

A PLACE AT THE

TABLE

FOR EVERYONE

**VIDEO DISCUSSION  
GUIDES**



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## Providing Light in Southeast Asia

FIELD PERSONNEL FOCUS: Brooke and Mike

### SETTING THE TABLE

Brooke and Mike have served as CBF field personnel in Southeast Asia since 2014. Their ministry reaches out to students and families in various university and school settings where they love cultivating beloved community through hospitality and community transformational development.

Brooke and Mike are especially active within the focused areas of table fellowship and providing light. CBF field personnel provide light in sharing the good news of Jesus and in providing an alternative lighting and energy source that's recently been made available. Brooke and Mike also offer ministry in hospitality through table fellowship. Brooke says that nearly every night one of their children will ask if someone can join them for dinner, and her response is always in the affirmative. Their table is open to anyone seeking a hot meal and warm fellowship.

The ministry of CBF field personnel in Southeast Asia helps meet the needs of the local community. Yuliana says in her story that, "the people need clean water, lighting and the road to be fixed." Mike and Brooke partnered with a renewable energy program at a local Christian university to install solar-powered lights. Most homes in this area do not have lighting other than a kerosene lamp. The lamps do not burn very bright, and they're expensive to burn. The solar powered lamps provide many extra hours for work and study to the benefit of those in the immediate area.

### BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

#### **Acts 2:42-47**

The story of the early church in Acts shows us the ideal of open table fellowship. Tables serve varied purposes during mealtime. They hold the food that is shared and broken at the meals. Tables hold the necessary tools for eating such as chopsticks, cutlery and napkins. These tables also hold the community mindset and the generous hearts that are fed through such nutrients.



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Through the book of Acts, the story of the earliest church is shared from the event of Pentecost to the preaching and teaching ministries of Paul and Peter. Throughout the book of Acts, the word for “poverty” is never used. Early Christians were far from the upper eschalon of society, but in the sharing of their resources there was enough for all.

Christian generosity is still practiced and the warmth of fellowship is right at home in many churches and gatherings in following Jesus. While many view the world through property ownership and market values, Jesus speaks to the mindset of the kingdom of heaven where the table is stretched wide and the wealthy and impoverished are fed and sustained in the same manner.

The word that is often referenced for this ethic of warm fellowship and compassionate sharing is koinonia. Some have remarked that the true miracle of Pentecost is made evident here. As Will Willimon puts it, “[Koinonia] is a fellowship which produces astounding ‘wonders and signs’ (2:43), not the least of which was that ‘all who believed were together and had all things in common.’” In sharing their possessions, their lives are connected in solidarity, deep friendship and the removal of typical barriers of limitation like class, gender, race or ethnicity.

## VIDEO RESOURCES AND INVITATION TO THE TABLE

In Luke 14, we read where Jesus offers instruction regarding invitations for a celebratory dinner. Jesus says not to invite rich neighbors or notable figures, but rather insists that the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame should be the ones that are invited to this gathering.

For most of us, our world view is shaped by the things that we encounter and witness. Our cities and towns generally seek to direct us towards more favorable vantage points in our commutes. It can be easy for us to navigate our daily lives without ever seeing poverty; our response to seeing this inequity can show the maturity of our faith.

View these videos created for CBF’s Offering for Global Missions emphasis and hear the stories of Yuliana, Alfon and Rio in Southeast Asia.



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## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

In the videos provided, you learned of Alfons, who teaches at the seminary and partners with the ministry of Brooke and Mike. How has God equipped him for the skills of ministry? Where do you see similarity between your calling and Alfons' calling? How are your lives similar? How are they different?

If you were planning a dinner and inviting Alfons, what kind of questions would you have for him?

You met Yuliana in a video as well. She cooks for her family and creates weavings to sell at market. She lives in a town with her five children without access to electricity or running water.

Where is God's blessing evident in the life of Yuliana? How does your life intersect with Yuliana's? What similarities do you have and what is different about your life and hers?

If Yuliana invited you to her home, what questions would you ask her?

Rio is the final subject in these videos. He is a teacher who installs solar powered lights in churches—light which is needed for their evening services. How is God working in Rio's life? What is Rio's ministry and how do your areas of service or interest compare to his?

If you were invited to a meal and sat across from Rio, what questions might you have for him?

## MISSIONAL APPLICATION

Jesus' ministry in comparison to modern equivalents was remarkably localized. Jesus healed people in neighboring villages, offering a ministry of hope and the forgiveness of sins by equipping a dozen disciples to help him.

Brooke and Mike's ministry shows a similar local emphasis. Their work seeks to offer hope, transformation, light and assistance to people in remote villages in Southeast Asia. How can your group help and support the ministry of Mike and Brooke and other CBF field personnel? How can your group and church learn ways of ministry and mission as demonstrated by the ministry in Southeast Asia?

The needs in Southeast Asia are related to infrastructure, resources for education, and access to clean water, basic medicines and a sustainable food supply. What are the needs in your local community, and what can your church do to offer hope and assistance for the betterment of your community?



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Your church may seek to help CBF field personnel in Southeast Asia. Could your group set a financial goal of giving targeted at assisting Brooke and Mike in student outreach, purchasing solar lights for churches or homes, or buying supplies for weaving artisans like Yuliana?

Challenge your group to offer prayers for the ministry of Mike and Brooke, and pray for Yuliana, Rio and Alfons by name. Pray that Brooke and Mike's ministry might increase the literacy rates and raise up new pastors and ministers to lead the local churches. Pray that others may know the saving message of Jesus Christ through the ministry of Brooke and Mike. Pray for assistance in their being beacons of light and installing literal lights in remote villages without electrical power.



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## Tragic Irony in North Fort Myers, Florida

FIELD PERSONNEL FOCUS: Rick Burnette

### SETTING THE TABLE

Rick Burnette serves as CBF field personnel in North Fort Myers, Florida, where he and his wife Ellen are passionate about food security. Their location in Florida produces two-thirds of the domestic tomatoes in the United States. Despite the amount of food production in this area, nearly all of the yield is exported to grocers and communities across the nation. The small farming community of Immokalee is a food desert as defined by the USDA. The poverty rate is well above the national average, and many of the migrants that work these fields full of food have little access to affordable, nutritious food for themselves and their families.

In 2017, Rick founded Cultivate Abundance, which seeks to feed the hungry and take holistic steps to fix many of the systemic injustices that result in food insecurity and local hunger. The Burnettes are creative in their implementation for feeding the hungry, including doorstep gardens which are five-gallon-buckets that grow leafy greens and other vegetables, adding mobility in contrast to a stationary garden bed. They also facilitate donations of non-perishables through a local food bank and assist in community gardens that provide access to nutritious fruits and vegetables for local residents in need..

### BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

#### 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Paul's letter to the church at Corinth shows a lack of unity at the table among the church. Richard Hayes makes clear that this rebuke is not a fundamental critique of a liturgical practice, but is a foundational disregard in terms of community care.

"At this early date, there were no separate buildings for Christian worship. The Lord's Supper was an actual meal eaten by the community in a private home." The issue within the Corinthian church was that some members of the church were overeating at their gatherings while others were going hungry. Paul goes on to remind them of the story of the institution of communion in verses 23 to 26 and, in doing so, reminds the church of the importance of their unity within the sacredness of even common things.



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Paul levels charges at the church related to the partaking of this meal in an unworthy manner. Instead of developing a theological perspective on food shared in community, the church at Corinth had reverted to a market perspective on hunger—"first come, first served."

Eating is an important aspect of Jesus' ministry, and Jesus models the ways that food and obtaining sustenance is in fact a spiritual exercise in addition to a necessary part of being human. Jesus dines with sinners and tax collectors; he blesses a small meal and instructs the disciples to feed thousands in miraculous measure with bread and fish; and in one of the last evenings prior to his crucifixion, he reminds the disciples that their fellowship and their eating around the table should be done in remembrance of him.

## VIDEO RESOURCES AND INVITATION TO THE TABLE

In Luke 14, Jesus offers instruction regarding invitations for a celebratory dinner. Jesus says not to invite rich neighbors or notable figures, but he insists that the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame should be the ones that are invited to this gathering.

Notice the hope that is felt when simple needs are being met and look for ways that your heart and spirits are lifted in hearing the stories of mission and advocacy in action.

View these videos created for CBF's Offering for Global Missions and hear the stories of Felipa, Maria and Miguel.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

In the videos provided, you heard from Felipa. Felipa volunteers with Misión Peniel, and she shares that the goal of this food bank is to help migrant workers who pick produce, but sadly do not have the resources to acquire this food on their own. What injustices exist for Felipa and these workers? What does food insecurity and hunger look like in your community?

If you were hosting a meal and inviting Felipa, what questions might you have for her? What word of hope might you offer to her?

Maria's story is also told. She shares her experience of moving from Guatemala to Immokalee to provide a better life for her family. She has a son named Marco who has Down's Syndrome. Maria is both a recipient of the assistance of Misión Peniel, but she's also a donor! She makes cheese and tamales and donates them to those in need instead of seeking to turn a profit. What virtues do you see in Maria and her family?



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If Maria were hosting a meal and invited you, what might you ask her? Where do you see the hope of Christ in Maria's story?

Miguel is referred to as the "pastor of Immokalee." He lives his life in service to others in the community. He communicates about the beauty of sharing life at the table with others. When have you found value in sharing at the table together?

Miguel comments that the mission of Cultivating Abundance and Misión Peniel seeks "not just to feed stomachs, but feeding heart and souls." In what ways do you see missions and meeting spiritual and physical needs?

If you were sharing at a table with Miguel, what questions might you have for him and how might you characterize his Christlike service?

## MISSIONAL APPLICATION

Hunger may appear to be an issue that is only in other parts of the world, but it's not. Local food insecurity affects many families in the United States as well. Even in fairly wealthy areas, hunger persists. Rick and Ellen Burnette's ministry in North Fort Myers works primarily with the poor and those needing assistance for daily living. The unfortunate reality is that much of the foods that we eat are picked by hands that cannot afford that very same produce. Poverty and hunger are invariably linked, and the systemic problems that lead to these injustices are not easily overturned; however, the issue of localized hunger is not one for the church to ignore. How can your church work with local partners to assist the poor and hungry in your locality?

The ministry of Jesus often involved eating and table fellowship as Jesus shared the table with the poor and downtrodden of the world. In hearing the stories of the poor, Jesus had compassion for the people.

How is your church reaching out to the downtrodden and seeking to see the world through their eyes?

Your church may want to help the ministry of Ellen and Rick. Perhaps you'd like to sponsor a doorstep garden or give a gift to support Misión Peniel in Florida. The issues of hunger and food insecurity are not isolated to North Fort Myers, Florida. Perhaps your congregation feels inspired to start your own garden or revitalize your food pantry to give more dignity to the patrons and neighbors who need assistance. Maybe your congregation hosts meals on Wednesday nights or on other occasions. Who is invited to the table and what conditions exist that allow some to eat to their fill while others go hungry as described in 1 Corinthians 11?



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Challenge your group to offer prayers for the ministry of Rick and Ellen Burnette in Florida. Offer prayers for Miguel, Maria and Felipa and others who survive and are fed due to the impactful mission of Misión Panel and Cultivate Abundance. Pray that this ministry will continue feeding stomachs, but that it will also feed hearts and souls with the hope of Jesus Christ. Pray that many local congregations will seek the good news for the poor and hungry and transform and revitalize existing ministries that uplift and give dignity to the hungry and hurting.



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## Lifting Up the Humbled in Eastern Kentucky

FIELD PERSONNEL FOCUS: **Scarlette Jasper**

### SETTING THE TABLE

Scarlette Jasper is a CBF field personnel in a large geographic region in the United States, stretching from south central Kentucky to eastern Tennessee. Her ministry is one of connection and presence. Several of these counties are among the poorest in the country and experience persistent rural poverty.

Appalachia is a cultural region of the eastern United States where mountain ranges, unpaved roads, and miles of distance separate people from each other. This region is home to many disparaging myths including the laziness, backwardness and feuding nature of Appalachian inhabitants. Like any other region of the world, persons are unique and their culture is worthy of observation and respect.

Jasper's ministry consists of pastoral care, counseling and teaching financial literacy in addition to partnering with area churches for health care ministries and housing, food and security for unhoused persons through White Flag ministries.

In feeding, clothing and housing those that are in need, Jasper builds relationships. She helps individuals apply for health insurance, gain transportation for a job, or secure permanent housing. She listens to their experiences and provides pastoral care and presence. She responds to their situations and sees and responds to their trauma and pain.

### BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

#### **Luke 19:1-10**

As recorded in Luke's gospel, Jesus meets a tax collector named Zacchaeus. R. Alan Culpepper, in his commentary on Luke, notes that "tax collectors function as the prototypical outcasts— those whom Jesus befriends." Indeed, Jesus seeks out relationships and friendships using a different metric than that of most of the common world. Instead of looking to network and build his reputation, Jesus sees the world through a lens of service and healing. Zacchaeus is one in need of such healing.



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Zacchaeus climbs into a sycamore tree, trying to get a glimpse of Jesus. The initial readers and hearers of this story may have expected this rich tax collector to fall into the pattern set up earlier in Luke's gospel. Luke adds emphasis to the downtrodden and poor, and the gospel is harsher than other works in regard to the treatment of the rich. Jesus is not harsh to this tax collector though. Zacchaeus is noted to be small in size and stature. Because he can't see Jesus in any other way, he subjects himself to the potential for ridicule by running ahead and climbing a tree.

Jesus sees the tax collector in the tree, and calls him by name. Jesus invites himself over for dinner saying, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down. for I must stay at your house today" (Luke 19:5 NRSV). This certainly breaks the rules of social etiquette, but Jesus is unconcerned with social constructs and limitations. Even as a matter of Jewish law, Jesus entering the home of a tax collector would likely stand as a violation of ritual purity. Culpepper points to the controversy of this interaction, "Jesus offered Zacchaeus, who merely wanted to see Jesus, an opportunity to be recognized prominently before the whole community. Jesus was exalting a man who had 'stooped' to running and climbing a tree."

In receiving such hospitality, the tax collector makes a judgement in favor of justice. In receiving such kindness, Zacchaeus pays back four times the amount that he had defrauded the people and gives half of his possessions to the poor.

When Jesus calls us, our response may look like foolishness by worldly standards.

## VIDEO RESOURCES AND INVITATION TO THE TABLE

In Luke 14, Jesus offers instruction regarding invitations for a celebratory dinner. Jesus says not to invite rich neighbors or notable figures, but he insists that the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame should be the ones that are invited to this gathering.

Jesus saw people as their whole selves, including those in his ministry that many would deem as "worthless." Jesus sees a change of heart in Zacchaeus and chooses to lift up his transformational change. In Scarlette Jasper's region of service and mission, there are many opportunities and needs for transformation and change.

View these videos created for CBF's Offering for Global Missions. Hear the stories of Kimberly, Glynda and Darell and see God's transformation as made possible by small acts of love that yield fruitful results.



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## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

In the videos provided, you met Kimberly. Kimberly is a native of McCreary County in Kentucky, who works with Olive Branch Ministries. An unexpected expense nearly derailed her finances, and a microloan facilitated through CBF Kentucky made all the difference. Have you ever felt this type of stress? When have you seen God provide in a physical sense?

If you were hosting a dinner and invited Kimberly, what questions might you have for her? What might your church be able to do to help people that have an emergent financial situation?

Glynda's story is that she completes a financial literacy program created by Scarlette. Scarlette is able to help and advocate through the challenges and red tape of disability paperwork or social security payments. Scarlette is pastoral and helps without judging. What do our own finances reveal about our spiritual lives and priorities?

If Glynda invited you to dinner, what might you ask her about her experience or life?

Darell is a volunteer with White Flag Ministry, a group that feeds and houses residents in Kentucky on the coldest nights of the year. This ministry, in partnership with local churches, helps to feed the hungry. Darell himself has known the challenges and reality of homelessness, and his compassion causes him to seek that no other person would know the challenge of life without help.

What challenges exist in the area surrounding your church, and how can your church provide short-term and long-term help to alleviate these challenges?

In Luke 19, Jesus invited himself over to dinner at Zacchaeus' house. If you invited yourself over to Darell's house, what questions might you ask him and what might he ask you? What did you notice about Darell's story that tell you that he follows Christ?

## MISSIONAL APPLICATION

Persistent poverty is an epidemic that permeates nearly all of America. Scarlette Jasper's ministry in Kentucky and Tennessee deals with persistent rural poverty in a variety of circumstances such as geographic isolation, lack of access or options for healthcare, and lack of financial literacy.

Poverty likely exists in the area around your church. How is your church seeking to fill a need for the community? What might be the first place to start? Or, how can your church make greater lasting change through advocacy?

If your congregation is helping provide financial assistance, what steps are being taken to provide structural changes to assist the lives of the poor? What type of assistance makes the biggest and most sustainable impact in people's lives? How can your church provide this type of help?



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Challenge your group to offer prayers for Scarlette Jasper's ministry. Pray for those who work with Scarlette through counseling or financial literacy or through housing or food assistance. Pray that this ministry will expand the hope available in Appalachia and build new compassionate ministries to assist the lives of those in this region. Pray that churches like yours can see the innovation and opportunity to impact a community with good news to reach out and lift up those who have been pushed down by challenges in the world.



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