
Small Group Study Guide

Matthew Croasmun & Miroslav Volf

The HUNGER for HOME
Food & Meals in the Gospel of Luke
A Small Group Study Guide for use alongside:

_The Hunger for Home: Food & Meals in the Gospel of Luke_, Matt Croasmun & Miroslav Volf,
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_The Hunger for Home Six-Part Video Series_,
featuring Matt Croasmun

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At the heart of this small group study is the claim that Jesus, the embodiment and herald of the home of God, is made known in his invitation to the table. Throughout the Gospel of Luke, we find Jesus teaching and enacting fellowship over a meal. Luke’s Gospel, in other words, is full of stories of God eating with God’s people. In this small group curriculum, we will delve deeper into the Gospel of Luke, exploring the relationship between who Jesus is, who we are called to be in relation to Him, and what food and meals might have to do with that. Along the way, we will also explore practical questions about what, how, and with whom we eat, and what difference it might make for us to ask these questions in the light of Jesus’s own practices of and teachings about food and eating.

How to Use This Guide

- This curriculum includes 6 sessions, each of which revolves around one chapter of The Hunger for Home: Food & Meals in the Gospel of Luke and 1 to 3 key passages from the Gospel of Luke.
- Participants are encouraged to attend each session having read both the brief chapter and the Gospel passages.
- Each session is accompanied by a video introduction from Dr. Matt Croasmun which frames and summarizes the chapter.
- While not essential, we recommend that each meeting take place over a meal of some kind.
- Be flexible and creative—potluck? A rotating roster of cooks? Or just a simple selection of bread and cheese? The point here is not to make gourmet food (though there’s nothing wrong with that!) but to establish a form of table fellowship like that which Jesus creates repeatedly in the telling of the Gospels.
Gather around a table, if possible, with food, if possible.

Open with prayer—suggested opening prayers are included in this study guide.

Begin with 30 minutes of time set aside for food and fellowship, using the suggested discussion questions for this time as appropriate.

View the short video for that chapter.

Read aloud one selected Gospel passage from that chapter.

Take 5 to 7 minutes of silent reflection and/or journaling on the Gospel passage. We’ve provided some suggested questions that might be helpful.

Begin the group discussion, sharing thoughts from silent reflection or responding to the questions provided.

Close with prayer.
“If we’re going to understand what Luke is trying to tell us about God, about Jesus, about the world and this home into which the many meals of Luke’s Gospel invite us, first, we need to get ‘bread’ right.” (p. 11-12)

**Table Prayer**

The eyes of all wait upon You, O Lord, and You give them their food in due season; You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts which we receive from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (Martin Luther’s Small Catechism)

**Food & Fellowship**

Have you ever depended on someone else for something essential, like food, for your own life? How did it make you feel?

**Watch Video**

**Read Luke 9:1-6, 10-17**

Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. 3 He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. 5 Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.’ 6 They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere...

10 On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. 11 When the crowds found out about it, they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured. 12 The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, ‘Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place.’ 13 But he said to them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ They said, ‘We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.’ 14 For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, ‘Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each.’ 15 They did so and made them all sit down. 16 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples
to set before the crowd. 17 And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.


Journaling & Silent Reflection

- Where in our world do you recognize a preference for mere bread? In what ways are you tempted to pursue mere bread?
- Our economic lives seem to be structured around what is systematically treated as mere work for mere bread. Can you think of ways, however small, to infuse your work with a sense of it being a gift and collaboration with God in God’s projects?
- In what ways has God invited you to participate in Jesus’s work of announcing the abundance of God’s good gifts to the world?

Group Discussion

Closing Prayer

Lord by whose very words we live, let us hunger for bread that is more than just bread. Let us recognize You as the source of every good gift. Let us be united with You in every work we do and hunger we seek to satisfy. Let us dare to share the good news of Your abundant gifts with the world You so love. Amen.
Feasting in the Fields

“Now is the inauguration of Jubilee. The land is being set free. The disciples are to declare the good news to the poor, set the oppressed free, release the captives, bring sight to the blind, and declare the year of the Lord’s favor. If and as they do so, every meal they eat points toward a feast like no other: a feast that makes present the coming reality of the world set free to find its home in becoming the home of God. But the feast is not yet here…” (p. 29)

Table Prayer

Be present at our table, Lord. Be here and everywhere adored. Your people bless, and grant that we may feast in paradise with You. Amen. (John Wesley)

Food & Fellowship

When and where was your last “feast”? What made it a feast rather than another meal? How much did you know about where the food came from or about who raised it?

Watch Video

Read Luke 6:1-5

One sabbath while Jesus was going through the cornfields, his disciples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. But some of the Pharisees said, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?' 3 Jesus answered, 'Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?' 5 Then he said to them, 'The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.'

Silent Reflection & Journaling

- What would Jesus’s declaration of Jubilee mean for your neighborhood or your city? How is Jesus inviting you to participate in his mission of Jubilee?
- How can we eat in ways that help us to be mindful of the places from which our food comes? Are there ways of eating that could bring us closer to the land on which we live and the people with whom we share that land?
- In what ways is it helpful to think about Jesus as anointed-but-yet-enthroned? In what ways is it troubling?

Group Discussion

Closing Prayer

Lord of the Jubilee, capture our hearts with Your vision of rest and release for our lands and for our neighbors. Lord of the harvest, make us mindful of Your provision and through whose hands and whose land it comes. Son of David, have mercy on us. Set us free. Amen.
Sinners at the Table

“Jesus got in trouble for who was welcomed at the table. No one was excluded—which was itself the problem... Even those who excluded themselves could do no more than imagine themselves ‘outside’ the feast in the midst of a meal where Jesus was inviting them to the banquet of the kingdom Jubilee.” (p. 43-44)

Table Prayer

Lord, Jesus Christ, we approach Your banquet table in fear and trembling, for we are sinners, and dare not rely on our own worth but only on Your goodness and mercy. We are defiled by many sins in body and soul, and by our unguarded thoughts and words. Gracious God of majesty and awe, we seek Your protection, we look for Your healing, poor troubled sinners that we are, we appeal to You, the fountain of all mercy. We cannot bear Your judgment, but we trust in Your salvation. Amen. (St. Ambrose)

Food & Fellowship

Describe an awkward dining experience you’ve had—what made it uncomfortable? How, if at all, was it resolved?

Watch Video

Read Luke 5:27-32

After this he went out and saw a tax-collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ 28 And he got up, left everything, and followed him. 29 Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax-collectors and others sitting at the table with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, ‘Why do you eat and drink with taxcollectors and sinners?’ 31 Jesus answered, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; 32 I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.’

See also: Luke 7:36-50, 15:11-32
Silent Reflection & Journaling

- Try to recontextualize this scene in today’s world. Who are today’s pharisees—those who are viewed by society as righteous and upright? Who are today’s tax collectors—those who whose inclusion at the table would cause great offense to others? Try to look at it the other way as well: have you ever been invited to eat alongside someone to whom you might be seen as a pharisee, someone whose very presence implies judgment? To whom might you be seen as a tax collector? Would it be easier for you to do the inviting or to accept an invitation? Why?

- What feelings arise for you when you think of Jesus relating to you as a sinner called to repentance?

- Whose sin do you find it hardest to forgive? What sort of sin are you uncomfortable thinking of as being in any sense like yours? Whose presence at Jesus’s table do you find troubling?

- What would it look like for all of our meals to be opportunities for Jesus to do his work of inviting all of us sinners to repentance, celebrating repentance with us, and inviting us to be at home with him and with one another?

- In light of these stories from Jesus’s life, who might God be challenging you to invite to share a meal? From whom might God be challenging you to accept an invitation to share a meal?

Group Discussion

Closing Prayer

Holy Father God, let the Jubilee of our anointed-and-soon-to-be-enthroned Messiah come to be in our world. Give us bread that is more than mere bread, but bread that invites us to be at home with our heavenly Father, with the fields and lakes God created, and with one another. Invite us to that table where all of us sinners eat side by side, forgiving and forgiven. Spare us trial, but, even then, we are ready to say: we do not live by bread alone, but by every word which comes from Jesus our Lord. Amen. (Adapted from Luke 11:2-4)
Rich & Poor at the Table

“The substance of Jesus’s Jubilee mission, the definition of true fasting that his feasting enacts is sharing bread with the hungry and welcoming the unhoused into houses, recognizing in them our family, members of our household. Meals are to be opportunities for rich and poor to be at home with one another.” (p. 61-62)

Table Prayer

Heavenly Father, Holy God, You do not despise the affliction of the afflicted; You do not hide Your face from them. Hear us, we pray, when we cry to You. Help us, we pray, to hear and to heed the cries of the poor and afflicted, in whom You have promised we will encounter Your holy presence. You have promised that the poor and the hungry shall eat and be satisfied; that those who seek him shall praise the Lord. Help us to be Your agents in the fulfilling of that promise, that in welcoming them and being welcomed by them, we might welcome and be welcomed by You, and resting in the hope that all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to You; that all the families of the nations shall worship You and feast at Your table together in the world to come. Amen. (Adapted from Psalm 22)

Food & Fellowship

Have you ever resented your placement at a table? If so, why? Have you ever sought out the lowest place at the table? What was that like? What are some other metaphorical ‘tables’ where our social position might be marked? What would it look like to take the lowest place there?

Watch Video

Read Luke 14:1, 7-24

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely… 7 When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. 8 ‘When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; 9 and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, “Give this person your place”, and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, “Friend, move up higher”; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. 11 For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’
12 He said also to the one who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'

15 One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, ‘Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!’ 16 Then Jesus said to him, ‘Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. 17 At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, “Come; for everything is ready now.” 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, “I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies.” 19 Another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies.” 20 Another said, “I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.” 21 So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, “Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.” 22 And the slave said, “Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.” 23 Then the master said to the slave, “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.”'

See also: Luke 16:1-31

Silent Reflection & Journaling

- With whom do you share your meals? What do you hope to get out of the exchange?
- Try to imagine what it would take to host a dinner where you invited only the poor, the disabled, the outcast. Could you fill your table? If so, what has prevented you from doing it? If not, what would have to change to make it a possibility?
- When you engage across lines of class, do these encounters deepen the divisions or break them down? Do those who have more and those who have less relate as patrons and clients or as housemates-to-be? What would it look like to relate as ‘kin’?
- How can our meals become sites of reconciliation that aim at life everlasting at home with one another, rich and poor?

Group Discussion

Closing Prayer

Lord, let this be our piety: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke. Let us share our bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into our houses. When we see the naked, let us cover them. Let us not hide ourselves from our own kin, that we may welcome and be welcomed by one another as members of Your household. Amen. (Adapted from Isaiah 58:6-7)
Dining at Home

“The places in which meals occur are also significant for Jesus. Because meals are not self-standing sites of nourishing mutual encounter as might happen in a coffee shop or a restaurant but rather enactments of home, when Jesus invites to the table, Jesus wants folks to ask: In whose home do we belong?” (p. 76)

Table Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, in You will all things in heaven and earth find their completion. You are beyond all things and in You the whole universe holds together. All that is finds its fulfilment with You. To You be all praise and all power. Help us to be at one with the earth, so that we know it as home. Help us to be reconciled to other living creatures, so that we know them as neighbors. Help us to be at peace with each other, so that we may live together in harmony. Just as you hold the whole world in Your hands, hold us too. Bless us with strength. Fill us with love. And inspire us to care for all that is. In the name of Christ. Amen. (Church of England, “Creation Care Prayers”)

Food & Fellowship

What is it normally like for you to prepare a meal? Stressful? Relaxing? Boring? Fun? How would meal preparation be different if you thought of it not simply as preparing food, but as preparing for an encounter with the presence of Jesus Christ?

Watch Video

Read Luke 22:14-30

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. 15 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 until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ 17 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves; 18 for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ 19 Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ 20 And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. 21 But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. 22 For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!’ 23 Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could
be who would do this. 24 A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. 25 But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. 26 But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. 28 'You are those who have stood by me in my trials; 29 and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, 30 so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'

Silent Reflection & Journaling

- Jesus says he is among us as one who serves, not as one who is served. How would your meals and eating habits have to change if you were to adopt this posture as your own?
- Fasting is an increasingly common practice in the everyday world of health and wellness. How does the perspective on fasting and feasting described in this chapter, and more importantly, in the Gospels, relate to secular practices like intermittent fasting, keto diets, Atkins diets, etc.? Why do you think Jesus fasts in the passage above? What might be some of the reasons and purposes behind the different practices of fasting? How do they compare to one another?
- How would thinking about your meals as nourishing mutual encounters between people, places, and the presence of God change the way you eat? What you eat? Where you eat? With whom you eat?
- What contexts around you are particularly ‘unfitting’ to the home that God is bringing about in your midst? What economic, political, cultural, and ecological dynamics do you long to see transformed? How might fasting from food (only if and as it is safe and healthy for you to do so) serve as a way of investing your body in this longing for transformation and for the world to become God’s home?

Group Discussion

Closing Prayer

Jesus, we long to eat at Your table in Your kingdom. Prepare us now for the fellowship that awaits us there. Deposit in us Your way of love and of service to our neighbors. Prepare us now for the world remade. Deposit in us Your way of love and service to the fields and wilds of the world You created. Prepare us now for the home into which we are invited. Grow in us a longing for the world at home in having become Your home. May we hunger and thirst for the feast that awaits us in the home You have prepared. Amen.
Made Known in the Breaking of the Bread

Table Prayer

Jesus Christ, in changing weather, vanishing species, and impoverished neighbors, the heavens and earth bear witness against us. As You lit an Easter fire and cooked breakfast, fashioning God’s kingdom from the stuff of this earth, so when we cook and light and warm our homes, make us people of Your resurrection, choosing life through simplicity, ingenuity, and obedience. Amen. (Eleanor Harris)

Food & Fellowship

How has Jesus been made known to you as you’ve encountered him in the meals of Luke’s Gospel? How has this affected your understanding of Jesus? How has this affected your understanding of meals and food? What practices might you adopt that would help you maintain this awareness?

Watch Video


Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ 19 He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’ 25 Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and
how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory? 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. 28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

See also: Luke 10:38-42

Silent Reflection & Journaling

- Why and how is the celebration of the eucharist important to you? What difference would it make for you to think of your everyday meals as eucharists? What difference would it make for you to think of the eucharist as a meal?
- When are you tempted to (a) see God as absent from your ideal picture of home, (b) imagine God as an 'add-on' to your ideal vision of home, or (c) attempt to make God a tool you can use in service of your own goals?
- What would it look like intentionally to plan a meal at which Jesus might be made known in the breaking of bread? If you’ve been reading this book together with a group, consider hosting a meal that gathers rich and poor, sinners all, to a meal that quite deliberately enacts that home to which God is inviting us. Consider what you will eat, as well as the fields and wilds from which it comes. Consider the people around the table, how they can feel welcomed. Consider how you might bless and/or give thanks for the meal; consider how the entire meal might be an experience of blessing and thanksgiving.

Group Discussion

Closing Prayer

Lord, be for us the One in whom everything else finds its meaning. Be at the center of our meals. Be at the center of our homes. Fill our hearts with longing for the feast and for the home You have prepared for us. Make us attentive to that home and that feast as they come to be in our midst. Let us receive Your kingdom with joy. Amen.
Friend,

Thank you for guiding your family, friends, and community through this small group series on home, food, and meals in the Gospel of Luke. We originally wrote the book in hopes that communities of Jesus followers would gather at sites of nourishing mutual encounter to be enriched by these reflections. We are humbled and honored that you’ve joined us in a hunger for our true home.

Sursum corda! Lift up your hearts!

Matt Croasmun & Miroslav Volf
Helping people envision and pursue lives worthy of our humanity.

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OUR DIRECTOR
Miroslav Volf is Professor of Systematic Theology at Yale Divinity School and author of over 20 books and 100 scholarly articles. Christianity Today named Volf’s Exclusion and Embrace one of the 100 most influential religious books of the 20th century.

“An exciting path toward a vision of abundant beauty and resounding justice.”
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