

## CHAPTER 6: JESUS THE TABLE SETTER

**QUESTION:** When was the last time you had a sincere, face-to-face conversation about a sensitive topic with someone who believes very differently than you about that topic?

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**QUESTION:** What is striking to you about Jesus' fellowship habits?

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**Zaccheus** [Luke 19:1-9] \_\_\_\_\_

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**Syrophoenician Woman** [Mark 7:24-30] \_\_\_\_\_

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**Simon the Leper/Woman with Jar** [Mark 14:3-9] \_\_\_\_\_

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**Matthew/Levi** [Luke 5:27-32] \_\_\_\_\_

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**Pharisee** [Luke 14:1, 7-14] \_\_\_\_\_

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**Parable of the Great Dinner** [Luke 14:15-24] \_\_\_\_\_

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**Feeding of the 5,000** [Mark 6:30-44] \_\_\_\_\_

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**Last Supper** [Luke 22:7-23]

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**QUOTE:** When Jesus tells his closest friends over a last meal to remember him whenever they gather around the table together, he is inviting them to notice the holy in the mundane, to acknowledge his presence in the unremarkable, to make acknowledging him part of the normal rhythm of life. This is perhaps the greatest challenge we experience along the spiritual journey: remembering. But if we begin to ascribe meaning to even the most commonplace of moments, we can create a life saturated with an awareness of the Divine. p.57

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**QUOTE:** What struck me when I began to read the gospel stories was Jesus' table ministry, the way he so often used the act of sharing a meal, the act of breaking bread, as a way of letting people know that they were seen and heard and known and respected. With great regularity Jesus used the common moments to incubate the sacred—everything becoming a sort of living parable to illustrate the tangible reality of spirituality. The table was an altar around which he welcomed the world to experience communion with God and with one another. p.58

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**QUESTION:** What would it look like to set a table as Jesus did? Who would you invite? How would you guide the conversation or handle conflicts that arose?

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**QUOTE:** In a world where we so often are content to preach only to the choirs of those who agree with us, to wall ourselves off in a social-media echo chamber of our amening cheerleaders, Jesus models a better way. He fully engages all sides and teaches them about one another in the process. p.60

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**QUOTE:** No matter how inclusive or open we imagine our hearts to be, Jesus will always cause us to stretch further than we are comfortable with, always seeking greater diversity, more justice, deeper renovation. p.60

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**QUOTE:** Invariably we will be required to dispense compassion and mercy upon those we deem undeserving of it. We will be challenged to extend love to people we may find quite unlovable. We will be called to care for the "least of these," who are so not because society disregards them—but often because we in the Church have. Sadly, in areas of racial equality, LGBTQ rights, ethnic diversity, and gender equality, the Church has been on the tail end of progress, hindered by its tradition. For as much as we claim to take our cue from Jesus, we've so frequently resisted the progressive, barrier-breaking heart of his ministry. To love the least in his likeness will involve repairing a great deal of the damage organized Christianity has done to historically marginalized communities, and in many cases, we'll need to push back in opposition to it from the inside. p.62

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**QUOTE:** The Church will thrive only to the degree it is willing to be about making space for a greater swath of humanity and by recognizing the redemptive power of real relationships. p.63

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**QUOTE:** Jesus models the better way. He sets a bigger table. We don't have to reinvent Church or create a new system or launch a new denomination. We don't need a ministry strategy or a building campaign or some magic words. We simply follow him to the table of our own hospitality. We pull that sucker open, drop in a couple of extra slabs of wood, and start adding chairs. This is how we become a family. This is how we find our place and set one for others. It's how we make chicken soup for the world. p.63

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