



An Invitation to:
the **Table**

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

*Surely goodness and lovingkindness
will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Psalm 23:5-6

week **05**

welcome

An Invitation to Encounter

When we come to the table of the Lord, we may find we come with *expectations*. We come with beliefs about who God is, with our own understanding of who will or will not be welcome, with some anticipation of how the experience will unfold.

Yet when we come to the table, we are invited to encounter the embodied love of Jesus — a love that often radically challenges our expectations and calls us into a new way of life. We might come expecting God to be the presiding, honorable host. We find, instead, Jesus — wrapped in the clothes of a servant — kneeling before our dirty feet with a tub of water. We encounter his love in our skin and our soles. And when we look up, we see him handing us the towel.

An encounter with the love of Christ changes how we encounter everyone. It changes how we encounter our own weakness. It changes how we encounter the people we see every day. It changes how we encounter the world.

May we open our hearts to genuine encounter with the love of Jesus this week, and may we be changed to encounter the world.

Meditation

We encourage you to start or end your days this week by spending a few slow, quiet moments reading this verse. Invite the Lord to speak to you anew each day through this scripture, and allow your heart and mind to rest in the faithfulness of his word.

**“I give you a new commandment,
that you love one another.
Just as I have loved you,
you also should love one another.
By this everyone will know that you are my
disciples, if you have love for one another.”
John 13:34-35**

love one another

John 13

In the Word

As you contemplate the idea of encounter with Christ this week, we encourage you to spend time in the story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet in John 13:1-15. On your own or with others, use the questions from Every Home's Be Fruitful and Multiply discipleship curriculum to help guide your study:

- Read the story once to get familiar with it. Who are the characters in the story? What are their actions? What other details does the text provide? Allow the story to "come to life" in your imagination. (Imagine what it would be like to sit around this table with the disciples and Jesus. What would you smell? What would you hear? How would things change as Jesus moved from the table to your feet?) Pause to invite the Lord to make your heart attentive to his voice as you spend time in his word.
- Read the story a second time. This time, try to put yourself in the story by "stepping into the shoes" of each character. For each character, ask: What emotions might the character be experiencing?

What choices does the character make? What motives might the character have for each choice? (Pay attention to verses 1-4. What is Jesus feeling? What is he aware of? What does he want to express? What might the disciples expect as they take their places at the table? How might they feel in response to Jesus washing their feet? How could they respond? Why might they respond the way they do?)

- Consider what truth the story speaks to you about loving God, others, and yourself (Luke 10:27). Reflect on any ways the Lord might invite you to respond to this truth. When you imagine sitting at this table, how do you feel when Jesus comes to wash your feet? How do you respond? What might Jesus speak to you as he washes your feet? How might he invite you to practice humility and servanthood in your life today?



For Further Reading: Philippians 2:1-18, Mark 10:45, Luke 24:13-35

In Your Journal

As you feel led, engage this prompt in your journal this week. If you are able, discuss the questions with your spouse or a trusted friend.

- When did you last encounter the love of Christ? What was that experience like? Did his love align with your expectations, or did it surprise you in any way?
- When or where do you find it easiest to encounter Jesus? What does that encounter look and feel like to you? Do you seek to practice regular encounter with his love? Invite the Lord to speak to you about his desire to encounter you. Are there new ways he might want to show you his love? Are there ways he might invite you to encounter others in his love? Write a prayer to express your own desire to encounter Jesus, allowing yourself to be honest about any reservations or fears you may have.

At Your Table

- Invite the Lord to show you practical ways to embody his love this week. How can you practice the humility of Christ, that others might encounter his love in you? Look for simple ways to serve people you see every day with the heart of Jesus.
- Over a meal this week with family or friends, read the story from John 13:1-15. Talk about what it would have been like to be one of the disciples when Jesus washed feet. Discuss how each person encounters the love of Christ in their own relationships with the Lord. Invite everyone to share what makes them feel loved or served in practical ways.

*May the Lord restore your soul
as you spend time at his table
this week.*

