

Come to the table

By [Christopher A. Henry](#)

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On September 9, when many of our members return from Labor Day vacations or summer travels, the gospel text from Mark and the sacrament of communion might be a powerful combination to welcome folks back to the gospel-centered community.

Whether she knows it or not, the Syrophenician woman's reference to the table is a persuasive image for her audience. The table stands at the center of Jesus' ministry. It is at table with sinners and tax collectors and the poor and outcast that Jesus breaks down barriers of hostility and division while breaking bread. And later in Mark, at the Passover table, Jesus will share a meal with his disciples that comes to be the central repeated sacrament of his followers.

Will Willimon offers this in *Lord Teach Us*:

When we want to meet God, we Christians do not need to go up some high mountain, or rummage around in our psyches, we do not need to hold hands, close our eyes and sing "Kum Ba Yah" in hope of revelation. We gather and break bread in Jesus' name. That's where he has chosen to meet us, that's where our eyes are opened and we recognize him.

But we have to come to the table. We have to lay aside the myth of independence and the deceptive lie that we are divine. At the table, we acknowledge our humanity and discover the kingdom of God that is indeed among us.

I'm fascinated by the length to which churches go to attract visitors and potential members. A church in the town I was raised in had a snow cone booth at little league

games. The snow cones were free, with one condition: you had to sign up for Bible school.

To try to appeal to seekers, many churches resort to gimmicks. They reinvent themselves on a monthly basis. Perhaps I should just get used to this. But I have this stubborn conviction that the church does not exist primarily to meet the desires of prospective Christians, but rather to define—and redefine—our deepest needs.

How about this for a church publicity campaign: “You need to be here.” Or, as the prophet Isaiah wrote, “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread? Come to the feast.”