A Weekly Discussion Guide for the Summer Sermon Series

Stanwich Church

August – September 2026

Welcome to the Table

How to Use This Guide

Each session is designed to be 75–90 minutes and follows a simple rhythm: Opening, Scripture, Discussion, Practice, and Prayer. Timing suggestions are provided as a helpful guide, but don't feel bound by the clock. If you or your group find meaningful conversation, create space for it and allow the Holy Spirit to lead.

This guide is designed to work whether or not everyone in your group attended the Sunday sermon. Each week includes a brief connection to the message, but the conversation is built to stand on its own. Feel free to welcome friends, neighbors, and those who may be exploring faith—the opening questions are intentionally crafted to create space for everyone to participate.

Pay special attention to the Practice section. An invitational culture is not formed only when we gather together; it grows as we carry God's love into our everyday rhythms—with our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and communities. Each week's practice is an opportunity to take what you're discovering together and live it out beyond Sunday. Encourage one another to share stories and celebrate what God is doing when you gather again.

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Week 1: God Sets the Table

Key Passage: Genesis 3:1–10; Luke 15:1–7

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Icebreaker

Think of the best meal you've ever been invited to—not necessarily the fanciest, but the one where you felt most genuinely welcomed. What made it feel that way?

SCRIPTURE & BACKGROUND (10 MINUTES)

Read Genesis 3:1-10 aloud together.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” 2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

Background: Genesis 3 shows how the enemy tempted Adam and Eve to doubt God's goodness and reject His loving authority. Their choice fractured their relationship with God, leaving them filled with shame, fear, and hiding. Yet before they ever sought God, God sought them. Throughout Scripture, we see the same heart of the Father. He is always the One who takes the first step toward His children, inviting them out of hiding

and welcoming them back to His table. The gospel is God's gracious invitation to leave shame behind and once again enjoy fellowship with Him.

DISCUSSION (30–35 MINUTES)

1. The serpent first questioned God's Word and then God's character. Why do you think temptation often begins by causing us to doubt God's goodness or His truth?
2. After Adam and Eve sinned, their first response was to hide from God. What are some ways people still hide today—from God, from others, or even from themselves?
3. God asked, **"Where are you?"** What does that question reveal about His heart? How is it an invitation to leave hiding and return to relationship with Him?
4. Our series is called **Welcome to the Table.** What keeps people from believing they are truly welcome at God's table? How can we help create a church culture where people experience the same welcome and grace that God extends to us?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Spend a few quiet minutes each day asking God the same question He asked Adam:

"Where am I?"

Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas where you may be hiding behind fear, shame, self-reliance, or distraction. Instead of hiding, practice responding honestly to God in prayer, trusting that He always moves toward you with grace and love.

PRAYER (10–15 MINUTES)

Pray that God would open your eyes to the people He is already drawing to Himself. Ask Him for compassion, courage, and sensitivity to join Him in His work by moving toward others with the same welcome and love that Jesus demonstrated.

Invite group members to say one name aloud — someone they are carrying into this week. Close by praying briefly for each name.

WEEK 2: THE COVENANT TABLE

Key Passage: 2 Samuel 9:1–13

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Icebreaker

Has someone ever shown you unexpected kindness—generosity or welcome you felt you hadn't earned? What did it feel like to receive it?

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† SCRIPTURE & BACKGROUND (10 MINUTES)

Read 2 Samuel 9:1–13 aloud together.

*And David said, “Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?” **2** Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David. And the king said to him, “Are you Ziba?” And he said, “I am your servant.” **3** And the king said, “Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?” Ziba said to the king, “There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet.” **4** The king said to him, “Where is he?” And Ziba said to the king, “He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar.” **5** Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. **6** And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, “Mephibosheth!” And he answered, “Behold, I am your servant.” **7** And David said to him, “Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always.” **8** And he paid homage and said, “What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?”*

***9** Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, “All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. **10** And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce, that your master's grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall always eat at my table.” Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. **11** Then Ziba said to the king, “According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do.” So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. **12** And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants. **13** So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.*

Background: Sunday's sermon reminded us that every hospitality table points to the Lord's Table. David's welcome of Mephibosheth is a powerful picture of covenant grace—kindness extended not because it was earned, but because of a promise. It reflects the way God welcomes us into His family.

DISCUSSION (30–35 MINUTES)

1. David intentionally searched for someone to show covenant kindness. What does that reveal about the heart of God?
2. Mephibosheth expected rejection but received a permanent place at the king's table. What does that teach us about grace?
3. Who are the "Mephibosheths" in your everyday life—people who may feel unseen, overlooked, or unworthy of belonging?
4. What is one practical way you can create space at your table, in your home, or in your Life Group for someone this week?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Identify one person or family who may feel overlooked or disconnected. Extend a simple invitation—a meal, coffee, or meaningful conversation. Your goal isn't to fix anyone, but to make room at your table.

PRAYER (10–15 MINUTES)

Pray for people in your community who feel forgotten or unseen. Ask God to give you eyes to notice them and courage to extend His welcome through simple acts of hospitality.

WEEK 3: JESUS AND THE WRONG CROWD

Key Passage: Luke 15:1–2; Luke 19:1–10

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Icebreaker

Think of a time you felt like you didn't belong. What helped you feel welcomed?

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† SCRIPTURE & BACKGROUND (10 MINUTES)

Read Luke 19:1–10 aloud together.

He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. 3 And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." 6 So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 8 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Background: Throughout His ministry, Jesus became known for welcoming the "wrong" people. His encounter with Zacchaeus shows that Jesus doesn't wait for people to find Him—He takes the initiative, enters their world, and transforms lives through His presence.

DISCUSSION (30–35 MINUTES)

1. Jesus saw Zacchaeus before Zacchaeus ever spoke to Him. What does that reveal about how Jesus pursues people?
2. Jesus entered Zacchaeus's world before asking anything of him. Why do you think that mattered?

3. Where might God be inviting you to move toward someone instead of waiting for them to come to you?
4. Who is one person you can intentionally spend time with this week simply to reflect the welcome of Jesus?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Spend intentional time with someone outside your normal Christian circle. Go where they are, listen well, and pray beforehand that God would help you see them the way He does.

PRAYER (10–15 MINUTES)

Pray for people in your life who are searching from a distance. Ask God to help you notice them, know them by name, and reflect the welcoming heart of Jesus.

WEEK 4: TWO KINDS OF HOSTS

Key Passage: Luke 7:36–50

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Icebreaker

Describe the best host you've ever experienced. What made you feel genuinely welcomed?

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† SCRIPTURE & BACKGROUND (10 MINUTES)

Read Luke 7:36–50 aloud together.

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." 44 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" 50 And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Background: Simon and the woman welcomed the same guest in two completely different ways. Simon fulfilled the appearance of hospitality while missing its heart. The

woman responded to Jesus with extravagant love because she knew the depth of His grace.

DISCUSSION (30–35 MINUTES)

1. Jesus asks Simon, "Do you see this woman?" Why is that question so significant?
2. What is the difference between Simon's hospitality and the woman's hospitality?
3. Who might you be overlooking because of assumptions, familiarity, or busyness?
4. If someone far from God met you this week, what would help them genuinely experience the welcome of Jesus?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Choose one practical way to become a more intentional host—whether in your home, your Life Group, or at church. Decide to be the one who notices, welcomes, and includes.

PRAYER (10–15 MINUTES)

Ask God to help you see people the way Jesus does and to make your heart increasingly shaped by His grace and compassion.

WEEK 5: THE TABLE THAT MULTIPLIES

Key Passage: Acts 2:42–47; Luke 22:14-23

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Icebreaker

Think of a community that naturally drew people in. What made it so attractive?

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† SCRIPTURE & BACKGROUND (10 MINUTES)

Read Acts 2:42–47 together.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Background: The early church didn't grow because of programs but because of transformed lives lived together. Their homes were open, their relationships authentic, and their tables became places where others encountered the love of Christ.

DISCUSSION (30–35 MINUTES)

1. What stands out to you about the way the early church shared life together in Acts 2?
2. Why do you think their community naturally attracted people to Jesus?
3. What keeps Christians from living with this same kind of open, invitational posture today?
4. What is one step your group or your family could take this week to become a more open table for others?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Share a meal with someone who isn't already connected to your church community. Simply create space for relationship and trust God to work.

PRAYER (10–15 MINUTES)

Pray that your Life Group would become a community where people experience authentic love, belonging, and the presence of Jesus.

WEEK 6: THE TABLE WE'RE HEADING TOWARD

Key Passage: Revelation 19:6–9; Isaiah 25:6–9

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Icebreaker

If you could invite anyone to dinner—living or dead—who would you invite, and why?

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† SCRIPTURE & BACKGROUND (10 MINUTES)

Read Revelation 19:6–9 aloud together.

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.[7] Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.[9] And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

Background: Every table in Scripture ultimately points to one final celebration—the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Our hospitality today anticipates God's future kingdom, where people from every nation will gather around His table forever.

DISCUSSION (30–35 MINUTES)

1. Isaiah and Revelation both picture God's kingdom as a great banquet. What does that reveal about God's ultimate desire for His people?
2. How does the promise of the coming feast shape the way we live and welcome others today?
3. Looking back over this series, what has God been teaching you about hospitality, invitation, or witness?

4. Who is one person you are praying will one day be at God's table, and what is one next step you can take toward them?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Write down the name of one person you want to continue praying for and intentionally moving toward. Keep their name somewhere you'll see it each day as a reminder that living an invitational life is an ongoing calling.

PRAYER (10–15 MINUTES)

Thank God for His invitation into His family through Christ. Pray by name for those who are far from Him, asking that they would one day join in the joy of His eternal feast. Close by praying for one another to continue living lives of open tables and open hearts.

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