

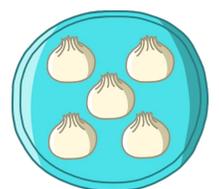


# HAVE YOU *Eaten Yet?*

## SMALL GROUP SERIES | ACTS 2

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FOR ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS



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## HAVE YOU EATEN YET? | ACTS 2

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In the U.S. many people of Asian descent have experienced overt and subtle ways of not belonging, including those who were born here or those who were forced to seek refuge here because of war. The pain of not belonging can stem from our racial appearance, backgrounds, or personal stories. It can even be difficult to see how we belong to the greater Asian American narrative or experience. While Asian America is diverse, one commonality that may tie us together is the experience of not belonging.

This study will explore how the early Christians gathered with each other out of not belonging to share and care for each other. They even extended hospitality to others that felt like they didn't belong.

### Warm-up Question

*What does belonging mean to you? Where have you experienced belonging on campus or during your college career?*

## Context: Grasping the Story of the Early Christians in Acts

### *Setting*

The book of Acts was written by Luke the apostle. In this book, he tells the story and history of the early Christian church after the death and resurrection of Jesus. He shows how they receive the Holy Spirit, become a community, and look to Jesus' examples to help them navigate the tensions between Jewish and Gentile customs. Acts also follows two individuals, Peter and Paul, who impacted both Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

### *Early Christian Experience*

The early Christians were in a unique situation, learning how to become a community while extending their community to non-Jews. At first, they saw themselves as part of Judaism, but eventually they were called Christians and became distinct from traditional Judaism. It would have been common for the Jewish Christians to gather in houses while still attending the Jewish temples.

Jesus' ministry gained a significant following in a short amount of time, and it grew even more after he died. All of Jesus' followers were at risk of persecution from the Roman empire, who saw their growing influence as a threat that could cause a revolt.

### *Acts 2:42-47 (CEB)*

<sup>42</sup>The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. <sup>43</sup>A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All the believers were united and shared everything. <sup>45</sup>They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. <sup>46</sup>Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. <sup>47</sup>They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

*Share in the group, what do you notice about this community?*

## Discussing the Community in Acts:

1. For the community in Acts, why might belonging be significant to them? How might the early Christian believers wrestle with belonging?
2. Reflect on when you first learned about Asian American identity, history, or community. How did you learn and who helped you understand? If you haven't, what would you like to learn?
  - a. For the Acts community, why is it important to learn with and from each other? How does this help them understand collectively who they are as a community?
3. How does the community in Acts collectively steward their gift of hospitality? What seemed natural for the community to do?
4. How does the community in Acts remind you of your Asian American community or communal context? How can your community lean into creating belonging and stewarding hospitality?

## Experiencing God's Hospitality

The community in Acts embodied the same hospitality described in God's great feast, helping a whole community belong when society was outcasting them. When we begin to embody God's hospitality, we experience God's feast on earth and remember that we have a place at God's table in the Kingdom of God.

## Guided Listening Prayer

Guided listening prayer is a form of meditative prayer that exercises our imagination. When we pray this way, God can unlock perspectives, ideas, and possibilities that are inspired by Scriptural truths. The following guide invites the Holy Spirit to help us imagine what hospitality might look like for each of us and our community.

Leader's instructions: Invite everyone to relax and settle into their bodies. Let the group know that there will be an opportunity to share about their experience afterwards. Then begin by slowly reading the guide aloud, pausing for 1-2 minutes after each question or bolded section to allow people's imaginations to respond to each prompt. During discussion, encourage but do not require people to share.

### *Prayer Guide*

**Begin by closing your eyes.**

*Holy Spirit, we invite you to help us see your hospitality and how we are part of it. Would you show us through images, memories, sounds, or smells.*

#### *Communal:*

**Imagine you are in a room gathering with your community.** *Who is in the room? How is belonging felt?*

**Look around the room again.** *Who is not part of the community but desires to belong to it? What invitations or extensions of hospitality are happening?*

#### *Individual:*

**Jesus comes into the room.** *He turns to you and asks, "Have you eaten yet?" How do you feel? What do you want to say to Jesus? How do you respond to Jesus?*

*Jesus motions you to give him your hand. What did he give you?*

*God, thank you for this time of prayer. Even if we aren't sure about what we received, we trust that you are with us. Please help us understand what we experienced. Amen.*

### *Prayer Discussion*

1. Share what it was like to imagine your community. Who was in the room? What did belonging look like? Who wasn't there and what invitations were being made?
2. Share what it was like for Jesus to ask you, "Have you eaten yet?" How did it feel? How did you respond? Did Jesus give you anything?

### **Gleaning and Growing from Stories**

1. In what ways is God changing your perspective or understanding of hospitality?
2. How are you experiencing God's hospitality for yourself? How is your community and campus experiencing or in need of God's hospitality?
3. Where is God challenging you in your hospitality or empowering you to extend your hospitality?

### *Check out questions:*

What is something you are taking from today? Or what is something you want to keep digesting or chewing on this week?