

Here We Come!

Have an assortment of stuffed animals available for the children to play with as they arrive. Seat the children on the floor in a circle. Place a paper circle representing a table top in the center. Talk about having company for dinner. Where do visitors sit? Place stuffed animals around the edge of the paper circle as guests for dinner.

Have the children remove animals for some of the following reasons:

cat = We don't want something that eats mice sitting at the table.

dog = We don't want something that barks sitting at the table.

raccoon = wears a mask

elephant = might break the chairs

shark = eats other fish

rabbit = would take all the carrots

lion = might take a bite out of something besides the food

lamb = might get wool in the soup

See how the children feel about the decisions. What concessions are they willing to make? How would they feel knowing someone didn't get to come to the table?

Put all the animals back and share a snack.

Scripture Words and Worship

Keeping every rule doesn't seem to be as important to Jesus as being kind to each other. His advice is always positive. Print the scripture words on hearts and hands. Let the children tell you some good things to do and what they would like to share with another person.

Sense-ations

Cover a tabletop with white paper. Have available several plates, utensils, napkins, and glasses. Let the children create their own place setting by tracing around the props. Learning to share and take turns is part of the activity. Children can color the drink to represent grape or orange juice, or leave it white for milk. Pictures of favorite foods can be drawn on the plate. As the children describe what they are having for dinner, see who would like to be invited to that meal.

Story Talking

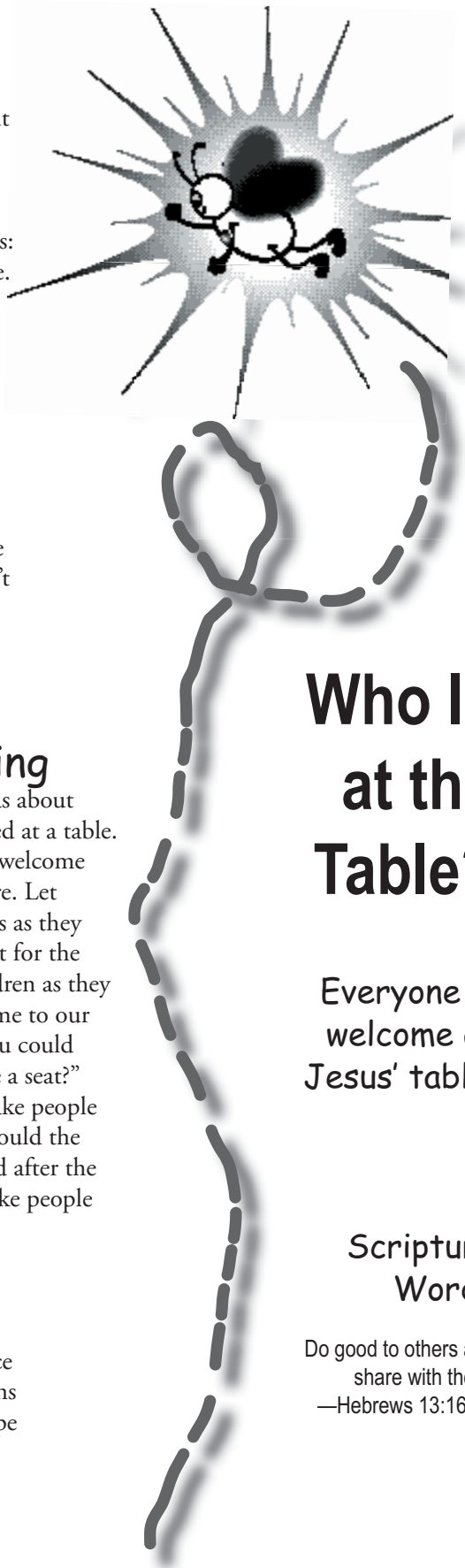
The scripture story was about people being welcomed at a table. But Jesus wants us to welcome people wherever we are. Let the children take turns as they practice being the host for the classroom. Greet children as they enter, saying, "Welcome to our class. We're so glad you could come. Won't you have a seat?" What other things make people feel welcome? What could the children do before and after the worship service to make people feel welcome?

Who Is at the Table?

Everyone is welcome at Jesus' table.

Scripture Words

Do good to others and share with them.
—Hebrews 13:16 LB



Live and Learn

The scripture story is based on Matthew 9:10–14 where the Pharisees gave Jesus and his disciples a hard time about following the table rules. Place the animals around the table circle as you tell the story. Each one can represent a person who was not looked on favorably in Jewish society. Remove the animal from the table when you name an unwelcome person. Put them back when you talk about who Jesus was happy to eat with.

- Jesus enjoyed getting together with friends for a good meal. Often people would invite him to come to dinner.
- That usually meant they would also be feeding Jesus' disciples who traveled with him.
- Is there room around our circle table for at least thirteen people?
- Some of the people in Jesus' time did not treat others kindly.
- Only Jewish people were allowed to eat at the same table.
- If you were a Roman, you couldn't come in.
- If you were a tax collector, people were mad at you.
- If someone thought you were a sinner or did bad things, they wouldn't eat with you.
- Often only men ate at the table. Women and children were fed in another room.
- But Jesus didn't pay any attention to the old rules. He liked having people around.
- Jesus loved them whether they were Romans or Jews, tax collectors or sinners, men, women, or children.
- Everyone was welcome at Jesus' table.

Up and at 'Em

If the congregation is having communion this Sunday, take a walk to visit the Communion table. Let the children ask questions and talk about what they see and know about Communion. Visit the place where the emblems are prepared, and talk to the deacons in charge. Prepare for a greeting activity before and after the worship service as suggested in Story Talking.

Moving Music

- "Jesus Loves the Little Children" HS 223. Replace the words "Red and yellow, black and white" with "Shades of brown from dark to light."
- "Make New Friends"
- "God Is Right There"
- "Jesus Loves Even Me" (page 6)

There We Go

Give each child a copy of the scripture (page 19).

Make New Friends

Traditional

Make new friends and keep — the — old; —
One is sil- ver and the oth- er gold.

God Is Right There

Round: 2 part

Traditional

No mat- ter where I may hap- pen to be;
God is right there with me, God is right there with me,
God is right there with me, close as can be.

**Do good to
others and
share with
them.** —Hebrews 13:16 LB

