

Pastor Chris Carr: “Room At His Table” – Augusts 3, 2025

Speaking of Camp... something I have often noticed is the profound impact that meals have in camp ministry. Yes, they are crucial for feeding hungry campers (not to mention the food is amazing!). But more than that, the tables we gather around at camp act as a central hub for friendships to form and community to flourish.

- **Have you ever noticed the difference that one intentional connect can make on a relationship you value?** We often utilize breakfast & lunch connects, or going out for dinner to boost our relationship with our spouse, a friend, coworker/employee, person from your small group, etc. Even something as simple as grabbing coffee works wonders!
 - **Well, at camp we get *not only one, but 9-12 meals together*.** This is a key ingredient in the ‘secret sauce’. Without fail I’ve witnessed how almost any group of people can gel together over a couple of short days within this setting.
 - Day one of any given camp session (MS, HS, LTA, YA) can feel a bit ‘awkward’... its only natural. We are still trying to figure each other out. But come day 3 or 4, you would think we were all best friends!
 - **I call this “the camp effect”.** It works similarly to a greenhouse: the conditions are ideal for making connections & building community. The table is right at the heart of it all – bringing us together & providing the rich soil needed to flourish in our relationship to God and one another, one meal at a time! I am convinced this is a big part of why camp is so effect, often equaling months of ministry at home in a short span of time!

The Big Point I am Trying To Make Is This: **The table is not without effect!** We are shaped by the tables we sit at. This extends beyond a ‘camp thing’ – it’s a human thing! I am convinced that at least part of what it means to be made in the image of God is that we don’t just hunt for our next meal – we hunt it, season it and then sear it to perfection (medium rare for me please). THEN, we set it down on a table and gather together with those we love to enjoy a meal together.

- I think we inherited this qualify from our creator! He also loves to gather others around His table to enjoy a meal together! Throughout time and across cultures people have gathered around tables – this points to God, the one who put that proclivity within us.
- Like our hunger for food, we are relational beings with an appetite to *know & be known!*
 - **The table is a gathering point; a relational anchor for the storms of life.** So it’s no surprise that the concept of ‘the Table’ appears all throughout Scripture as a central theme & illustration for fellowship with God and others!

Here’s the quote that sparked the idea: *“In Luke’s Gospel Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.”* Robert Karris (Eating Your Way Through Lukes Gospel)

- **The 2025 High School camp theme was born out of a question:** What would it be like to journey with Jesus through the pages of the Gospels, going from table to table with Him? What would we discover about His Heart, our identity & value, and life in the Kingdom of God as seen from the discussions He had with real people around the table?
- At Camp we only made it through a handful of stories from Luke’s gospel. We barely scratched the surface! In this sermon we have even less time, so we will really only focus on two tables.

- **Here's A Fun Challenge To Try This Month:** Try reading through a Gospel(s) and pay special attention to every mention of Jesus at the table or any food/meal illustrations he uses (incl. parables). As you'll discover, we barely scratched the surface! Make some observations of your own & share them freely with others!
- Maybe you're asking, *"What's the big deal? Jesus ate with lot's people. So what??"*

A | Understanding The Mission & Method Of Jesus

- Courtesy of Tim Chester in article titled "The Son Of Man Came Eating And Drinking"ⁱ
- Three times in the Gospels we find the following statement, *"The Son Of Man (Jesus) came..."*, each followed by a different description.
 1. *"...the Son of Man came not to be served but **TO SERVE**, and **TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM** for many."* Mark 10:45 (ESV)
 2. *"...the Son of Man came to **SEEK AND TO SAVE** the lost."* Luke 19:10 (ESV)
 3. *"The Son of Man has come **EATING** and **DRINKING**..."* Luke 7:34 (ESV)
- *"The first two are statements of **purpose**. **WHY** did Jesus come? He came to serve, to give his life as a ransom, to seek and save the lost. The third is a statement of **method**. **HOW** did Jesus come? **He came eating and drinking.**"* Tim Chester

Jesus' Mission: To seek, save & serve the lost, ultimately displayed in His Death, Resurrection & Return.

- **Jesus' Method:** He sat with people at the table (He often invited himself over to their house); Jesus ate meals, told stories & demonstrated the Heart of God – all at the table.

Quick List Of Tables Mentioned In Luke:

- In Luke 5 Jesus eats with tax collectors & sinners at the home of Levi (*we'll look at this shortly*)
- In Luke 7 Jesus is anointed by a sinful woman at the home of Simon the Pharisee during a meal.
- In Luke 9 Jesus feeds the five thousand.
- In Luke 10 Jesus eats in the home of Mary and Martha
- In Luke 11 Jesus confronts the Pharisees and expert teachers about their hypocrisy at a meal.
- In Luke 14 Jesus, at a meal, urges people to invite the poor to their meals rather than their friends.
- In Luke 19 Jesus invites himself to dinner with Zacchaeus.
- In Luke 22 we have the account of the Last Supper.
- In Luke 24 the risen Christ has a meal with the two disciples in Emmaus, and then later eats fish with the disciples in Jerusalem.

B | The Power & Effect Of An Invitation:

It feels amazing to receive an invitation... just as it feels horrible to discover you've been left out.

Invitations express outwardly the heart of the host towards us... that they value us and desire our company! This too, is not without effect. Invitations can transform us; especially invitations from Jesus!

In order to understand the invitation we have received, we must apply the **NOW/NOT YET Principle**.

- **THE INVITATION IS TWOFOLD:**
- You're invited to **DAILY DINNING** with Jesus (meaning a close, personal relationship with Him daily) as well as to a **LITERAL FEAST** with Jesus and all the Saints when He returns.

- **NOW:** *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.* Revelation 3:20
 - o **NOT YET:** *"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.) Then the angel said to me, "Write this: **Blessed are those WHO ARE INVITED to the wedding supper of the Lamb!**"* Revelation 19:6-9
- This is the tension found in-between the Fall (Genesis 3) and The Restoration Of All Things (Revelation 21-22) as God's great rescue mission unfolds! The space between us and God has been filled with a lavish table and an invitation to dine with Him.

Let's Take A Closer Look At This Method In Jesus' Ministry. Here's the offer 'on the table' NOW...

- *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, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.* Luke 5:27-29 (NIV)

This specific invitation from Jesus to Levi (later known as Matthew) was captured in the series "The Chosen", which seems to have struck a chord with the audience. When this show comes up in conversation, I find its often this scene which is referenced; it's an iconic moment early on in the show.

- There is one particular line from this scene that seems to capture something that resonates DEEPLY with people. *"Get used to different."* The writers of the show take artist liberty, of course, but I feel they captured the heart of Jesus well in this moment.
 - o **I bet you've felt 'different' at some point in your life.** Ever caught yourself thinking... *"If they only knew what I've done... who I really am... they wouldn't welcome me in. There's something wrong with me. I'm just... different."* I imagine that is exactly how Levi felt!
- The scene portray Jesus inviting Levi to follow Him. Levi is stunned, and needs to be sure he heard right. He clarifies, *"Who, me?"*, only to discover that Jesus was in fact inviting him! He, a filthy, corrupt tax collector; a traitor, had just been invited to follow Jesus!
- As Levi scrambles to leave His tax booth and his old way of life behind, Peter steps in to question Jesus' rational, which seem irrational... **"WHY HIM?!"**
 - o Jesus patiently reminds Peter that it didn't make sense when He called Him either.
 - o To this Peter responds, *"Ya, but this is different... I'm not a tax collector!"*
 - To which Jesus confidently responds, **"GET USED TO DIFFERENT."**
 - o If you think it 'makes sense' that Jesus invited you to follow him... you've completely missed the point! ⇒ *Chris, I anticipated your weakness and still called you anyway!*

Jesus' Mission: To seek, save & serve the lost, ultimately displayed in His Death, Resurrection & Return.

- **Jesus' Method:** He sat with 'DIFFERENT' people at the table (He often invited himself over to their house); Jesus ate meals, told stories & demonstrated the Heart of God – all at the table.

C | Seeking Sheep & Counting Coins (the first 2 of three stories in Luke 15)

HOW exactly does Jesus use the Table to seek & save sinners, thus fulfilling his mission? Let visit another table in the Gospels – in Luke 15. Let's dine with Jesus, the master storyteller, and His new group of dinner guests, although the atmosphere is all too familiar.

- **Luke 15:1-2,** *Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees & the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners & eats with them."*

- **Where have we heard this before??** Notice the pattern. The quote on quote 'bad apples' (i.e. tax collector, sinners, prostitutes) eagerly gather around the table with Jesus, while the 'holy men' (i.e. Pharisees and Teachers of The Law) cast judgement from the side.
 - o In Luke 15 we get a front row seat to witness Jesus' strategy in capturing the heart of the sinners seated at the table. How will He get their attention? **WITH STORIES!!**

"Jesus says, 'Come as you are', but He loves you too much to leave as you were." (P. Stefan)

- At this table, Jesus was surrounded by a group of broken people that He loves & wants to help. His desire is to save them; to rescue them. **HOW WILL HE DO THIS?**
- **By sharing a meal with them and telling them stories!** (*the method to his mission!*)
 - o **QUESTION: How on earth would a story have the power to change & transform a person?**

I've got a riddle for you: There are two kinds of rooms with a table at the center. From the outside these rooms appear to have little to nothing in common, but both bring healing. I'll tell you what the first room is... *it's a dining room*. Can you guess what the second room is? **AN OPERATING ROOM.**

Consider again Luke 5:30-32: ³⁰ *...the Pharisees... **complained...** "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."***

- **BIG TRUTH:** Jesus work at the table is like that of a skilled surgeon. With precision he is able to operate on the worst diseases and ailments known to man. But, in typical Jesus-fashion, His approach is "upside-down", just like His Kingdom!
- ***"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."*** Luke 5:31
 - o **Jesus operates on His patients in the *DINING ROOM*. He uses stories, not scalpels.** Stories that cut to the heart and provide the life-saving treatment we need. He uses the dinner table, not the operating table, to do the work of restoring a sick world.
- **Fact OR Fiction?** So you're saying that just hearing a story is all that is needed to save a broken world? Maybe you're thinking... *"The world has plenty of good story tellers, and things are still just as broken as ever. That can't be all there is to it. We need people of action, not fiction!"*
- **YES, in a sense you're right!** Jesus was a Leader Through ACTION (**the ultimate LTA**) who used "fiction" (i.e. stories/parables) to grab our heart and ignite our imagination!
- Jesus was not the only teacher to communicate in story form. This is not what set Jesus apart. What set Jesus apart is how he used a story to capture the heart, then followed through with ACTION, thus **HEALING THE HEART**. **MANY** have the power to **diagnose**, **FEW** the power to **help**, but **ONLY ONE** has the power to **HEAL THE DIRE DEPRAVITY OF MANKIND**, & His name is **JESUS**.
 - o **Was the shepherd who set out in search of the lost sheep fiction?** Perhaps this story was based off of an actual shepherd Jesus and others knew. Maybe not. That's besides the point. First off, the story is realistic (meaning it really could have happened). Furthermore, this story points to an historical account of a GREAT SHEPHERD who really did lay down his life for the sake of His sheep.
 - **The story points to the Cross. And in this case, fact outdoes fiction!**
 - You see, while we were still lost & helpless, without hope & committed to our rebellion, Jesus set out in search of us. He dares you to believe that he as good (**in fact better**) than the shepherd in His story!
 - He joyfully puts us on His shoulder and carries us HOME. **This is FACT.**

But it begs the question... Is There Room For Them At Your Table??

Consider This Promise: ***You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*** Psalm 23:5

- Everyone loves this promise!! *“Yes, bring my enemies to grovel at my feet while I experience the grace of God through His provision & protection at the table!!”* That sounds good, doesn’t it?
- **BUT CONSIDER THIS:**
- At The Cross, in the presence of JESUS’ enemies, HE prepared a table FOR THEM! for us!
 - o **EXAMPLE:** soldiers who crucified Him & thief on cross – even there, He invited them!
 - **And He Invites Us Too!** *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were STILL SINNERS* (i.e. enemies of God), *Christ died for us.* Romans 5:6-8
- We Are Called To Love Our Enemies... Matthew 5:43-48
- **TRUTH:** if there’s room FOR US at His table, there gotta be room at the table FOR THEM.

At The Last Supper, Jesus knew a secret. There at the table was seated a traitor (in fact, they’d all abandon Jesus in His trial), yet they still received an invitation that night! Jesus TAUGHT that we should love our enemies (Matt 5:42-48), forgiving & praying for them. He also **MODELLED IT.**

- **TRUTH:** if there’s room FOR US at His table, there gotta be room at the table FOR THEM.
 - o **WHY MAKE SUCH A BIG DEAL OF THIS?** We’ll never understand the significance of our invitation to His Table unless we understand *the scandal* it is that we’ve been invited & *our unworthiness* to be there.
- It was in the middle of our rebellion that Jesus said, *“Pull up a chair. I want to eat (have a relationship) with you!”* **IF WE’VE BEEN FORGIVEN OF SUCH A DEBT, WE TOO MUST FORGIVE!**
- **TRUTH:** if there’s room FOR US at His table, there gotta be room at the table FOR THEM.
 - o **AND PRAISE GOD...** there’s still room at His Table **FOR ANYONE!**

D | A Tale From The Table, About A Son Returning To The Table!

As mentioned, In Luke 15 Jesus tells 3 stories, all with the same message... The Lost Sheep (v3-7), The Lost Coin (v8-10) & The Lost Son (v11-24). We’ve already touched on the first two... here’s the last story.

- *Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus...* **Luke 15:1**
 - o Jesus has an opportunity to speak with *these guests... sinners... tax collectors, thieves, perhaps prostitutes, and all manner of broken people. These would be “His Enemies”.*
 - **WHAT WOULD YOU SAY/DO IN SUCH A SITUATION?**
- Those gathered around the Table are about to hear one of THE GREATEST STORIES ever told. This story has captivated the hearts of millions of people.
- **THIS IS GOD’S HEART FOR A WAYWARD WORLD IN STORY FORM:**
 - o Read Luke 15:11-20

The reason why this story resonates so deeply with people is because at some level we can all relate with the lost son. We’ve all made mistakes before. We’ve all done things that we regret; made decisions that we wish we could undo.

- **Pay Attention To This:** when the Son finally hit rock bottom and “came to his senses” ... he was so filled with shame at the thought of standing before his Father that he resorted to preparing a script to use when he saw his Father again, knowing his words in the moment would fall short.
- This “Script” reveals how the son thought his Father would treat him when he returned...

It consisted of **THREE MAJOR PARTS:**

1. *Father, **I have sinned** against heaven and against you (as in, “Look... I know that I messed up! I made a HUGE mistake. I wronged YOU and God, and hurt you deeply...”)*
2. ***I am no longer worthy to be called your son** (as in, “I understand that because of what I have done, things will NEVER be the same. You will never see me as your son again...”)*
3. ***Make me like one of your hired servants**. (as in, “Maybe if I WORK HARD & earn my keep, you might be willing to tolerate me & spare me from starvation. Oh please, Father...”)*

Perhaps you have felt shame like that before? Have you ever done something wrong and felt wracked with guilt. It’s an awful feeling, isn’t it? One of the worst feelings is having to face a person that you wronged... to look at them in the eye and own your mistake. I’ve been there.

- I bet a lot of us can relate with the son in this story. I am willing to bet that we too have sat under the heavy weight of shame, struggling for the words to say to God or others. I’m willing to bet that everyone in this room has felt unworthy at some point in their life.

Behold; The Fathers Heart!

- *So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; **he ran to his son**, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. **Let’s have a feast and celebrate**. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate. Luke 15:20-24*

Despite how you feel or the lies you have come to believe, this story reveals God’s heart for you!

PAY ATTENTION TO THIS: When the son finally stands before the Father, he can’t even finish his speech before the Father hugs him. In fact, the son doesn’t even have the chance to get himself to the Father before the father **RUNS OUT TO MEET HIM**.

- **Despite how you feel or the lies you’ve come to believe, this story reveals God’s heart for you!**
 - The child says, “I have sinned...”
 - The Father says, **“I HAVE FORGIVEN!”**
 - The child says, “I’m not worthy...”
 - The Father says, **“BRING THE BEST ROBE & RING – PUT IT ON THEM!”**
 - The child says, “Make me like a hired servant... I’ll work hard for you!”
 - The Father says, **“MY CHILD, THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR YOU AT MY TABLE!”**

REFLECTION TIME:

1. What barriers are standing between you and your seat at His Table? (i.e. lies, shame, guilt, painful memories, unforgiveness, sin, fear, doubt, etc)
2. What truth(s) is Jesus inviting you (*daring you*) to believe today? What does Jesus want you to know about your value in Him and your place at His table?

What are you waiting for?

- Your life is an RSVP – a response to Jesus’ invitation. What will you do with it, that’s the question!
- *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone **hears my voice and OPENS THE DOOR**, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. Revelation 3:20*
