

Discussion questions Easter 2018

The Ultimate Invitation (April 01 - 28)

The resurrection is a profound act of hospitality, of inclusion, and welcome. It's the ultimate invitation.

The following discussion questions are designed to accompany the [The Ultimate Invitation Resource Pack PDF](#) to help adapt the material for small group work. These questions are just a guideline and there is no need to go through all questions in a single session, or in the following sequence. Feel free to pick and choose what interests your group.

Part 1: Food, friendship, and festivity!		
<p>Read Mark 16: 1-8</p> <p>Some of the oldest copies of the Gospel of Mark end abruptly at 16: 8 with "...and they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid." (other versions include extra verses, which some scholars think were added a later date).</p> <p>Intriguingly, if we stop Mark on this cliffhanger, it puts us in the shoes of those who have just found out this amazing news.</p> <p>This prompts the questions - who are we going to tell? Who are we going to invite along into the mystery?</p>	<p>Read Isaiah 25: 1-9</p> <p>In this compelling, poetic vision we see that the Lord will 'wipe away tears from all faces' and 'swallow up death forever' but hunger is not swept away or 'cancelled out' - on this mountaintop you still gotta eat.</p> <p>Instead of doing away with the need to eat - the need is met abundantly and extravagantly.</p> <p>How come?</p>	<p>Read Luke 24: 13-35</p> <p>In this reading it is food that acts as the trigger of revelation. The disciples recognise Jesus as he breaks the bread. When they share together everything falls into place and they recognise him.</p> <p>We often celebrate important moments in our lives with foods and feasts, when loved ones come home or move away, at weddings, at other times of transition.</p> <p>How has food played a role in significant moments in your life?</p> <p>Taste is often a powerful memory trigger, what food reminds you of others?</p>

Part 2:A 'Politics of Hospitality'?		
<p>Read John 20: 19-29</p> <p>The disciples were gathered together as a group when Jesus appeared to them. But Thomas missed it. What was he up to?</p> <p>Jesus waits until the disciples are together again to appear to Thomas.</p> <p>Is it significant that Jesus waited to appear to Thomas in the context of a group setting rather than appearing to him on his own?</p>	<p>Read Psalm 133</p> <p>This short psalm suggests that the joy of living together in unity is like the joy of generously sharing precious things.</p> <p>Rare and expensive oil is lavishly poured out in blessing, and precious mountain dew accumulates bringing life to the dry lands below. These scarce, invaluable things are given away - not hoarded for profit.</p> <p>What role do precious resources, blessings, and gifts play in our society and what role would we like them to play?</p>	<p>Read Leviticus 19: 9-10</p> <p>This reading demonstrates a way of looking out for and including those who find themselves struggling on the fringes of society.</p> <p>It is not a call for direct charity - to harvest all the food and then decide who qualifies to receive it and handing it out to them.</p> <p>Instead, it asks us to take less ourselves and make room for others. There's no judgement, no 'means testing' no tax deductible write off. It's essentially an invitation to take what you need.</p> <p>What would be a non-agricultural way of following this instruction in our everyday lives?</p>

Part 3: The demands of hospitality		
<p>Read Luke 24: 36-43</p> <p>When unexpected guest turn up - they bring their needs - like Jesus asking for a bite to eat. For the disciples seeing Jesus eat the same food as them must have been mind blowing - he really is here! We see once again the significance of sharing food together.</p> <p>Hospitality is cemented by sharing, people naturally relax when eating together, but the gift comes at a cost to the giver. Jesus is challenging the disciples to be good hosts, to be generous, to be accommodating, to cope with disruption.</p> <p>The defining model of hospitality in our contemporary society is one of luxury, anonymity, and cost to the guest - rather than humility, relationship, and cost to the host.</p> <p>What's the difference when the host pays and the guest pays?</p>	<p>Read Acts 3: 13-21</p> <p>When you make an invitation it always comes with the possibility of rejection. In the reading Peter discusses the painful rejection that Jesus suffered at the hands of his home community.</p> <p>It is incredible to think that the 'Author of life' would put himself out there and risk such painful rejection. And yet the author had a sequel in mind. Resurrected to life he extends the invitation once again.</p> <p>Rejection feels horrible and it is understandable that we try to avoid it, but what can we learn from the relentless hospitality of Jesus - who wouldn't even let death stop him from inviting us?</p> <p>And how can we cope with the rejection?</p>	<p>Read Leviticus 19: 33-34</p> <p>This reading contains a beautiful but challenging idea, that we should welcome and treat 'aliens' - people we have no familial or cultural ties to - as well as we treat ourselves. We shouldn't just be <i>nice to them</i>, we should stop thinking of them as 'other' and instead include them as part of 'us'.</p> <p>This process of breaking down barriers between people can be incredibly rewarding but also incredibly challenging, especially if we have little in common to begin with.</p> <p>What are practical things we can do to stop seeing people as 'other' and start seeing them as 'us'?</p>

Part 4: Many hospitalities		
<p>Read Hebrews 13: 1-3</p> <p>At Her Majesty's Pleasure - hospitality and the state.</p> <p>How can we be more hospitable to those experiencing the hospitality of the state, in detention centres and prisons? How can we identify with them and give them a voice?</p> <p>Using the language of the reading, how can we 'remember' them?</p>	<p>Read Psalm 23</p> <p>Many remote communities rely more on hospitality and sharing than the self-contained urban lifestyles of those in towns and cities.</p> <p>Isolated island villages often need to band together in times of crisis. This is often driven by necessity but leads to real bonds of trust and close knit communities forming. The bad weather Spring 2018 in the UK has led to such community spirit. How can we continue this caring for one another?</p> <p>The psalm describes the Lord as an ultimate rural host, caring for the flock, looking out for all their needs. The flock can't be self-sufficient, striking out on their own, they have to rely on the shepherd, their lives are bound together.</p> <p>Whether or not we live in remote communities, what can we learn from rural hospitality?</p>	<p>Read Exodus 23: 1-9</p> <p>This reading weaves the law into everyday life.</p> <p>For those of us who don't come across many oxen or donkeys when out and about - what would be a non-agricultural version of verses 4-5?</p>