

## **Neighborhood Communion Group**

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **Background**

The idea behind neighborhood communion groups arose from the earliest Christian communities that gathered regularly in homes for a time of eating and talking. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our churches gather for a talk called “sermon” and a meal called “Communion,” but with little time for developing intimacy and relationships.

As you gather this evening, think of it as a throwback to the early church, or a dinner party in our day. Below, you’ll find a Scripture passage, along with some suggested questions. Neighborhood Communion is a chance to enjoy food and food for thought.

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#### **Scripture Passage: Mark 8:1-10**

In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, <sup>2</sup>‘I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup>If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance.’<sup>4</sup>His disciples replied, ‘How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?’ <sup>5</sup>He asked them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’ They said, ‘Seven.’ <sup>6</sup>Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. <sup>7</sup>They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. <sup>8</sup>They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. <sup>9</sup>Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. <sup>10</sup>And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

#### **Discussion**

Although this story comes before the birth of the church, by the time Mark writes it, they had been gathering together for nearly forty years, eating the Jesus meal we call Communion. Here are some questions to get the discussion going.

- 1) This story appears six times in the Gospels (twice in Matthew and Mark), and each time using the language we associate with Communion (taking the bread, giving thanks, etc). What might this say about the meal we eat in church on Sundays?
- 2) In this account Jesus feeds people in a Gentile setting, whereas the earlier account (Mark 6) took place among the Jews. Have you ever thought of food banks and programs like Micah Ministry as a form of Communion for all persons?
- 3) When Jesus indicates his desire to feed the crowds because of his compassion, the disciples question how it could be done with such meager resources. And yet the story ends with leftovers. When you think about feeding the poor, what obstacles come to mind? How do you balance meeting immediate needs with addressing systemic food injustices?