenge: “The table is set; the party is starting. So get up, dress up, and show up. There’s a seat at the table for you.” Through his parable, Jesus described the wide-open invitation God has given each of us to join him. The only disqualification is refusing to come. If anything is stopping you from saying yes to God, ask a friend to help as you keep searching for answers.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

In the Gospels, Jesus often alluded to food and drink, eating and imbibing, feasting, and celebrating. Sometimes he compared great spiritual truths to common spices and staples on the table, while other times he was the unpredictable guest of honor at the table. In this session's passage, Jesus is at a feast himself, observing his fellow guests. Their behavior prompts him to comment, then tell a parable.

Read Luke 14:1-11.

In verse 1, Luke tells us that even as a guest, Jesus was being watched. The Pharisees were suspicious of him and many were fully antagonistic toward him. To heal a person on the Sabbath, they believed, would violate God's Law (see Exodus 34:21). Knowing the Pharisees brought the diseased man as a test, Jesus asked the gathering his own question in verse 3: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?"

They remained silent, and he healed the man. **What does this exchange tell you about the hearts of the Pharisees at that dinner?**

Re-read verse 5. Using a rhetorical question, Jesus told the gathering why he healed the man on the Sabbath. **What reaction was he hoping to provoke from his hosts? How did they actually respond?**

Jesus then noticed how other guests were choosing the honored seats over the lesser places at the table. So he admonished them to think humbly of themselves, lest they be embarrassed when the host moved them out of a seat of importance because a more illustrious guest had arrived.

Read Proverbs 27:2.

How do you feel when someone honors you in front of others? In what ways is it better to let someone else reflect on your positive attributes instead of talking about them yourself?

Jesus was reminding the religious leaders that true honor cannot be grasped; rather, it is earned and recognized by others. **In what situations have you experienced or witnessed the beauty of someone being honored?**

Read Luke 14:12–15.

Jesus warned his fellow guests to avoid what they were just doing—honoring themselves. And if they were to give their own banquet, he said—flipping the cultural script—the invitation list should include those who could not pay them back. **What does he say their repayment will be in verse 15?**

How often do you think of eternal rewards, rather than more immediate gratification, when you are serving others?

Read Luke 14:16–24.

Jesus emphasized the point of his conversation through a parable in which a man joyfully prepared a feast and was eager to sit down with all of his guests at the table. In the same way, Jesus (the master) has invited us to fellowship, to commune, to enjoy a close relationship with him. **What does it mean to you to hear that Jesus wants you to be his friend, to join his community of loved ones?**

The invitees, however, started making excuses about why they couldn't attend the dinner. The master then opened up his home to people that the Pharisees, listening to the story, would never consider appropriate guests: “. . . bring in here the poor, maimed, blind, and lame” (Luke 14:21). **What does this broad invitation tell us about Jesus's character? About his desire for the church?**

Consider your own local church. **What are you doing well to welcome people of all backgrounds, life situations, and struggles? How would you evaluate your church's willingness to embrace the lowly, outcast, and needy?**

The master in the parable flung open wide the doors of his house—every sort of person was welcome. Jesus was rebuking the Pharisees, who prided themselves on following the Law. Rather, God welcomes the humble who know they are not perfect. He welcomes those who know their faults and are willing to come to him anyway. **Whom can you invite into your life more purposefully? How can you reflect God's generous heart?**

LAST WORD

Jesus's parable is good news to everyone. He is the master portrayed in the story—the ultimate host, setting up a feast and opening his home to everyone who responds to his invitation. What will it take for you to RSVP with a “yes”? If you've already accepted Jesus's invitation, whom can you invite to join you? As believers we represent Jesus to everyone around us. Let's consider how well we model his generosity and hospitality.

DEEPER WALK

Memorize: To remember Jesus's primary message communicated in the parable, memorize Luke 14:11. “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Host: Create a guest list of people who would not consider themselves in your closest circle of friends. Send the invitations. Using the recipe from this session, create a meal, and welcome new people into your world.

Serve: Seek local opportunities to serve those in need around you in a meal-centered setting. Perhaps you could volunteer at a soup kitchen, or deliver meals to the home-bound, or visit care facilities for the elderly. Or consider bringing a meal to a friend or neighbor who needs short-term help.

Pray: Ask God to reveal any tendency toward pride in your heart and to empower you to humble yourself more and more.

Session 2



Quesadillas

Ingredients

- » Tortillas
- » Shredded Cheese
- » Optional: Chorizo

Add your tortillas to an ungreased pan, at a medium to low heat. Not using oil gives your outer shell a little crunch. Top with your choice of cheese. You can also add in some cooked chorizo at this point if you'd like. Once your cheese starts to melt, fold the tortilla over and flip. Once your tortilla has reached your desired toastiness, remove from the stove and serve!

★ Bianca's Salsa Quemada (Session 2)

- » 4–5 vine-ripened tomatoes
- » 1–3 jalapenos
- » 1–3 serrano peppers
- » 1 onion
- » 2 cloves of garlic
- » ½ a bunch of fresh cilantro
- » salt & pepper
- » 1 tsp. of vinegar

Toss the peppers and the onion with a little bit of olive oil and roast in the oven at 400°. Let roast for 5–10 minutes then add your garlic. After a few more minutes add your tomatoes. We don't put the tomatoes in immediately because the juice from the tomatoes will keep you from getting that roasted burn quality on the outside of the chilies. Once everything looks roasted and dark, start adding your ingredients to a blender; your tomatoes, the onion (coarsely chopped first), and the cloves of garlic. Next, add the peppers to desired spiciness. Lastly, add a half of a bunch of cilantro, a little bit of salt and pepper, and the teaspoon of vinegar.

You can top it off with avocado or leave it plain.

SESSION 2: A DINNER PARTY FOR 5,000

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: God can use even the smallest gift to do great things. But to participate in his work, we must be willing to offer him everything, even if what we have to offer seems insignificant.

Head Change: To know God can use anything we offer to him for his glory, our good, and the good of others.

Heart Change: To feel encouraged that God wants to use even our weaknesses to bless others.

Life Change: To thank God for what we do have, little or much, so that we can share it with others.

Each session in *Table Talks* corresponds to a video segment featuring a recipe. Feel free to watch the video as a group, make the recipe together, and use the icebreaker question below to spark conversation while you eat.

OPEN

When have you seen a small item used for something significant?

A paintbrush is a small tool, but it can create huge works of art. A ladle, though delicate, can scoop out gallons of warm soup to the hungry. A little thing can do big work when it's in the right person's hand. In this session, Bianca recalls her childhood claim, "There's nothing to eat," and her father's response: "If there is something, never say there's nothing." What could be the "something" in our lives we are not allowing God to use?

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Bianca Juárez Olthoff's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

How did Jesus feed 5,000 men?

What does love look like to a hungry person?

Show Session Two: *A Dinner Party for 5,000* (9 minutes).

REVIEW

Bianca recalled her family's habit of complaining that their pantry and fridge didn't have "anything" to make a meal. **What is your usual reaction when you notice your resources—money, food, energy, time, etc.—have been depleted?**

The childish habit of seeing "nothing" in a pantry full of food reminded Bianca of a story in the Gospels, in which Jesus was faced with a hungry crowd and few resources. Read Luke 9:10–17.

A crowd of 5,000 men (and others uncounted by Luke) followed Jesus and his disciples to a remote destination. Jesus spent the day with them, teaching and healing. **What is Jesus's attitude toward the crowd? Do you think he looks at you the same way? Why or why not?**

The people began their journey to Jesus looking for spiritual food, but they ended up needing physical nourishment as well. The disciples looked at their circumstances—a large crowd, a remote location, limited options—and concluded that their day's work was finished. It was time to send everyone off to find food and shelter. **In what ways can you relate to the Twelve? Does their logic seem reasonable? Why or why not?**

Bianca noted that, often, when Jesus asks us to do something, we give him all the reasons we can't do it. We can't feed a crowd—we only have a few ingredients. We see our lack and assume it isn't enough. **In what ways do we discount God's ability to use the seemingly small gifts we have? What could it look like to trust him with the gifts we offer him?**

Bianca wanted us to change our perspective from seeing what we're missing to seeing what God can do with what we have. She said, "the ingredients for a miracle are always in our midst." **What resources do you have that God can use? What could it look like to purposely offer them to him?**

Bianca pointed out that the little boy in the crowd who offered his lunch to Jesus was not even among the 5,000 men counted as being there. But his provision certainly counted—and his story continues to reverberate through history. **What small actions of faithfulness in your life have reaped outsized results?**

If you've ever felt like you don't count, in what ways can the little boy's interaction with Jesus encourage you?

In such a large crowd, chances are good that people had brought food with them. But only one boy offered help. Bianca touched on a problem common to our online, globalized culture. Information overload can sometimes cause a sense of helplessness in the face of the enormity of needs. If we think the little we have won't help enough, we are tempted to do nothing at all.

In what ways have you felt the tension Bianca described between knowing about needs and not feeling equipped to help? What could it look like to be prepared to help if God prompts you to intervene?

Jesus taught the crowd the good news, and he wants us to do the same. But the truth is often best expressed alongside loving action. As Bianca said, "Love is tangible. To a hungry person, love is bread." **In what ways are you helping meet physical needs as well as spiritual ones?**

Let's start a new way of thinking about how we can join God's work by thanking God for what is in our hands so that we can share it with others.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

The story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 is the only miracle that all four Gospel writers included in their accounts. The main events are told with remarkable similarity, but each account contains something unique from the others. Together, they paint a full picture of what happened that day.

Read Luke 9:7–9 and Matthew 14:1–13.

Before Jesus's miracle on the hillside, he learned about the death of John the Baptist, whom King Herod had beheaded earlier. We can't tell exactly how much earlier it happened, but it appears that Jesus was just hearing about his cousin's death when the disciples returned after being sent out to preach. He needed some space to process what he'd learned. **How do you deal with difficult news?**

Jesus wanted to spend some downtime with his people. They were excited but tired, and he was grieving the loss of someone he loved. But a crowd of needy people interrupted their getaway. Read Mark 6:34. **How did Jesus respond to the crowd? What was it about them that provoked his reaction?**

Despite their heavy hearts and weary bodies, Jesus and the disciples ministered to the crowd all day. We are not often given a choice about when others need us: parents get awakened by sick children in the middle of the night, workers show up despite emotional turmoil at home, pastors miss family time to usher a grieving church member through a sudden loss, and the list goes on. **When have you experienced the necessity to serve others while you were already burdened? What motivated you to push past your own struggles and reach out to others?**

Read John 6:8–9. Compare with Mark 6:38, Matthew 14:17, and Luke 9:13. Jesus had charged the disciples with feeding the crowd. **What new details does John add to the story? How does the new information expand our understanding of the feeding of the five thousand?**

Matthew's account confirms that women and children were also among the crowd, so estimates of the actual number range from 10,000 to 15,000. Certainly, 5,000 is a misleading figure—many, many others sat on the hillside listening to Jesus, anticipating something they likely never saw coming. **When have you been depleted, waiting for God to fill your need? What did it look like to see him come through for you when the situation seemed impossible?**

Consider the gifts God has given you—your free time, your paycheck, the food in your pantry. **How could you be open-handed with one thing God has given you this week?**

LAST WORD

The feeding of the 5,000 showcased the compassion and majesty of Jesus all at once. He loved the people and wanted to provide for them. He feels the same for us. And just like he magnified the humble gift of the boy's lunch, he can make much of anything we have to offer him. All we have to do is trust him. What do you have, small as it may be? Offer it to God and see what he can do with it!

DEEPER WALK

Reflect: God cannot multiply what we do not recognize. Spend time thinking through your tangible resources—finances, belongings, people in your life—and assets not so tangible, such as education, emotional stability, spiritual support, and more. Thank God for reminding you of the blessings that he has given you. Then ask him how you can use what he's given to you to love others.

Study: The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 is in each Gospel. Take some time this week to read each passage. Compare and contrast the various characters, actions, and words: Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–15.

Research: Look through your pantry, freezer, and refrigerator. Make a list of everything there, then research recipes that include those ingredients. Check out the recipe cards that go with this series for inspiration. Invite some friends over for a creative meal.

Pray: Ask God to reorient the way you see yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, and his ability to bless you—and bless others through you.

Session 3



Charcuterie Board Shopping List

All these items are optional! But if you struggle to know where to start, here is a list of possibilities. Try and mix it up, salty & sweet, crunchy and soft. The fun part is layering it all out!

- » 3 types of cheeses (or more!)
- » Crackers or bread slices
- » Chocolate
- » Dried fruit (apricots, figs, etc.)
- » Pickled items (pickles, olives, etc.)
- » Nuts
- » Fresh Fruit (berries, apple slices, etc.)
- » Veggies (peppers, carrots, cucumbers, etc.)
- » Dips and spreads (hummus, marmalade, honey, etc.)
- » Pasta salad
- » Salami or other cold cut meats

SESSION 3: PRIORITIES

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Knowing God should be our priority more than all the good works we do to serve him.

Head Change: To know that our first priority is our relationship with God more than our acts of service for him.

Heart Change: To feel peace about prioritizing God above everything else in our lives.

Life Change: To remind ourselves that, while serving the Lord is a high calling, he ultimately desires our worship and company.

Each session in *Table Talks* corresponds to a video segment featuring a recipe. Feel free to watch the video as a group, make the recipe together, and use the icebreaker question below to spark conversation while you eat.

OPEN

Imagine you are asked to host an elaborate dinner party. Would you be excited about it or filled with dread? Why? What would be your priority in preparing for the party?

Everyone thinks of hosting differently, and it's not everyone's cup of tea. Even among the naturally gifted hosts, no two are alike. Some love to make intricate meals, others prefer to have a spotless home, while others focus on the guest list.

In this session, Bianca will introduce us to Mary and Martha, two sisters with vastly different approaches to having Jesus in their home. Jesus's response to their dispute gives us a glimpse into how we should prioritize our time and efforts.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Bianca Juárez Olthoff's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

How did Jesus respond to Martha's complaint about Mary?

What was the point of the gathering in the sisters' home?

Why was Mary's the better choice?

Show Session Three: *Priorities* (9 minutes).

REVIEW

Hosting a gathering can be both a delight and stress for those responsible. Bianca told a story of when she allowed the pressure of perfection to override her enjoyment of the event. She had lost sight of her purpose for hosting. **In what ways can you relate to her situation?**

Bianca told a story from Luke that shows what can happen when we misplace our priorities. Read Luke 10:38–42.

Following the social norms of her society, Martha opened her home to Jesus when he came to town. But Martha, Mary, and Jesus were already friends. **When you welcome friends to visit, what does your preparation look like? What are your priorities as you get ready?**

Martha busied herself with preparations but her sister didn't. Martha's issue with Mary seems reasonable—it's not out of the question to need help hosting. **If you have a roommate or spouse, what expectations do you have for them to help with hosting duties during a dinner party? If help fails to materialize, how do you react?**

Bianca explained the phrase "sat at the Lord's feet" as the action of a disciple or student, which was rarely—if ever—described of women in Jesus's day. Allowing Mary to learn from him made Jesus a unique teacher. **In what ways does the context Bianca provided shape the way you view this story?**

Bianca noted that Martha's work was necessary: "candles need to be lit, the table has to be set, and the floor has to be swept." Such chores are part of what makes a place welcoming to visitors and able to be used for great purposes. But Jesus corrected Martha's attitude. **What was wrong with her attitude? How did Jesus point her toward better priorities?**

Jesus didn't reprimand Martha for her being a hostess, but rather for her attitude while serving her guests. In her zeal to serve, she had forgotten the reason for the gathering. Mary's focus was on soaking in Jesus's teaching. He was the reason they were all together, after all. **How did Jesus describe her actions in verse 42? What would having a mindset like Mary's look like in your life?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

In the Gospel of Luke, Martha and Mary welcomed Jesus to their home in distinctly different ways that revealed different priorities. Their story reminds us that following and knowing Jesus are the most important things we can do with our lives. Jesus also talked about how we should prioritize our lives in his longest recorded sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, which we find in Matthew.

Read Matthew 6:19–24.

This section of the sermon focuses on our relationship with possessions and money—which can both easily distract us from God and other people. **What do these verses tell us about the durability of our possessions or finances? Why shouldn't we place our hope in them?**

Our world brims with plenty of "treasures" we can store up for ourselves—from the latest tech to cute clothes to social-media-worthy experiences. **What "treasures" compete for your attention? What's appealing about them?**

In what ways have the "treasures" of the world let you down?

The passage encourages us in verse 20 to "store up treasures in heaven." In other words, we should treasure God, his kingdom, his ways, and his people, which will endure eternally. **What does it look like to "store up treasures in heaven," practically speaking?**

As we see in verse 21, our misplaced priorities reveal our hearts. Verses 22–24 reemphasize that what we focus on will affect our inner selves, which affect the people around us. In the video, Bianca talked about a dinner party she threw where she was so preoccupied with preparations that she wasn't loving the people around her. **When have your actions shown misplaced priorities at work, at home, or in your church community? How did your actions affect other people?**

Bianca's husband reminded her that they were opening their home to serve people—to extend the love of God to them. Preparing her home wasn't wrong. But in worrying about getting ready for the party, Bianca forgot what truly mattered. Worry is often the root issue behind our misplaced priorities.

Read Matthew 6:25–34.

Jesus knows us well—he recognizes that our wrongly ordered priorities are often influenced by worry, so he tackles the issue head-on in this passage by reminding us of who God is and what he thinks of us. **What illustrations does Jesus use to explain God's character? What is God capable of according to these verses?**

Worry can blind us to the strength, power, and faithfulness of God. When we worry, we view the world as if God were absent or uncaring. But Jesus reminds us of the truth: God loves us. He loves you. Just as he cares for birds and flowers, he sees you, knows what you need, and is powerful to provide for you. **In what ways do God's love, power, and sovereignty help you put your worry into perspective?**

Believing God loves us can be one of the most difficult truths to grasp, especially if we are stressed, enduring hardship, or grappling with grief. **When is it difficult for you to set aside worry and remember God's character and love for you?**

In what ways have you experienced God's care? What could it look like to remember those moments when you're faced with worry?

Worry affects our relationship with God, and it can spill over into our relationships with other people. **What are you worried about right now? How might worry be affecting your priorities? The people in your life?**

What could it look like to hand over your worries to God?

Jesus commands us in verse 33 to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” In other words, Jesus calls us to pursue him and his ways above all else. It all comes back to Bianca’s point in the video: our priorities matter. **How would you assess your priorities right now? What’s competing for your attention?**

Pursing God first often plays out in small, simple ways in our lives—like Mary choosing to sit at Jesus’s feet or Bianca loving her friends at a dinner party. But small steps of obedience can make a tremendous impact on our lives, our hearts, and our relationships. **What could it look like for you to pursue God’s kingdom and righteousness this week?**

Note: If you struggle with anxiety, depression, or any other mental health issue, seek help from a professional. Also consider talking to a trusted Christian friend or pastor about your struggles—you are not alone.

LAST WORD

Jesus wants us to focus on him more than any other distraction. He commands us to seek him and his kingdom first. He can handle our worries, our needs, our desires. This week, take some time to consider your priorities. Are you more preoccupied with the worries in your life? What do you value most? What could seeking after God and his kingdom look like in your life?

As we encounter opportunities to serve Jesus, let’s keep the main thing the main thing.

DEEPER WALK

Reflect: Spend time in the Gospels exploring Jesus's interactions with Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38–42; John 11; 12:1–7). Martha is usually written off as a workaholic, but her response to Jesus in John 11 gives us insight into her character. What can you learn from her?

Prepare: Using the recipe from Bianca in this session, keep your preparations simple for your next gathering. Instead of planning a complicated spread, be intentional at setting up so that you are freed up to enjoy your guests' company more.

Memorize: Spend time repeating, writing, and committing to memory Jesus's statement in Matthew 6:21: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Pray: Ask God to help you prioritize what is truly meaningful as you find opportunities to serve him.

Session 4



“Not Your Momma’s” Grilled Cheese

Ingredients

- » Bread Slices
- » Butter
- » Havarti cheese slices
- » Pesto
- » Red bell peppers, roasted

Start by slicing your red bell peppers in half and cleaning them. Place on a pan, sliced side down, on parchment paper. Roast in the oven at 400° for 15–20 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool.

When cool to the touch, peel back charred skin—it should lift easily—and slice.

Add a generous amount of room-temperature butter to one side of a slice of bread. On the other side, stack slices of Havarti cheese. Let your cheese overlap and fall over the edges of your bread. Place in your pan butter side down. Turn your stove to about medium heat. While your cheese starts to melt, prep your other piece of bread with a generous amount of pesto on one side and butter on the other. When the cheese has melted a bit add some of your roasted bell pepper slices and your other piece of bread, this time butter side up.

When your bread starts to turn golden brown on the bottom, 3–5 minutes, flip your sandwich to toast the other side for another 3–5 minutes.

Serve solo or with a side of tomato soup!

★ Tomato soup (Session 4)

- » 1 large yellow onion, medium diced
- » 1 Tbsp. chopped garlic
- » 1/2 cup of olive oil
- » 8 roma tomatoes
- » 1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes
- » 1 bay leaf
- » 2 cups vegetable stock
- » 1 cup of cream
- » Black pepper to taste
- » Fresh basil (optional)

Add one large yellow onion, medium dice, one tablespoon of chopped garlic and a half a cup of olive oil to a pan and simmer for 5–6 minutes. Add eight roma tomatoes, medium dice, a half a teaspoon of red pepper flakes and one bay leaf. Cook on medium temperature stirring for eight to ten minutes. Add two cups of vegetable stock, or water if you don't have it. Simmer on low heat for a half an hour. Finish with stirring in one cup of cream. Bring it to a boil and then turn your heat off. While you let it cool a little bit pull the bay leaf out. Throw everything into the blender and mix on high speed.

Ladle into bowls and top with a drizzle of olive oil, cracked pepper, and some finely chopped basil.

★ Basil Pesto (Session 4)

- » 1/2 cup of olive oil
- » 1–2 garlic cloves, about a teaspoon
- » 1/4 cup toasted pine nuts
- » 1 Tbsp. of lemon juice
- » 1/2 tsp. of salt
- » 2 cups basil
- » 1/4 cup parmesan

Add the following ingredients to a food processor or blender: a half a cup of olive oil, garlic, a quarter cup of toasted pine nuts, one tablespoon of lemon juice and a half a teaspoon of salt. Turn that on until well incorporated. You want to make sure all of the garlic is finely minced. Open it up, add your two cups of basil and a quarter cup of Parmesan, and pulse until finally incorporated.

SESSION 4: THE UNINVITED GUEST

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Recognizing our own sin and accepting God's forgiveness frees us to extend grace to others.

Head Change: To know that we are no better than other sinners, equally in need of forgiveness.

Heart Change: To feel compassion for others that comes from humility in recognizing our own sin.

Life Change: To acknowledge our own sinful tendencies and decide to forgive those who hurt us.

Each session in *Table Talks* corresponds to a video segment featuring a recipe. Feel free to watch the video as a group, make the recipe together, and use the icebreaker question below to spark conversation while you eat.

OPEN

When the headlines announce another scandal, what is your first reaction? Why do you think you react that way?

Our world offers no shortage of public and private sin—some people have their disgrace blared in the media for all the world to see, while the rest of us suffer among personal relationships and situations. In today's session, Bianca walks us through an occasion in Jesus's life in which he is confronted with a sinful person and pressured to react a certain way. He chooses the way of grace and illustrates why we should do the same.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Bianca Juárez Olthoff's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

How was Jesus treated by his host?

Why were the woman's actions so shocking?

When faced with someone else's sin, what question should we ask ourselves first?

Show Session Four: The Uninvited Guest (7 minutes).

REVIEW

Any gathering of people carries the potential for an awkward moment. In today's session, we heard about a woman approaching Jesus during a dinner party at a religious leader's home. Jesus, the woman, and the leader each have something to teach us about judgment, forgiveness, and grace.

Read Luke 7:36–50.

Jesus's dinner with Simon is a study in contrasts. It opens with Jesus entering the home of a Pharisee, one of the religious leaders in Israel. Pharisees were generally wary of—and sometimes hostile to—Jesus, so the invitation is somewhat surprising. **Have you ever received a surprising invitation? If you attended the event, how were you welcomed?**

Bianca referenced the value of hospitality in Jesus's culture. Guests were to be treated with honor, including a welcoming kiss and an offer to wash their dusty, sandal-wearing feet. Look back at verses 44–46. **How did Simon treat Jesus? What does his behavior as the host tell us about his attitude toward Jesus?**

Bianca also explained some of the social customs of Jesus's time. Dinner party guests reclined to eat—their tables were low to the ground and surrounded by comfortable pillows. Guests would lie down, propped on their elbows with their feet behind and to the side of them. The sinful woman entered without objection likely because the doors would have been left open for onlookers to gather around the edge of the room due to Jesus's fame. **How do details about cultural customs help you understand this scene more clearly?**

The woman who came to see Jesus had a reputation for living a sinful lifestyle. No details of that sin are given. But anyone with a reputation for sin would have been avoided and condemned by some religious leaders as an outcast from the spiritual life in the community. But she was on a mission to bless Jesus. Approaching him at the Pharisee's home took courage. **When have you risked censure or rejection to do something you felt God had prompted you to do? What feelings dominated you during that event? Would you do it again?**

The woman sacrificed a valuable possession—a jar of perfume estimated to be worth a year's average salary—to honor Jesus. **What would it look like for you to offer God something extravagant? In what ways have you sacrificed for him?**

Simon judged both the woman's behavior and Jesus, wondering silently if Jesus truly understood what was going on. Knowing Simon's thoughts, Jesus, the master teacher, used a parable to teach him (and us) a lesson. Two people owed differing amounts to a lender, who forgave both upon realizing they could not repay him. Which of the borrowers loved the generous lender more? The one who owed the most, Simon answered correctly. **What truth was Jesus teaching through his parable? What was he communicating to Simon?**

In comparing the sinful woman to the Pharisee, Jesus honored the woman as one who loved God more because she understood her sinfulness. Simon's self-righteousness showed through his poor attitude toward both Jesus and the woman. **With which person, Simon or the woman, do you identify most right now? Why? When have you found yourself resembling the other one more closely?**

Simon seemed blind to his own self-righteousness. Bianca noted that the woman's example can help us look at ourselves and ask, "Where is the sin in my life?" **What steps can you take toward identifying your own sin? Toward refusing to judge others' sins? Toward giving thanks to God for his forgiveness?**

Notice Jesus's closing words to the woman in verse 50. **What saved the woman? How can Jesus's benediction to the woman help you find peace even as you struggle to overcome sinful tendencies?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

God's plan to restore his people to relationship with him is a central theme threading its way through the biblical story. From the Garden of Eden in Genesis to the New Creation in Revelation, God constantly forgives rebellious, hard-hearted people. The word *forgive* applies in a variety of scenarios, spiritual and material. For instance, in Luke 7, both financial debts and sins are forgiven. In what sense are debts and disobedience related? Let's explore the concept of forgiveness in the Bible.

What does it mean to forgive or be forgiven?

The two Greek words translated "forgive" in Luke 7 carry meanings such as "grant, give, bestow on; deal generously or graciously with, pardon; hand over or release (of a prisoner); cancel a debt, leave behind, cancel, dismiss, depart from."

So, when we see "forgive" and its related terms, we must evaluate the context of the paragraph to understand what connotations are being communicated.

Like the two who owed money in Jesus's story, forgiveness can be tangible—when a specific financial, material, or behavioral obligation is no longer owed. The debt is canceled.

Read Luke 7:41–43 again.

Who is forgiving whom? What is being forgiven?

Let's explain the lender's forgiveness using different terms. For instance, "The lender waved away their debt." **How else could you describe what happened?**

When have you been forgiven a debt, monetary or otherwise? How did you react when you learned you'd been forgiven? What happened next as a result? (Did you experience freedom to pay other obligations, to give or save? Were you able to pursue a different goal? Try to connect the events.)

Just as being forgiven a tangible debt influences our everyday lives, so being forgiven for actions and words affects our spiritual lives, which leads us to the next question.

How does forgiveness influence our relationship with God?

Read Luke 7:44–50. Jesus explains the woman’s motivation to Simon, then tells her, “Your sins are forgiven.” **In what ways are the financial debts in the parable different from the woman’s debt of sin? How are the debts similar?**

If money is owed, it can be given back. But if you have hurt someone, can that action be reversed or undone? Of course not. Likewise, the woman’s sins happened and could not be blotted out. But, when Jesus told her, “Your sins are forgiven,” he was releasing her from the guilt she carried for those sins. He was allowing her to depart from the punishment of what she’d earned through her actions. She no longer owed God any spiritual debts for her sins. **How can knowing you are free from guilt propel you to a greater sense of peace with yourself and with God?**

The New Testament is full of references pointing to the forgiveness Christ offers those who trust him. A sampling:

Romans 4:7 — “Blessed are those whose lawless acts are forgiven and whose sins are covered.”

Colossians 1:14 — “In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

1 John 1:9 — “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

According to the quoted verses above, what is required to be forgiven?

What changes for us after we receive God’s forgiveness?

What do we learn about God’s character when he forgives us?

Jesus offers us freedom from the guilt of our sin. He paid our debt on the cross, declared those who trust in him to be righteous, and intends us to live in freedom—from shame, guilt, fear—and in holiness. **What freedom have you found since accepting Jesus’s forgiveness?**

When God's forgiveness restores our relationship with him, he expects us to replicate that harmony with those around us.

How should our forgiven status with God influence our relationships with others?

Bianca closed the session with an astute observation: Often, we start out like the sinful woman, humble and grateful for God's grace, but we grow up to become more like Simon, judgmental and condemning of others, having forgotten our humble beginnings. **In what ways have you seen Bianca's observation to be true in your life?**

Scripture tells us that the best way to show Jesus our gratitude for his grace is to extend grace to others.

Ephesians 4:32 — "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God forgave you in Christ."

Colossians 3:13 — "... bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive."

Think of a time when someone extended grace to you. Maybe they forgave you for doing them wrong, or gifted you through service, or spoke well of you before others. **What could it look like for you to respond to God's grace in your life in your behavior toward others? Whom do you need to forgive? What small kindness can you extend to a hurting friend?**

Fun fact: The word Jesus used for "forgive" in Luke 7:48–49 (and that Paul used in the verses above) comes from the Greek *charizomai*, which is related to *charis*, which is translated *grace*. Forgiveness and grace are two sides of the same coin.

LAST WORD

Our lives are filled with occasions in which we owe others. We may owe something tangible, but more often we tend to need forgiveness for emotional and spiritual debts. The church looks more like Jesus when we reflect his grace toward us in our relationships with each other. The more we recognize our sin, the more we love and thank God for forgiving us like the women with the alabaster jar. We wash others' feet and offer our very best to be a fragrance to the world as our way to love God. As 1 John 4:19 reminds us, "We love because he first loved us."

DEEPER WALK

Reflect: Spend time thinking about the forgiveness you've received from God. Whatever your story, his love is greater than your sin. How have you responded to his grace? In what ways might you need to humble yourself to him again and confess your need for him?

Host: Prepare and host a small gathering, perhaps using the soup and sandwich recipe from today's session. As a small sign of grace, prepare a small gift to send home with everyone. Perhaps print a recipe card, or purchase a set of small decorative kitchen towels, or bake an extra loaf of bread for everyone. Nothing fancy—just a little something extra to say "thanks for coming."

Serve: Find an opportunity to serve tangible needs in your community. Spend time "washing the feet" of those in humbler circumstances.

Pray: Ask God to help you identify the ways in which he has forgiven you and specific ways you can reach out to forgive those who've hurt you or bless those who are hurting.

Session 5



Harvest Apple Salad

Ingredients

- » 4–5 cups of spinach
- » 1–2 honey crisp apples
- » 1 cup cooked quinoa
- » 1/4 cup of pecans
- » 1/5 cup pepita seeds
- » 1/3 cup of cranberries
- » Diced Gouda as desirable

Start off by cooking your quinoa or using pre-cooked. Then you're going to cube and dice the honey crisp apple, and the Gouda. Toss the spinach and the quinoa together, then layer all your ingredients. First apples, then pecans, pepitas, cranberries, lastly top with the cheese on top. Drizzle your vinaigrette on top. Our light shallot vinaigrette goes great with this.

★ Shallot Vinaigrette (Session 5)

- » 1–2 shallots
- » 1 Tbsp. honey
- » 2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- » 1/2 tsp. of salt
- » 1 Tbsp. Dijon
- » 1 Tbsp. water

Add the following ingredients to a food processor or blender: two tablespoons of minced shallot, one tablespoon of honey, two tablespoons of white wine vinegar, a half a teaspoon of salt, one tablespoon of Dijon. Blend on high, slowly adding the half a cup of olive oil followed by the one tablespoon of water.

SESSION 5: WHO SITS AT THE TABLE?

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: As those who have been saved by Jesus, we should pursue humility, putting others above ourselves.

Head Change: To know pride is not godly and humility is Christlike.

Heart Change: To feel motivated to humble ourselves and seek the good of others.

Life Change: To actively look for opportunities to use our influence to raise others up.

Each session in *Table Talks* corresponds to a video segment featuring a recipe. Feel free to watch the video as a group, make the recipe together, and use the icebreaker question below to spark conversation while you eat.

OPEN

Have ever met someone famous? How did they behave? Did they appear to expect recognition, or were they relaxed and accommodating?

Status plays tricks on our minds. When we meet someone we've admired from afar, it's easy to embarrass ourselves in our excitement because we have given that person such distinction in our minds. But what if we were the "famous" one, or at least the guest of honor—would the celebrity status go to our heads? In our session today, Bianca will share a story where Jesus calls out our unhealthy desire for recognition and status.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Bianca Juárez Olthoff's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

What is Jesus's warning to guests?

What is Jesus's warning to hosts?

Show Session Five: Who Sits at the Table? (8 minutes).

REVIEW

Bianca's story of getting politely banished to the corner at the dinner party where she was—unknown to attendees—the guest of honor would have been comedic if it weren't so embarrassing for the woman she met. **Have you ever been involved in a similar incident? If so, what was your role and how did you handle the situation?**

Jesus warns against seeking honor when it's not ours to claim. Instead, we should be realistic about our own humble status and look around for others to lift up. If anyone finds honor, it should come from a reputation recognized and celebrated by others—not ourselves.

Read Luke 14:7–12.

Jesus watched as other guests jockeyed for the best positions at the table to gain honor for themselves. **What might such behavior look like today? What measures do we use to determine our value compared to others?**

Jesus's parable illustrated a common event in Jewish society: a feast. Much like banquets today might have tables labeled "VIP," certain places were reserved for those the host wished to honor. Not just anyone could sit there and those who presumed to claim the seats of honor could be shamed when the intended honorees arrived. **What is the mindset of a person who presumes any place of honor is available to him or her? To what level do you recognize in yourself the same tendencies shown by Jesus's fellow guests?**

Read Proverbs 25:6–7. The Pharisees would have known the teaching about not exalting themselves in the king’s presence. Jesus was reminding them to practice what they already knew. **What would it look like for you to live wisely, not promoting yourself? How can you apply the truth of Proverbs 25:6–7 to your life online, at work, or with family?**

Bianca challenged us with a question: “Do we assume we are more important than we truly are?” **How would you answer that question?**

Jesus also warned the dinner host to check his guest list. Favoring only those we admire is just as self-serving as seeking the best spot at the table. Think of the areas in your life where you hold some authority or influence. **What can you do to help someone improve, gain access, or move up? Whose names come to mind, and what first steps can you take to honor them?**

God is pleased with the humble because he knows that their heart is in the right place. They have the right perspective. **How can you cultivate a more accurate view of your place in God’s kingdom? Where do you need to sit back and let others shine? And whom can you reach out to with a helping hand?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

It can be easy to criticize the Pharisees’ pride until we examine our own lives. We are often tempted to exalt ourselves and exclude others, just as they were. **How important is it for you to be liked by other people?**

It’s not that God wants us to be disliked or be ashamed of our social status. Rather, he wants to protect us—and for us to protect ourselves—from the insidiousness of pride. The Pharisees were experts in Jewish Law, they should have known what the Scriptures said about pride. But they did not practice what they said they believed. We have God’s word at our fingertips. How well are we living out his principles for a holy life? Let’s explore what Scripture says about pride and humility.

Read Proverbs 11:2; 18:12.

Both of these verses contrast pride with humility. **What is the relationship between pride and disgrace? How can humility protect us from the damage that pride inevitably causes?**

We live in a world driven by self-promotion, where getting ahead often depends on being noticed by those with influence and power. That's the world's way, but Jesus offers us a better path. Read Philippians 2:3–4.

Paul holds up Jesus as the example of how to treat one another. **In this passage, whose needs should be treated as most important? What mindset is necessary for us to put others first?**

Putting ourselves first comes naturally. But the way of Jesus puts others first. Think of a relationship that can be stressful sometimes for you. **What are some tangible ways you can apply Philippians 2:3–4 to the way you interact with that person? How can you treat the other person as “more important than” yourself?**

Paul is laying down a challenge—it's hard to promote others ahead of ourselves, especially when we might feel they don't deserve it. But he offers support to his readers in the next few lines.

Read Philippians 2:5–11.

Jesus models the humility he asks of us. In verse 6, Paul reminds us that, though Jesus is God, he did not consider his deity something to be exploited (CSB) or grasped (ESV). He was willing to give up glory out of his love for his people. But putting others first required sacrifice. **What did Jesus sacrifice for us? What might it look like humble yourself for someone else? For someone you aren't inclined to like?**

Re-read verse 7. It begins with “he emptied himself” (CSB, ESV) or “he made himself nothing” (NIV). To be a servant, to die, and to die on a cross—each action was more shameful than the one before. But Jesus willingly gave up the glories of heaven to become the lowest of the low, for us. His sacrifice makes our salvation possible. Reflect for a moment on the grandness of Jesus's love for you as seen through the level of his sacrifice for you. **What do you think it means that Jesus “emptied himself”? What would it look like for you to sacrifice for others as Jesus did?**

In verse 5 Paul writes, “Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.” **In what ways do you find it difficult to humble yourself? Where do you struggle with sacrificing for others?**

Read verses 9–11. God honored Jesus’s willingness to let go of glory in pursuit of loving us. The way up is down. We aren’t promised that our humility will reap accolades from other people, but we do know that following Jesus’s example is pleasing to God. **What is one area of your life in which you want to follow Jesus’s example more?**

Bianca asked us in the video, “Are we placing our desires for praise and affirmation over others?” **What steps can you take to evaluate the way you prioritize yourself above others?**

In your current circumstances, what is one action you can take to step out of the limelight and honor someone else?

LAST WORD

Jesus modeled the upside-down way of living: the one truly worthy of honor voluntarily became lowest of the low as the supreme act of love. As Bianca said, the way up is down. Jesus came down to raise us up to be with him. Let us adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, considering others more important than ourselves.

DEEPER WALK

Memorize: Memorize Philippians 2:3, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.”

Host: Using a simple recipe, such as the harvest salad Bianca shared, prepare a modest meal without getting fancy or complicated. Spend time at the table talking about ways you can leverage your influence to help someone else.

Evaluate: Spend time going through your social media accounts. Look for trends in what you have posted. How many selfies do you have? How often do your words focus on you more than others? What does your feed communicate about your heart?

Pray: Ask God to help you identify points of pride in your heart. Ask his forgiveness and help with seeing yourself clearly and humbly. Thank him for humbling himself on your behalf.

Session 6



Year-Round Thanksgiving Sandwich

Ingredients

- » Sour dough rolls (halved), or bread slices
- » Cranberry Aioli
- » Thickly sliced Turkey
- » Sliced Brie
- » Thinly sliced apples (honey crisp works well)
- » Fresh spinach leaves
- » Honey mustard dressing

Start by toasting your bread on one side. Leave the inside of your bread soft to absorb your aioli. Coat the bottom of your pan in olive oil, and toast one side of the bread on medium-low until golden. While your sandwich toasts, toss your spinach in honey mustard dressing. Once done toasting, assemble your sandwich in this order: Apple slices, brie, turkey, Spinach. Coat your other bread slice in the cranberry aioli then place on top.

★ Cranberry Aioli

- » 1 cup dried cranberries
- » Water or red wine
- » 2 cups mayonnaise
- » 1 lemon

Place half a cup of dried cranberries in a pot. Cover them with water, or if you want, you can use red wine. Steep on low heat until basically all the water has evaporated. Take your cranberries and cool them down in a food processor, add in two cups of mayonnaise, the juice of one lemon, then puree.

SESSION 6: INVITE YOURSELF OVER

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: People are worth pursuing and loving. Just as Jesus sought us out, we should seek to share God's love with the people around us.

Head Change: To know that God is still seeking those who don't know him.

Heart Change: To feel compassion for those who do not know Jesus yet.

Life Change: To intentionally get to know people who have not met Jesus so that we can share his love with them.

Each session in *Table Talks* corresponds to a video segment featuring a recipe. Feel free to watch the video as a group, make the recipe together, and use the icebreaker question below to spark conversation while you eat.

OPEN

What is your favorite way to talk with people about Jesus?

Talking about Jesus will be a new practice for some people. The comfort of gathering around food and drink is a great way to ease into conversations centered on faith. In today's video, Bianca introduces a familiar Bible character whose life was changed after dinner with Jesus.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Bianca Juárez Olthoff's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

What was so scandalous about Jesus's invitation to Zacchaeus?

What happened to Zacchaeus after he had dinner with Jesus?

Show Session Six: Who Sits at the Table? (6 minutes).

REVIEW

Bianca began by praising the power of conversation around a table. The chef she met was justified to think she might use their mealtime to talk about Jesus.

Consider meals you've shared with friends. **In what ways does the setting of sharing food and drink encourage conversation and intimacy?**

Read Luke 19:1–5. Zacchaeus, a tax collector, was disliked by just about everyone. He was looked down on by the Romans because he was Jewish and ostracized by Jews because he collected taxes for their oppressors. Zacchaeus also charged his neighbors at a higher tax rate, taking the excess to make a nice profit for himself.

What do you think about Zacchaeus—is he someone you would want to be friends with? Why or why not?

Jesus knew Zacchaeus and his reputation. Yet, he befriended him anyway. Jesus knows us too, both our reputation and all our secret sins. Despite it all, Jesus wants to be our friend. **What does it mean to you that God knows you intimately? Do you think you deserve his friendship? Why or why not?**

Read verses 19:6–10. Zacchaeus was thrilled with Jesus's offer, but onlookers muttered about it disapprovingly. The teacher eating with a sinner? Scandalous! **Why was the mindset of the townspeople in error? What were they missing when they judged Zacchaeus for being a "sinner"?**

When have you been tempted to judge someone else without acknowledging your own imperfections?

Bianca reminded us that Jesus sees value in every person. In Luke 5:32 Jesus says, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” **If you have never done so, what could it look like for you to accept Jesus’s invitation to repentance? And if you have been a longtime disciple of Jesus, what does his invitation mean to you even now?**

Scripture does not give us the details, but it does tell us the meal with Jesus changed Zacchaeus. He was a brand-new person. After one dinner with the savior, the thieving tax collector became a repentant, generous saint. **What did Zacchaeus announce after his time with Jesus in verse 8? Why was his declaration shocking?**

Jesus declared Zacchaeus was a “true son of Abraham,” which, Bianca explained, meant that Zacchaeus was a true person of faith. Galatians 3:7 says, “. . . those who have faith, these are Abraham’s sons.” Zacchaeus’s actions didn’t save him; rather, his faith, made evident through his restitution, did. Bianca said, “Repentance is not just ceasing to sin but to turn away from it and hate it.” **In what ways has Jesus changed you—your actions, thoughts, relationships?**

Bianca’s last point was that Jesus saves those who seek him. He didn’t write off Zacchaeus, and he won’t write you off. **What does it mean to you that Jesus doesn’t give up on you?**

Bianca closed by encouraging us not to give up on the lost. Jesus invited himself into Zacchaeus’s home, his life, and his future. That meal radically changed lives in Jericho. As Jesus’s disciples, we have the privilege of introducing others to the forgiveness and redemption Jesus offers them. He’s worth it, and they are worth it. **Whom have you given up on? What could it look like to restart a relationship with that person?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Zacchaeus’s story is one of faith and transformation. He encountered Christ and came away a different person. His new faith compelled him to do what he could to make right all that he had made wrong while he lived as a sinner. Inspired by Jesus’s forgiveness, he not only returned what he had taken but added four times the amount to each of his victims. With extravagant repentance, he demonstrated the vitality of his new faith.

In Ephesians 2, we discover from the apostle Paul that Zacchaeus's transformation demonstrates exactly how our salvation works: we start in disobedience and sin, encounter Christ's mercy and grace, and become new people exploding with potential for good works. Let's investigate Paul's teaching more closely.

Read Ephesians 2:1–3.

Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus, to people who followed Jesus, to encourage their faith as they lived it out in a culture that espoused ungodly values. He begins this section by reminding the believers of who they used to be. **Do you identify with his description? How has "walking according to the ways of this world" apply to your thoughts? To your behavior? To your words?**

People who don't know Jesus sometimes reveal their dead hearts through their actions. Zacchaeus, for example, extorted and stole from his clients. He let greed rule his life. **What is your attitude toward lost people who need Jesus? How willing are you to draw close to them?**

Read Ephesian 2:4–9.

In verses 4–5 Paul follows up his earlier words with the best news of all, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ . . ." Notice the action of the sentence. **Who is doing the acting? What does it mean for us that God is the one who made us alive in Christ?**

If God can save you, he can save the people around you—even the socially awkward, the defiantly disobedient, and the subtly snide ones. Jesus loves them all. Think of at least one person in your circle who has not accepted Jesus. **What is one step you can take to show God's love to them?**

The lost don't have to earn God's favor. When Zacchaeus met Jesus, he was still lost. But then Jesus invited himself to dinner and Zacchaeus emerged a brand-new believer. When Zacchaeus announced his plan to pay restitution, Jesus knew that Zacchaeus's heart had changed. **What behaviors or attitudes have changed in your life since following Jesus? In what ways have you noticed your heart has been made new?**

Finally, read Ephesian 2:10.

Jesus's kind gift of salvation does not stay in our emotions and thoughts. Our new life bursts forth into action—good works that God has prepared for us. Once we are “in Christ,” our lives should actively and tangibly reflect God's love. **Who in your life needs a friend, a word of encouragement, or an offer to meet for coffee? Write down a name or two and pray about how and when you'll reach out.**

LAST WORD

The story of Zacchaeus illustrates the truth that God's grace can save us from sin and propel us into a new life full of godly, good, life-giving works. Jesus seeks all the lost, not just the socially acceptable. He thinks we're all worth his effort. He calls those of us who have already been found to keep going out to find the ones who need him. Maybe over a sandwich or a drink, we can share what God has done in our lives and give hope to someone else.

God's grace is worth sharing with others. Let's not write anyone off.

DEEPER WALK

Memorize: Memorize Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost,” and Ephesians 2:8, “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift . . .”

Host: Simple sandwiches and finger foods like those Bianca shared in this session's recipe video, can make casual get-togethers easy to plan. Invite a few friends over, including those still exploring the idea of faith.

Walk: Be intentional about getting to know your neighbors, whether that's walking your local sidewalks and talking to them in their yards or using technology to encourage gatherings. Start making friends right where you live and pray for opportunities to share the love of Jesus with them.

Pray: Commit to praying for two or three people who don't know Jesus. Set regular reminders in your calendar so you don't forget to keep interceding for their salvation.

Sesión 7



Cacio e Pepe

Ingredients

- » Spaghetti, fresh or boxed. Other long noodles could work.
- » 2–4 Tbsp. olive oil
- » 3 Tbsp. freshly cracked pepper
- » ¼ lb.–½ lb. finely grated parmesan reggiano cheese
- » Salt to taste

Boil your pasta al dente in lightly salted water, then drain. When finished, set some of your pasta water aside to use in your sauce later. While your pasta is boiling, heat 2–4 tablespoons of olive oil, depending on how much pasta is used, in a pan. Start to add the freshly cracked pepper. At the very minimum it should be three tablespoons of pepper, but if preferred spicier you could add as much pepper as you want. You're going to toast the pepper in the olive oil while the pasta is cooking.

Once done, go ahead and pull out the pasta and to begin to coat it in the pepper and the olive oil while sprinkling in finely grated Parmesan. If the grated parmesan reggiano is too thick, the cheese won't melt down and it won't turn into that delicious cheese sauce that you want. So you're going to want to use finely grated parmesan reggiano. You are going to sprinkle the cheese into the pan while mixing the pasta continuously. You want to add them both simultaneously.

The pasta mixture might get a little bit dense, a little bit too thick, so take your saved pasta water, and pour in one-fourth cup at a time till you reach the desired consistency of your cheese pepper sauce.

Serve immediately.

★ Lemon Vinaigrette (Session 7)

- » ½ cup olive oil
- » Zest from one lemon
- » 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- » 1 Tbsp. minced shallot
- » 2 Tbsp. honey
- » 2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- » ½ tsp. salt
- » 1 Tbsp. water

Puree or whisk together all the ingredients. Drizzle over salad and toss.

SESSION 7: THE LAST SUPPER, FOR NOW

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Jesus's death and resurrection offer us hope for new life in him. We can rejoice, anticipating the grand reunion feast waiting for us in his coming kingdom.

Head Change: To know that Jesus's resurrection gives us hope for eternal life with him.

Heart Change: To feel encouraged by the prospect of an eternal, beautiful future with God.

Life Change: To exercise the spiritual discipline of table fellowship as an expression of our hope, creating opportunities to regularly gather with other believers and inviting the lost to come and see the hope we have in Jesus.

Each session in *Table Talks* corresponds to a video segment featuring a recipe. Feel free to watch the video as a group, make the recipe together, and use the icebreaker question below to spark conversation while you eat.

OPEN

If you were able to invite any living person to have dinner with you, who would it be? What topics would you cover during your meal? And what would you prepare for your time together?

Fellowship around a table, while sharing good food and conversation, is an effective, artful method of growing relationships. The pace of our society, however, impedes our efforts to cultivate friendships slowly. In today's session, Bianca will look at the Last Supper as a hopeful event pointing to our future feast in heaven and as a model for a spiritual discipline we can implement today.

REVIEW

Bianca began by imagining what she would cook if she could have us all over for dinner at her place. **Do you have a favorite recipe you use when hosting? What makes it special?**

Jesus and his disciples gathered for their annual Passover dinner, a traditional feast celebrating an important event in their nation's faith. But at their last Passover together, Jesus changed things up. Read Luke 22:14–22.

The bread and wine now represented his body and blood, which would be sacrificed for them and us. He knew that, after dinner, he would be arrested, tried, and falsely condemned to die. So he “eagerly desired” to eat one last meal with his friends. **When you are leaving loved ones for a long time, how do you like to celebrate before you go? What sorts of feelings dominate during your last time together?**

Jesus comforted them with a vision of future joy—the next time they would gather for such a meal would be a celebration of God's kingdom. **Why do you think Jesus offered his disciples a hopeful vision of the future? How can hope help us endure difficulty?**

Jesus made the ceremonial dinner a word picture for how he would bring salvation to us. Through cracked bread, bitter herbs, and sweet wine, the disciples tasted and felt tangible illustrations of the price Jesus was about to pay. We are tactile people with five senses to help us experience the world. In Communion, or the Lord's Supper, we have a small piece of bread and some wine or grape juice. But even these small offerings can engage all of your senses **In what ways does the Lord's Supper create an environment that engages all of your senses? How does holding and tasting the communion elements solidify Jesus's sacrifice in your mind?**

Bianca quoted biblical scholar N. T. Wright, who wrote that Jesus “gave them a meal” as a way to explain his death to his disciples. For thousands of years, the church has mimicked Jesus by celebrating the Lord's Supper. The details may differ by region or tradition, but we often repeat Jesus's words from the Last Supper when we take this meal. **If you attend church, how does the Lord's Supper help you focus on Jesus's sacrifice for you? Which elements of your tradition make the ceremony meaningful to you?**

Read Luke 13:29 and Revelation 19:6–9. Both passages reference a future feast in God’s kingdom. At the Last Supper, Jesus acknowledged his coming suffering, which must have been sobering to hear. But he ended on a note of hope—that he would join them again in the kingdom of God. The next banquet they’d share would be one of joy and celebration! **Based on the passages you just read, what emotions surround the “marriage feast of the Lamb”? What makes God’s kingdom worth anticipating?**

We can look forward to a glorious eternal future with God all because Jesus was willing to sacrifice his life on our behalf. His love reaches past our faults and offers us a future with him in the new heavens and new earth. **When you think of being included in God’s future kingdom, what excites you the most?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

At the Last Supper, Jesus offered the disciples a glimpse of their future hope, the surety that they all would one day gather again. That joyful event would have to wait through the suffering and sorrow surrounding Jesus’s death, the persecution of the church, and all the various trials and pains that life brings everyone. As his disciples now, we still await that future day when all wrongs will be made right. How are we to live in hope? What does hope really mean?

What is hope?

First, we need a definition of hope. The Random House Webster’s Dictionary’s first entry says hope is “a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.” **How would you define hope? In what ways does your understanding of hope align with the general dictionary definition?**

Bible dictionaries define hope as “a confidence in regard to a good and beneficial future” (DBL Hebrew), and “a looking forward to in confident expectation” (Louw-Nida). **What sets the biblical meaning of hope apart from the general definition given above?**

Biblical hope is not mere wishful thinking, as children might “hope” the presents under the Christmas tree are exactly what they requested. Such thinking is based on the strength of the child’s feelings, not a concrete reality. Biblical hope relies on the object or person who is being trusted to bring about a desired result.

Let's explore what Scripture teaches us.

What do we hope for?

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb describes the beginning of God's new, eternal kingdom. But why is the new kingdom worth pinning our hopes on? What will it be like? Read Revelation 21:1–7.

The culmination of history shows God dwelling with his people in a new heaven and a new earth. The old, broken world will be replaced with a perfect, ideal world. The kingdom will be full of resurrected people living on a beautiful, perfected earth. What will it look like? We don't know—we only get imagery to give us a sense of its rightness. **How can the assurance that God plans a whole new, perfect world inspire you to endure the trials you face?**

The writer of Revelation pictures the new Jerusalem as a bride. Just as a wedding marks the beginning of a bride and groom's new, united life together, so the union of God (the groom) to live with his people (his bride) marks the start of a new, holy, perfect world. **How does the wedding imagery in Revelation 21 help you understand God's future kingdom better?**

Verses 3 and 4 describe the union between God and humanity. Jesus became a human and dwelt among us for a time, and the Spirit lives in us now. But someday, Jesus will return to dwell permanently with us. **When has God's nearness meant the most to you?**

What can we do to remind ourselves and others of God's present and future proximity with us?

The new kingdom also means peace, wholeness, joy—all that we fight to attain as we struggle against sorrow, death, and pain. With God, broken things are made new. **What in your life needs to be made new? How could the hope you have in Christ encourage you as you wait for God's renewal?**

In verses 6–7, God himself announces that he has done it! In the new heavens and new earth, he is the trustworthy source of life who has answered every need, renewed every spirit, restored everyone who hoped in him. **How does the vision of**

Revelation 21 encourage your faith today? What does it change or add to the way you worship God?

How does hope affect our lives now?

Read Colossians 1:3–5. Paul, writing to a church, describes why he thanks God for them: their faith in Jesus and love for God’s people. **According to verse 5, what is the church’s faith and love rooted in? What’s the connection between hope, faith, and love?**

The church in Colossae continued to faithfully love each other because they were motivated by what was coming in the future. In other words, their hope changed the way they lived. **What are some specific ways you’ve seen your actions, thoughts, or relationships change because of your hope in God?**

The Colossian church expressed their faith and loved each other so well that they were known for their hope. **Who are the most hopeful people in your life? What makes them unique?**

Hope changes everything. When we put our hope in what is sure—Jesus’s resurrection and future return—we are transformed from the inside out. We can be joyful in difficult circumstances; we can rest in a world that prizes busyness; we can serve other people sacrificially. **What could it look like in your life for hope in Christ to ground you, to support you in daily life? How could hope motivate your conversations, your decisions, your prayers?**

Bianca closed her teaching by encouraging us to exercise our hope through a specific action: table fellowship. Our mealtime gatherings—often referred to as the table—offer microcosmic moments to celebrate God’s work in our lives and point to our future with him. A small group sharing dinner, a few friends at a coffee shop, a family enjoying a picnic . . . the setting doesn’t matter as long as love is central. Tasty food is a bonus. **What could the discipline of table fellowship look like in your life? Whom could you invite to your table?**

LAST WORD

Hope has a name—Jesus. His resurrection gives us courage and excitement and purpose as we walk out our days keeping his promises in mind. Our hope for his return is based on solid intel—he told us he was coming back, and we know that God is faithful and trustworthy. So as we keep gathering around our tables in love and fellowship, enduring hard times, and enjoying sweet moments, we do so with the assurance that our efforts are not in vain. We are a people of hope. Let's keep sharing that good news.

DEEPER WALK

Memorize: Memorize Revelation 19:7, "Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself."

Prepare: As you plan your next gathering, find a recipe for an old favorite dish that recalls warm, pleasant memories. As you prepare the meal, pray for your guests. Be ready to share a story or two, when you sit down with them, of how that recipe was part of special occasions in your life.

Study: Using Bible study resources such as a concordance or Bible dictionary, conduct a study of the word hope. Read the stories in which it plays a significant role. See how it connects to faith and love. Psalm 71:5, Jeremiah 29:11, and Acts 26:6 are good places to start.

Pray: Spend time thanking God for giving you the assurance of your eternal future. Ask for clarity on what is still unclear and for faith to live each day in light of your hopeful destiny.

