



## **The Habits & Practices of Jesus (Week 2/3) Jesus & Meals**

### Small Group Discussion Questions

**Connect** *As we begin a new series, how do you think you could best prepare for it?*

#### **Warm-Up**

1. What do you value the most when sharing a meal with other people?
2. Where in the Gospel of Luke can you recall that Jesus shares a meal with someone?

#### **Read Luke 5:27-32**

3. In Jesus' time, why was a tax collector despised by Jewish people and treated like a "sinner"?
4. Why would Levi's occupation make Jesus' call: "Follow me" surprising or even scandalous?
5. What does Levi do after following Jesus (v.29)? What might this reveal about the joy of being welcomed by Jesus? Do you have experiences similar to Levi's?
6. Why do the Pharisees and teachers of the law object to Jesus sharing a meal with tax collectors and sinners? Are they mainly concerned about food, morality, religious purity, or something deeper?
7. With what analogy does Jesus answer the Pharisees? Who is Jesus in that analogy? Who are we? When then do we need him?
8. How would this help you to respond to the idea of "I must clean myself before Jesus will receive me?"
9. In this passage, who is in the greater spiritual danger - Levi or the religious leaders? Why?

#### **Read Luke 5:33-35**

10. What contrast do people notice between Jesus' disciples and the disciples of John and the Pharisees?
11. Why does Jesus compare himself to a bridegroom? What does this communicate about his presence?
12. Jesus' presence means God's mercy is at the table; e.g., the sick are being healed. How does this challenge the idea that Christianity is mainly about looking respectable, serious, or religious?
13. Share one or two ways we can make meals less about impressing people and more about presence, listening, prayerfulness, and genuine welcome?
14. From your experience, what are some simple ways to naturally include Jesus in the conversation without making the meal feel awkward or artificial?
15. As a group, how could we use meals to include people who may otherwise be isolated: newcomers, migrants, older members, single people, young families, or those who feel socially awkward?
16. What practical barriers stop us from sharing meals, e.g., busyness, cost, house size, perfectionism, fear, and how could the gospel (*Jesus first welcomed us*) free us from those pressures?

**Apply** *Who is one person or household God may be calling you to welcome in the coming weeks?*

**Pray** *Lord Jesus, thank you for welcoming sinners to your table; help us receive your grace with joy and reflect your costly welcome to others as we wait for your coming feast. In your name we pray, Amen.*

# GOING DEEPER

## **The Habits & Practices of Jesus (Week 2/3) Jesus & Meals**

### Small Group Discussion Questions

#### **On Your Front Line this Week**

*What are your current habits of prayer? If you don't have a daily pattern of prayer, start with the Lord's prayer each day.*




#### **For Families**

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: [stbartskids.org](http://stbartskids.org)

#### **Listen, Watch, and Read**

- *Listen (sermon):* "The Call of Levi" by R.C. Sproul:  
<https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/call-levi>
- *Read (article):* "Evangelism Is Mercy Ministry" by Elloit Clark:  
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/evangelism-mercy-ministry/>
- *Watch (sermon):* "Mission Through Meals" by Tim Chester:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1qgdD35Ex4>
- *Listen (sermons):* "Hospitality" by Tim Keller:  
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/hospitality/>
- *Watch (clip):* "Key Difference Between Entertaining and Christian Hospitality" by Rosaria Butterfield  
<https://tinyurl.com/yp9uxekf>
- *Read (article):* "10 Lessons from Jesus' Table" by Wycliff Bible Translators:  
<https://www.wycliffe.org/blog/posts/10-lessons-from-jesus-table>

#### **Series Resources**

- *Read:* "Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction" by Justin Whitmel Earley. 
- *Read:* "Celebration of Discipline" by Richard Foster. 
- *Read:* "Prayerfulness" by Peter Adam. 
- *Read:* "A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, & Mission Around the Table" Tim Chester.
- *Read:* "Extraordinary Hospitality (for ordinary people)" by Carolyn Lacey.
- *Read:* "Subversive Sabbath" by A. J. Swoboda.
- *Read:* "Sabbath as Resistance" by Walter Brueggemann.

 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Library (Toowoomba): [stbarts.com.au/library](http://stbarts.com.au/library)

For sermons and additional resources, visit [stbarts.com.au](http://stbarts.com.au)

**st bart's**

# HABITS & PRACTICES OF JESUS

*Week 02/03 “Jesus & Meals”  
by Justin Lai (05/07/2026)*

예수님과 식사 | 耶稣与筵席 | இயேசுவும் விருந்தும்

*Bible Passage: Luke 5:27-35; 22:7-23*

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*Gracious Father, thank you that by your Spirit you bring us to Jesus' table;  
where you welcome us, give us the joy of your presence, and assure us of your promised salvation.  
Teach us to receive your feast with thanksgiving and to share your welcome with others.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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## Introduction

Meals do more than fill stomachs.

Around a table, we welcome, honour, remember, celebrate, and belong.

- In Luke's Gospel, Jesus seems to be either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal [Robert Karris, *Eating Your Way Through Luke's Gospel*]. Jesus eats with tax collectors, Pharisees, crowds, disciples, and finally with his friends on the night before he dies.
- These meals are not just background scenes.
  - They are *windows* into Jesus' mission and his *heart*.
  - Wherever Jesus sits down to eat, we see his grace at work - he makes room at the table for people who don't deserve to be there.
  - And today, he is still pulling up a chair for you and me.
- So this morning/evening, we are going to zoom in on one meal near the start of Jesus' ministry, and then briefly look ahead to another meal at the end of his earthly ministry.
- At these meals, we see three things:
  - **[1] Jesus welcomes us to his table;**
  - **[2] Jesus brings joy through his presence; and,**
  - **[3] Jesus points us to his salvation.**

## JESUS WELCOMES US TO HIS TABLE | LUKE 5:27-32

耶穌歡迎我們來到他的筵席 | 예수님은 우리를 그분의 식탁으로 맞아 주십니다 | இயேசு நம்மைத் தம் விருந்தில் வரவேற்கிறார்

First, Jesus welcomes us to his table. Luke 5:27...

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*27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, 28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. 29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 30 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:27-32)*

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- Here we see Jesus calling Levi, a tax collector.
  - When we hear "tax collector," we might think of an accountant or someone from the ATO. But Levi is nothing like that.
  - In Jesus' time, he worked like a toll road for Herod, collecting duties on goods passing through. Which means two things to the people around him:
    - First, a traitor: he works for the occupying power, taking money from his own people and handing it up to the Roman government.
    - Second, a scammer: people in his trade often make their living by charging more than what is owed and pocketing the difference.
  - So, Levi is probably wealthy from skimming his own people, and he is also despised. He is not to be trusted. He is not welcome. Socially and religiously, he is an outsider.
  - People see him as a "sinner" - the kind of man, in their eyes, who does not deserve any mercy, friendship, or forgiveness.
- And then Jesus walks up to him and says two words: **"Follow me."**
  - That's it! No interview, no probation, no *"clean-yourself-up-first."*
  - And Levi - who has a profitable, if filthy, business - gets up and *leaves everything!*
- Now watch what Levi does next - he *"held a great banquet for Jesus at his house"*.
  - He just met Jesus, and his first instinct is to throw a party and get all his disreputable associates in the room, so they can meet Jesus too!
  - Levi doesn't tidy his contact list; he invites the whole grubby crowd.
- And this is big!
  - In that world, sharing a meal isn't casual - not like grabbing a coffee with someone you half-know. Sitting and eating with someone was a public statement.
  - It says, "You're one of mine. I'm bound to you. I'm *not ashamed* to be seen at the same table with you." It means *"friendship, a full acceptance."* [L. Morris, *Luke*, 132.]

- No wonder the religious leaders are so agitated.
  - “*Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?*”
  - They are not asking about table manners.
  - They’re asking: how can a man of God publicly accept and declare himself a friend of these people?
- And Jesus’ answer cuts straight through.
  - “*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*”
  - Let’s pause and think about how much it exposes here:
    - Do we blame a doctor for spending time among the sick? Of course not. That’s the whole job. So if Jesus is the doctor of the soul, where would you expect to find him - *if not among the spiritually sick?*
    - His meal at Levi's table isn't a compromise. It's the mission.
    - This is what he came to do!
  - And today, Jesus’ answer remains the same. The only people who miss out on seeing the doctor are those convinced they’re well.
  
- So, the question that this passage puts to everyone of us is: “*Do you know you’re sick?*”
  - The danger is *not being too far from Jesus’ table*. Levi proves there’s no such thing!
  - The danger is *thinking you’re okay* - that you got it together, that your life is tidy enough, that grace is for people worse than you. What keeps you away from the doctor is not your sin, but your sense that you don’t really need him.
  - So, before we talk about our tables, hear what Jesus says first.
    - His table is astonishingly open!
    - The people the world keeps away - the morally messy, the socially awkward, the religiously suspect, the person with a past, and the spiritually weak - **Jesus pulls up a chair for them.**
    - This is not a shallow “you’re fine just as you are.” It’s the welcome of a doctor who has seen exactly how sick you are and has come anyway in order to heal you.
  - *You are not too much for him.*
  - You don’t have to clean yourself up before you come. The table is already set, and there stands the Lord Jesus with welcoming arms.
- And because Jesus welcomes sinners like this, his table is not gloomy.
- It is a table of joy!

## JESUS BRINGS JOY TO HIS TABLE | LUKE 5:33-35

耶穌把喜樂帶到他的筵席 | 예수님은 그분의 식탁에 기쁨을 가져오십니다 | இயேசு தம் விருந்திற்கு மகிழ்ச்சியைத் தருகிறார்

And that takes us to the second point: *Jesus brings joy to his table.*

33 They said to him, “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.” 34 Jesus answered, “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? 35 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”

(Luke 5:33-35)

- The objection keeps coming: “Hey, Jesus, the serious religious people are fasting. John’s disciples fast. The Pharisees’ disciples fast. So what about your disciples? Why are they always eating and drinking?”
- And Jesus answers with a picture: “*Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?*” Just imagine at a wedding: **the groom is here**, the celebration is on, then someone stands up and tells everyone to stop eating and look solemn.
  - That would be strange! You do not mourn at a wedding.
- And Jesus says that’s what is happening right now.
  - Jesus, the bridegroom, is here.
  - God’s King is in the room;
  - God’s mercy is sitting at the table with sinners;
- The sick are being healed;
- The lost are being brought home;
- Of course there’s joy!
- In the presence of the one people have been waiting for, sad-face 😞 just doesn’t fit.
- Now, we need to be careful here - Jesus is not cancelling fasting. That’s not what he says.
  - In verse 35, he says, “*The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, in those days they will fast.*”
  - Jesus himself fasted; the early church fasted too.
  - So Jesus is not saying fasting is wrong.
  - He’s saying there’s a time for it and a time not for it;
    - *And while the bridegroom is present, the right response is joy.*
    - When Jesus is taken to the cross, there will be a time of grief.
  - But now, because “*Jesus has come to bring explosive joy to people who desperately need to be saved. This is not something that can be contained within the religion of the Pharisees, who want to stay separate from sinners.*” [Philip G. Ryken, *Luke*, 239]
- And notice how the joy is expressed around the table:
  - Levi and his friends are eating because Jesus is *with them*.
  - The bridegroom has come near. And *in his presence, there is joy.*

- Now of course, we are not the bridegroom, we are not the Saviour.
- But we are people who have been welcomed by him. And that means our tables can become small echoes of his table - places where his welcome and joy are reflected.
- That is still one of the beautiful gifts of sharing meals today.
  - A meal gives us time to be *present* with one another.
  - This is more than just a quick hello - you sit, you listen, you ask, you welcome.
  - And as followers of Jesus, our tables can become small places where something of his welcome and joy is reflected.
    - Not because your food is impressive or your house is perfect.
    - Not because every conversation has to be deep and spiritual from the first minute.
    - But when people are welcomed as Jesus would, something of his joy can be reflected there.
  - So, here's a small, doable step: in the next few weeks, ask God to help you to share one unhurried meal with someone.
    - Not a rushed meal; not a transactional meal; but an intentional meal.
    - It might be with your family.
    - It might be with a neighbour.
    - It might be someone new at St Bart's.
  - It might be with someone who usually eats alone.
  - And as you share that meal, pray for an open door to -
    - Perhaps to speak of Christ;
    - Perhaps to share how Christ has been your joy;
    - Perhaps to ask a deeper question;
    - Or simply to listen with the patience of Jesus.
    - Let Jesus be part of the conversation.
  - A simple meal can carry more of Christ's joy than we'd ever expect!
- So far, we have seen who Jesus welcomes and the joy he brings.
  - But there's still a deeper question underneath both:
  - How can sinners sit at God's table at all? And why is it joyful?
  - The final meal answers that question.

## JESUS GIVES HIMSELF AT HIS TABLE | LUKE 22:7-23

耶穌在他的筵席上賜下自己 | 예수님은 그분의 식탁에서 자신을 내어 주십니다 | இயேசு தம் விருந்தில் தம்மையே கொடுக்கிறார்

And this brings us to our final point: Jesus gives himself at the table.

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*14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." 17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. (Luke 22:14-20)*

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- It's the night before Jesus dies, and he's sharing the Passover meal.
  - This is a meal that God's people ate to remember the night God rescued them from the slavery of Egypt. It's the night death passed over their homes because of the blood of the lamb.
- And now Jesus does something extraordinary with this old, sacred meal.
  - He takes the bread and says, "This is my body, given for you."
  - He takes the cup and says, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you."
- Jesus is saying, the Passover lamb was always pointing here - to me.
- I am the Lamb. My body will be given. My blood will be poured out. And because of my death, the judgement of God can pass over you.
- That answers the question *underneath the other meals*.
  - How can sinners sit at the table of a holy God?
  - How can God's table be so joyful?
  - Here's the answer: because Jesus gives himself for sinners - for you and me!
  - The thing that kept us out, our sin, has been dealt with.
  - It is opened by the blood of Jesus. The door is open, and the table is set!
- Yet, this is **still not the end** of the story.
  - Jesus says: "I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God...I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."
  - Remember the wedding picture from earlier? The bridegroom says a day would come when he'd be taken away - and here it is, the night before the cross.
  - But the cross is not the end - he points forward to another feast still to come - the great banquet of the kingdom, the wedding meal that has no end.
- So, this table reaches both directions at once:
  - It points back to the cross, where Jesus gives himself for us;

- And it points forward to the feast to come, where we will eat with him face to face!
- That's why we still come to this table even today.
  - Not as an empty ritual. Not as a religious performance with a sad face.
  - But as people who remember what Jesus has done for us, and wait with real hope for the feast he has promised.
  - Because for all who trust in Christ, there is a place at his table.

## Conclusion

- So, two meals, one Jesus - and one invitation.
- As individuals, the invitation is this: come as you are.
  - Not as the person who has it all together, but as the one who knows they need the doctor. Receive his welcome. Rejoice in the grace Jesus gives at his table.
- And together, as a church, let us become a *table-shaped people*.
  - Let our life be marked by open doors and generous tables;
    - The person who eats every meal alone,
    - The international student far from home,
    - The family that has never been inside an Australian home,
    - The unwell friend.
  - The awkward fellow Christian.
    - May they find a seat among us here at St Bart's. Not because we are impressive hosts, but because Jesus first welcomed us.
    - We do not wait for people to clean themselves up before they come near.
    - Jesus didn't wait for us.
    - We simply pass on the welcome we have been given.
- Because every meal we share can be a small signpost - pointing back to the grace we received, and pointing forward to a feast where the whole family of God will sit down together.

**Today, Jesus is still pulling up a chair:**

**Will you take your seat?**

**And will you make room for others?**

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*Gracious Father, thank you that in Jesus you have pulled up a chair for sinners like us.  
Thank you for his body given and his blood poured out, so that we may have a place at your table.  
By your Spirit, help us to receive his welcome with joy, and to make room for others with generous love.  
In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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