



2023

# SUMMER Life group



## WHY THIS BOOK?

One of the greatest ailments of modern society is a lack of connectedness, authentic community, and a shortage of opportunities to seek reconciliation with those different from ourselves. What if there was a way to do all of this without compromising our convictions to Christ and the gospel?

This is the topic of Tim Chester's book, *A Meal With Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission Around the Table*. Chester explores the Bible's repeated use of food and hospitality in order to explain Jesus' desire to reveal to sinners and strangers the deeper spiritual realities that shared meals with Christ point to.

The insights in these meals also encourage us as Christians to make the sharing of meals an integral part of our fellowship with others, so as to regularly reenact and reflect upon the grace that Christ so freely gave to us.

This summer, as our regular Life Groups go on a break, we gather as one church-wide life group to engage with Tim Chester's book, *A Meal With Jesus*. Through it, we hope to see the immensity of God's love and believe the gospel deep down in our personal lives and in our church.

We hope you'll join us in weekly reading of *A Meal With Jesus* as well as some guides personal reflection and practice time outside of our Wednesday night group discussions.

## **SESSION 1**

June 7th  
Luke 5

Introduction and Chapter 1: Meals as Enacted Grace

## **SESSION 2**

June 14th  
Luke 7

Chapter 2: Meals as Enacted Community

## **SESSION 3**

June 21st  
Luke 9

Chapter 3: Meals as Enacted Hope

## **SESSION 4**

June 28th  
Luke 14

Chapter 4: Meals as Enacted Mission

## **SESSION 5**

July 12th  
Luke 22

Chapter 5: Meals as Enacted Salvation

## **SESSION 6**

July 19th  
Luke 24

Chapter 6: Meals as Enacted Promise

# ABOUT THIS STUDY GUIDE

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Each session is designed to complement and coordinate with Tim Chester's book, *A Meal with Jesus*. Assigned reading, practice, and personal reflection questions should be completed before each Wednesday night session.

## ASSIGNMENTS

At the start of each session you will see a brief list of *Assignments* to complete prior to each week's summer life group meeting. This will include reading the corresponding passage from Luke and chapter in *A Meal With Jesus*.

## PRACTICE

The *Practice* elements are simple, yet intentional ways to get us thinking about how we might apply particular aspects learned throughout the reading each week. These short assignments vary in nature and are meant to be completed prior to meeting. Participants will be invited to share their experience in group discussion with the weekly *Practice*.

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

A few questions are provided each week to help participants engage with the reading in ways that might impact them personally. These questions are for the benefit of the individual and should be done prior to gathering.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The *Group Discussion Questions* will guide our weekly group meetings. These questions will be facilitated by a discussion leader in small groups every Wednesday night. You're welcome to read through them in advance but it's not required.

# Session 1:

## Meals as Enacted Grace

This week we'll cover the Introduction and Chapter 1 of *A Meal With Jesus*, as well as focus on lessons from Luke 5.

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Read Luke 5:27-32.
- Read the Introduction and Chapter 1 of *A Meal With Jesus* (pg.9-35).
- Practice: Enacting Grace.
- Complete the Personal Reflection Questions.

### PRACTICE: ENACTING GRACE

"Think about your dining room or kitchen table. What dramas have been played out around this simple piece of furniture" (pg. 10)? There's no magic in a piece of furniture or a certain room in your home, but there is something special about sharing meals together, and space is a part of that process. Take some time to look around your home and envision how this space--as cluttered or clean as it might be--could be a place of hope and healing as friends and family reunite with each other and Jesus over a meal.

*Take some time to pray over your space, and pray over what God might do there.*

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Meals are really important, and yet we often overlook them. Take a moment to think back on a couple of significant meals that you remember having. *What made these meals significant?*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

2. Jesus often showed us grace while having a meal. *What are some ways that you've experienced grace and generosity over a meal?*

3. The Pharisees in Luke 5 thought they understood grace, and yet also failed to see their need for Jesus. Work through the following diagnostic questions from Chapter 1 (pgs. 27-28) to see how you personally tend to think about grace:

- How do you define salvation? *"I'll be happy, fulfilled, accepted if..."*
- What must you do to be saved? *"To achieve this I've got to..."*
- How do you view people who don't measure up to the law? *"People who don't fit in are..."*
- What happens when you don't measure up? *"When I don't achieve, then..."*

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. "In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal" (pg. 13). *How does this match up with your preconceived notions of Jesus' ministry on earth?*

2. "How would you complete the sentence, 'The son of man came...?'" Chester shows that of the three New Testament uses of this phrase, one was "eating and drinking." *What does that tell you about the importance of meals to Jesus?*

3. In Luke 5:27-32 we see Jesus challenged about the type of people that he's eating and drinking with. He responds by saying that he's not here for the righteous but for sinners. *How does that affect the way we see his ministry to us?*

4. "We can't do our work of pointing sinners to the Savior unless we spend time with them" (pg. 26). Chester tells us that Jesus ignored the question "with whom can I eat" and instead was a "friend of sinners" (Luke 7:34). *Do you spend time with people who don't know Jesus? How are you working to be a "friend of sinners"?*

5. Luke 15 and the story of the prodigal son shows us God's "scandalous grace" (pg. 32). *How can we live out that "scandalous grace" in our own lives as we're invited to the Father's feast?*

## PRACTICE: ENACTING GRACE

*As a group take some time to discuss your experience with this week's Practice.*



Notes:

# Session 2:

## Meals as Enacted Community

This week we'll cover Chapter 2 of *A Meal With Jesus*, as well as focus on lessons from Luke 7.

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Read Luke 7:33-50.
- Read Chapter 2 of *A Meal With Jesus* (pg. 37-54).
- Practice: Enacting Community.
- Complete the Personal Reflection Questions.

### PRACTICE: ENACTING COMMUNITY

When we think about hosting people for meals, we often think about hosting people similar to ourselves. The passage this chapter is based around, Luke 7:33-50, displays the drama that unfolds when different sorts of people show up for dinner. Have you ever been to a meal or party with people of wildly different social statuses and backgrounds?

*Take a minute to write down who you might know and could share a meal with that is different than you. It could be a difference of ethnicity, income, belief, interests, life experience, etc. Pray for the people you've written down, and if you don't have a very long list, take some time to plan ways to get to know people that are different from you.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Chester quotes some pretty startling statistics about the decline in families eating together and people spending time together in general in the last several decades (pg. 46). *Does this match your experience? In what ways?*

2. "How do we react when a promiscuous woman kisses the body of Jesus? Do we celebrate God's grace or are we scandalized" (pg. 40)? Chester shows us the radical nature of God's grace in this story. *What are some ways that you've been on the receiving end of this grace?*

3. Part of the beauty of this story is the woman's treatment of Jesus while the host, Simon, has failed to properly welcome him into his home. *What are some of the ways that the woman shows true hospitality to Jesus where Simon fails?*

4. "Hospitality will lead to collateral damage. Food will be spilled on your carpet. You'll be left with cleaning up. Your pantry may be decimated. But remember that God is welcoming you into his home through the blood of his own Son" (pg. 49). *Are you ready for this type of inconvenience? Take some time to write out your worries about hosting and pray through them one by one.*

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have someone read aloud the first several paragraphs of Chapter 2 up until the excerpt from Luke 7 (pg. 37-38). *How would you respond in this situation if you were the host?*

2. "Simon has no sense of forgiveness because he has no sense of need. But the woman has a strong sense of her brokenness... And she sees Jesus as someone who accepts her anyway"(pg. 45). Sometimes when we feel like we've got our lives together, we can forget our sense of need. *In what areas do you most feel your need for Jesus?*

3. "It's possible to articulate an orthodox theology of justification by faith but communicate through your meals a doctrine of justification by works" (pg. 53). *What do you think this means? What's the challenge for us here?*

4. "Involvement with people, especially the marginalized, begins with a profound grasp of God's grace. Often our instincts are to keep our distance. But the Son of God ate with them. He's not embarrassed by them. He lets them kiss his feet. He's the friend of riffraff, traitors, the unrespectable, drunks, druggies, prostitutes, the mentally ill, the broken, and the needy—people whose lives are a mess" (pg. 40). *As we tend to keep our distance, how could a better understanding of God's grace help us to meaningfully interact with some of the people on the list above?*

5. "It's easy to love people in some abstract sense and preach the virtues of love. But we're called to love the real individuals sitting around the table" (pg. 48). *What are some ways that we can work to better love the actual people we spend time with in community -- even with their unique challenges?*

## PRACTICE: ENACTING COMMUNITY

*As a group take some time to discuss your experience with this week's Practice.*

Notes:

# Session 3:

## Meals as Enacted Hope

This week we'll cover Chapter 3 of *A Meal With Jesus*, as well as focus on lessons from Luke 9.

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Read Luke 9:7-20.
- Read Chapter 3 of *A Meal With Jesus* (pg. 55-73).
- Practice: Enacting Hope.
- Complete the Personal Reflection Questions.

### PRACTICE: ENACTING HOPE

In this chapter we read about the hope that we have in Christ and the wonderful reminder that food can be. One of the things that this chapter focused on was pausing to remember that food is not just fuel, but a gift and expression of God's grace. You might regularly pray before eating, but how long has it been since you paused to think about *why* you pray before eating?

This chapter offered these reminders about why we pray before a meal (pg. 73):

- To trust in our daily dependence on God as creatures and sinners.
- To honor our daily dependence on others as we give thanks for those who grew, processed, bought, and cooked our food.
- To rejoice in the goodness of food, so that we can understand our food not just as fuel, but as a gift from God.
- To give thanks to God, so that we look outside of ourselves and instead back to God.
- To give thanks for our community as we ask God's blessing on our fellowship over the meal.

*Take some time before meals this week to pray through some of these reminders from this chapter about why we say "grace" before a meal. Try practicing this before some of your meals this week.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. "Eating is an expression of our dependence" (pg. 70). This chapter contrasted our dependence on Walmart for "our daily bread" with our dependence on God. *What are some of the things you can tend to trust in for safety and fulfillment instead of depending on God?*

2. "Jesus reminds us that this world is not going to be trashed, but redeemed. Food matters because it is a part of God's good creation, and part of God's new creation" (pg. 66). Sometimes we tend to think of heaven as a disembodied experience, but that's not the picture Scripture paints. *How does this change the way you understand God's gift of food?*

3. "Our world is a world of hunger, pain, suffering, and want. Even in neighborhoods where most people have enough to eat, we still live in want. We're still unsatisfied. We may not long for bread, but we long for meaning, intimacy, fulfillment, community, purpose, and joy.... Jesus doesn't fit in our world. His actions were a sign of God's coming world" (pg. 60). Maybe you don't lack food, but you still feel the 'hunger' for something more in the world. *How does the work of Jesus offer hope to our broken world?*

4. "Jesus is the host of God's banquet, and he provides for us by dying for us" (pg. 65). We reenact this banquet and "spiritually feed upon Christ" each week when we take communion. *Take a couple moments and try to list out some ways that you've seen the weekly meal of communion provide spiritual food in your life.*

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This chapter opened with the feeding of the five thousand in Luke 9:7-20. *What does Jesus' generous and miraculous provision of food--even leftovers, show us about his character?*

2. This chapter reminds us that "Through the daily meal God is calling us to rejoice, to celebrate in the midst of our working day" (pg. 69). *How could you celebrate food better in our meals throughout each day?*

3. "Food will be a part of the renewed creation. Food is not left behind with the resurrection.... The point is that food isn't just fuel, it's a gift, generosity, grace" (pg. 67). *How can this change the way we interact with food?*

4. As we struggle with our relationship with food, Chester reminds us that the spiritual discipline of fasting can help us "rediscover the joy of simple food received as a gift from God" (pg. 72). *Do you have any experience with fasting, or fasting from particular foods? If so, has that helped to rediscover the joy of food as a gift?*

5. This chapter deals with our hope in the eternal banquet, pictured among other places in Revelation 19. *To what extent does heaven as a feast match your picture of heaven?*

6. "When your church family gathers together as a group of needy people and shares food with Jesus as the center and with Jesus as the provider, you glimpse God's coming world right here, right now. The Christian community is the beginning and sign of God's coming world--and no more so when we eat together. Our meals are a foretaste of the future messianic banquet. Our meals reveal the identity of Jesus. Our meals are a proclamation and a demonstration of God's good news" (pg. 61). *What are your thoughts about this? How does this intersect with your vision of Christian community and the demonstration of the gospel?*

## PRACTICE: ENACTING HOPE

*As a group take some time to discuss your experience with this week's Practice.*



Notes:

# Session 4:

## Meals as Enacted Mission

This week we'll cover Chapter 4 of *A Meal With Jesus*, as well as focus on lessons from Luke 14.

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Read Luke 14:1-24.
- Read Chapter 4 of *A Meal With Jesus* (pg.75-99).
- Practice: Enacting Mission.
- Complete the Personal Reflection Questions.

### PRACTICE: ENACTING MISSION

This chapter was all about meals as an opportunity and place for mission in our regular lives. Often we tend to think about missions as either a project that we can attend, or something happening far away, when instead it could be happening in our ordinary lives as we share meals together.

*Invite someone to share a meal with you this week. It could be at a restaurant or in your home, it could be a nice meal or a quick stop at a fast food place, it could be with a longtime friend or with a new acquaintance. Take some time to share a meal with someone outside of your family and enjoy the "ordinary mission" you've been called to.*

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. This chapter is titled "Meals as Enacted Mission." *What normally comes to your mind when you think about "mission"?*

2. On pg.79 this chapter says that we're all spiritually poor, crippled, blind, and lame. Take some time to think through each of these descriptors. *How do you think you might fit into each of these categories?*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

3. “Jesus’ teaching consistently attracted the irreligious while offending the Bible-believing, religious people of his day.... If the preaching of our ministers and the practice of our parishioners do not have the same effect on people that Jesus had, then we must not be declaring the same message that Jesus did” (pg. 84). *Do you think this is true? If so, then what’s different about our message?*

4. “Mission isn’t something I can clock out from at the end of the day. The hospitality to which Jesus calls us can’t be institutionalized in programs and projects. Jesus challenges us to take mission home” (pg. 91). *How is this different than a typical church missions effort? How do you think this matches the life and ministry of Christ?*

5. “Consider Jesus. Yes, he adopted the attitude of a slave... but think, too, how often he accepts service.... He’s not just the helper of sinners, still less their project worker. He’s the friend of sinners, who came eating and drinking” (pg. 83). *As we struggle to be “friends of sinners” instead of just serving people as projects, what would change in your approach if you were to fully adopt this lifestyle and mindset?*

6. “At base, hospitality is about providing a space for God’s Spirit to move. Setting a table, cooking a meal, washing the dishes is the ministry of facilitation: providing a context in which people feel loved and welcome and where God’s Spirit can be at work in their lives. Hospitality is a very ordinary business, but in its ordinariness is its real worth” (pg. 91). *There’s nothing magical about a meal - the work is from the Spirit. How have you seen God work through hospitality?*

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This chapter opened with various descriptions of meals creating community and missional experiences. *Have you ever experienced anything like that?*
2. “I know people do a lot to help me. But what I want is for someone to be my friend” (pg. 83). *Has this played out in your experience? How can we reach people as friends and not as projects?*
3. “Jesus didn’t run projects, establish ministries, create programs, or put on events. He ate meals. If you routinely share meals and you have a passion for Jesus, then you’ll be doing mission” (pg. 89). *Do you agree with this? In a modern church-culture based around activity, how can this be both challenging and freeing to us?*
4. “People often complain that they lack time for mission. But we all have to eat. Three meals a day, seven days a week. That’s twenty-one opportunities for mission in community without adding anything to your schedule” (pg. 92). Perhaps the emphasis on hosting in a home has been overwhelming in this study. *How could you use regular meals throughout your day as a missional opportunity?*
5. “I wonder what kind of reputation Christians have in your neighborhood. We should have a reputation for throwing the best parties” (pg. 93). *What is your reaction to this? How do we see this lived out in the life of Jesus? How can we as Christians throw the best parties?*
6. On pages 94-97 this chapter addressed some common excuses for not showing hospitality. *Which of these struck or challenged you?*

## PRACTICE: ENACTING MISSION

*As a group take some time to discuss your experience with this week's Practice.*

Notes:

# Session 5:

## Meals as Enacted Salvation

This week we'll cover Chapter 5 of *A Meal With Jesus*, as well as focus on lessons from Luke 22.

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Read Luke 22:7-30.
- Read Chapter 5 of *A Meal With Jesus* (pg.101-124).
- Practice: Enacting Salvation.
- Complete the Personal Reflection Questions.

### PRACTICE: ENACTING SALVATION

This chapter unpacked some of the meaning behind the Lord's Supper and how we can fit that into our overall understanding of meals as Christians. Each week as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are hopefully reminded of why we do it, but hopefully this chapter has been helpful in slowing down to think about it a bit more.

*Take some time to think about the Lord's Supper and your personal experiences there. Pray over and maybe journal some memories you have of specific times you've been encouraged, comforted, or deeply affected by this meal.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. “Five times Luke tells us that this meal (Luke 22:7-20) is the Passover” (pg. 102). *What connections are there between the Old Testament Passover and the Lord’s Supper for us today?*

2. In the Lord’s Supper we eat bread and drink wine. We do this because it’s what we’re told to do, but Jesus could have picked anything for us to eat and drink. *What do you think is the significance of bread and wine?*

3. This chapter talks about the Lord’s Supper and some of the benefits that we experience there as believers. *What are some of the more meaningful or impactful benefits of the Lord’s Supper to you personally?*

4. Take some time to anticipate the Lord's Supper at church this coming week. *What are some things you could personally do differently to better rest in and enjoy this brief meal?*

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Each week as we celebrate the Lord's Supper it can become so much a ritual that we don't think much about it. Consider the following question from this chapter: *"If your church stopped celebrating communion, what difference would it make in your life" (pg. 102)?*
2. "Not only were the people of Israel rescued through an event encapsulated in a meal, they were rescued for a meal" (pg. 106). *Do you think the same is true for us? In what ways?*
3. Have someone read Luke 22:24-30 out loud. Here we see Jesus at a meal, talking about a future meal. *What does this passage tell us about our current struggles and challenges as Christians?*
4. "What we call the Lord's Supper is a foretaste of the Lamb's Supper in Revelation 19. It's a beginning of the feast we eat with Jesus and his people in the new creation. It's not just a picture. It's the real thing begun in a partial way. We eat with God's people, and we eat with the ascended Christ, present through the Holy Spirit" (pg. 118). Maybe you haven't thought about the Lord's Supper this way before. *How should this reality change the way we participate in this brief meal every Sunday?*
5. This chapter unpacks how among other things, the Lord's Supper is a meal of remembrance, community, dependence, participation, and formation (pgs.120-123). *Which of these speaks most to you? Which was a good reminder in how to better understand this weekly practice?*

## PRACTICE: ENACTING SALVATION

*As a group take some time to discuss your experience with this week's Practice.*



Notes:

# Session 6:

## Meals as Enacted Promise

This week we'll cover Chapter 6 of *A Meal With Jesus*, as well as focus on lessons from Luke 24.

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Read Luke 24:13-35.
- Read Chapter 6 of *A Meal With Jesus* (pg.125-138).
- Practice: Enacting Promise.
- Complete the Personal Reflection Questions.

### PRACTICE: ENACTING PROMISE

When he had risen from the dead, Jesus took some time to walk with some of his disciples--and yet they didn't recognize him at first. Did they recognize him in his teaching? No. They recognized him in the breaking of bread. This is probably because it was such a regular part of their life together that they knew Jesus better in this personal context than through his public teaching.

*Take some time to discuss with your family, or make a plan for yourself how you can develop familiarity and regularity in your meals so that you would be recognized by them. Brainstorm and pray through some ways that you could make a habit out of sharing meals with other people.*

### PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

1. "The risen Christ eats. The Son of Man came eating and drinking. And still the Son of Man eats" (pg. 125). *What does this tell us about our own resurrection hope?*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

2. “Our whole world is between Good Friday and Easter Sunday” (pg. 128). *What do you think this means? How have you felt this tension personally?*

3. “The Easter message is not only that someone has risen.... The Easter message is that the Crucified One is risen” (pg. 132). *What’s the difference? Why does this distinction matter?*

4. “We walk alongside people on the Emmaus road not as victors, nor as people with all the answers, but as fellow human beings, fellow sinners, and fellow strugglers. Otherwise the rumor of resurrection will always sound incredible or glib” (pg. 130). *Sitting in this tension with people in sadness can be really difficult. How have you struggled with this?*

5. It’s interesting that although on the road to Emmaus the disciples didn’t recognize Jesus while walking, they did recognize him at the meal. “Jesus is known at the breaking of bread, at the meal table...” (pg. 136). *What does this tell us about the character and regular habits of Jesus?*

6. “The Christian community often wears me out, winds me up, and drives me crazy. But I also have moments when I look at my brothers and sisters and know the presence of the risen Christ” (pg. 136). *Take a moment to think about some of these moments in your life. Where have you seen the presence of Christ in Christian community?*

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This chapter unpacks how on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), Jesus listened to the disciples pain before proclaiming the hope of the resurrection. *How should this influence the way we evangelize and even just live life with people?*

2. “Our culture is on the Emmaus road, heading away from Jerusalem” (pg. 128). *What are some ways that you’ve been saddened to see this?*

3. “Christianity no longer dominates our culture.... The Bible story seems out of place and archaic.... But don’t despair. This is a moment of opportunity to rediscover authentic apostolic Christianity shaped by the cross” (pgs. 130-131). Maybe you’re tempted to despair in our current cultural moment, *but as this quote suggests, how can we find hope in this moment in history?*

4. “How do we make Christ known? Through the Bible. It may not sound trendy, but it’s God’s way” (pg. 134.) We probably already know that we’ll always have to lean on Scripture in order to make Jesus known, *but how can we practically find ways to actually do that in our lives?*

5. This chapter points out that when Martha complained to Jesus that Mary wasn’t helping her serve, Jesus didn’t take Martha’s side, but told her to leave her anxieties about hosting behind (Luke 10:38-42). *How can we embrace this attitude despite our own hesitations or frustrations about the work of having people over?*

## PRACTICE: ENACTING PROMISE

*As a group take some time to discuss your experience with this week's Practice.*

Notes:

