

## **AUGUST: WOMEN'S MONTH**

Set during Women's Month, this theme invites us to take an honest look at how women have been left out of important spaces especially where big decisions are made in the church, in society, and in theology. The idea of a 'round table' helps us imagine something better: a space where everyone has a voice, where people are seen and valued, and where power is shared, not controlled by a few. Unlike the usual boardroom or dinner table where the person at the head holds the most influence, a round table reminds us of shared leadership, mutual respect, and working together as equals.

As we search for this kind of table, we're also shining a light on the unfair systems that still exist around us. We're asking real, hard questions: 'Who is missing from our tables?', 'Who hasn't been heard?', 'What kind of community are we building?' This is about more than just seats and spaces. It's also about the future. What kind of church, what kind of leadership, what kind of theology are we passing on to the next generation? Are we making room for our daughters, sisters, mothers, and elders to fully lead, speak, dream, and serve? Are we building spaces where they don't have to fight to belong—but know they are already welcome and needed? That's why '**In search of a round table**' is not just a theme but a journey. It invites us to reflect on where we've been and to reimagine where we're going. Most of all, calling us to build a community that reflects God's love and that radically welcomes all.



**Week 1: Whose table is it anyway?**

**Week 2: Where are the empty chairs?**

**Week 3: When the round table is not round**

**Week 4: A Theology of mutuality at the table**

**Week 5: Preparing the table for the next generation**

# Week 1: Whose table is it anyway?

## *Reclaiming the Table as God's Invitation for All.*



The image of the table in Scripture is rich with themes of invitation, hospitality, and shared presence. However, across history, the table has been co-opted & used to exclude, to define hierarchies and to center power in the hands of the few. This then challenges the assumption that the table belongs to some authority; be it tradition, patriarchy or culture. It reclaims the table as God's.

### Home Groups and classes guide:

1. Open in Worship and Prayer: this is to invite God into the meeting. For example, you can light a candle, sing together, or use a YouTube Hymn or song.
2. Open your Bibles and read the Bible verses for this week (take turns?) see below.
3. Reflect on the Bible verses and the reflection written by a Minister or Lay Preacher.
4. Connect with each other and take the reflection deeper by answering the Questions.
5. Works out: What have we learned that we can apply in our lives in this session? Keep each other accountable for promises made or important steps taken. Pray for and over each other (after taking prayer requests).

### Scripture readings:

Esther 4:12–17 (Esther finds voice and courage to take her place at the table)

Matthew 22:1–14 (The Parable of the Wedding Banquet)

Psalms 24 (The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it)

### Hymn/Song:

New Wine - Hillsong Worship

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IozGKIOzEVc&list=RD1ozGKIOzEVc&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IozGKIOzEVc&list=RD1ozGKIOzEVc&start_radio=1)

### Reflections on the Bible readings written by: REV THABISO MCINGA.

From the text in Matthew 22:1–14, we hear of Jesus telling a parable that ought to make us uncomfortable. In this parable, a king prepares a wedding banquet for his son. This isn't just any meal but a royal feast, certainly a table with not only generosity, but also celebrations and a space of belonging. But unfortunately, things don't go as expected. Those who were originally invited, i.e. the ones with status, familiarity and privilege all refuse to come. Some are unresponsive. Others react violently. The invitation receives a clear rejection. And so, the king opens wide the doors. "Go to the street corners," he says. "Invite everyone you can find." At that point, the banquet hall is filled with guests, both good and bad. One thus sees that this is not a table curated for perfection, yet a table filled by grace. And still, we are left with a haunting question: **Whose table is it anyway?**

Too often, we act like the table belongs to us. We behave as if we wrote the guest list—deciding who can sit, who gets served, and who should leave. But we forget that this is the King's table. It is God's invitation, not ours. And when we forget that we stop sharing the table and start guarding it. We build fences instead of pulling up chairs.

This parable thus shows us a powerful reversal in God's kingdom. Those who are often seen as unworthy are welcomed in, while those who assumed they belonged because of their status, appearance or tradition are left outside. This clearly reminds us that the table is not a reward for the righteous but a gift for the hungry and those in need. That's exactly what grace does. It makes space for those the world pushes aside, and it humbles those who believed they had a right to be there. So, when we ask, *whose table is it?*, we're also being challenged. We are invited to treat others differently .... to let go of pride and the control that keep people out. Oh yes – this question also then invites us to live with open hands and open hearts. As a take-away, this text affirms that indeed Church is certainly not meant to be a gatekeeper, but a witness and a sign of what God's welcome looks like.

So maybe the real task is not to manage the table, but to make room at the table. We are invited to extend the welcome repeatedly, remembering that we are guests ourselves. This table wasn't built by us. It was given to us. And because it is God's table, no one is too far gone, too broken, too late, or too different to be included. Grace sets the table. Love fills the room. And everyone is welcome just as they are. But just when we begin to rest in this wide embrace, the parable takes a sudden turn. One guest is found without wedding clothes and is thrown out. It feels harsh. But the point is clear: being invited is not the same as being changed. Grace gets us in, yes, but God also calls us to be transformed.

So again: *Whose table is it anyway?* It is God's. And at God's table:

The invitation is scandalously wide.

The response is urgently required.

The transformation is deeply expected.

And the host is not to be taken lightly.

So, the next time we gather at the table be it the Communion table, the dinner table, or the metaphorical table of decision-making and inclusion; let us remember: It is not our table. It is God's. And God's table makes room. And God's table cannot be tamed.

## Questions to take the Scripture and reflection deeper:

1. What feelings or thoughts did this parable stir in you?
2. How do we unintentionally exclude others in our churches, families, communities or other spaces?
3. In what ways do you think our modern culture still confuses privilege with spiritual entitlement?
4. Lastly, what does "pulling up more chairs" practically look like where you are?

## Memory verse for the week:

*Entrench this verse in your mind, ponder it, meditate on it.*

### Monday

#### Isaiah 25:6

*"On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine - the best of meats and the finest of wines."*

### Tuesday

#### Psalms 23:5

*"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."*

### Wednesday

#### Luke 14:13-14

*"But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

### Thursday

#### Revelation 19:9

*"Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"*

### Friday


#### Romans 12:1-2

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God... Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

# Family time – Written by: Jenny Blake- Children’s Pastor

## Whose Table Is It Anyway?”

Reclaiming the Table as God’s Invitation for All


 Scripture: Esther 4:12–17

### Opening Thought

In the Bible, the table is more than just a place to eat. It’s a symbol of *belonging, hospitality, and God’s love*. It’s where people gather, share stories, and remember that God is with them.

But sometimes people act like the table only belongs to certain groups — to the powerful, the rich, or the ones who fit in. That’s not what God wants. The table is *God’s*, and *everyone* is welcome.

Esther had a seat at the king’s table, but at first she didn’t use her place to help others. Then she remembered: *God put her there for a reason*. And when she spoke up, everything changed.

 Scripture Reading: Esther 4:12–17 (NIV)

*“...And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” Then Esther said, “...I will go to the king... and if I perish, I perish.”*

### Discussion Questions for Teenagers (Ages 12–18)

1. At your school or friend group, who usually gets invited to the “table”? Who doesn’t? Why do you think that is?
2. What pressures might keep you from speaking up when something is unfair or unkind?
3. Have you ever been like Esther — scared to act, but you knew deep down it was the right thing? What happened?
4. How can we make the spaces in our lives — at school, youth, home, or online — more like *God’s table* and less like the world’s table?

### Discussion Questions for Younger Children (Ages 4–11)

1. Have you ever felt left out before? What helped you feel better?
2. What do you like about sitting at a table with your family or friends?
3. If you could invite anyone to eat with us, who would it be? (Let them name someone they know, or even imagine a fun guest like Jesus, a superhero, or someone new at school.)
4. Why do you think God wants *everyone* to feel welcome?
5. Esther was brave. What is something brave *you* could do to help someone else?

### Family Connection Moment

Take turns answering this sentence:

*“I think God wants me to make space at the table by \_\_\_\_\_.”*

(Examples: “inviting someone new,” “sharing my toys,” “being kind to the kid who’s alone,” “listening to someone’s story.”)

Then, make a plan as a family:

This week, can you have someone over, sit with someone new, or do something that shows “*God’s table is for everyone*”?

### Closing Prayer (Child-Friendly)

Dear God,

Thank You that Your table is big and there’s room for all of us.

Help us be like Esther — brave and loving.

Show us who needs to feel welcome and help us invite them in.

Amen.