

November 7, 2021

## 10. Shared Abundance — **John 6:1-15 NRSV**

I can relate to the statement, “For some Christians, hospitality is a spiritual gift . . . For the rest of us, [it] is a spiritual discipline” (*Salt & Light Leader*, p. 61). I like to cook for people, on my timing and of my choosing. But I worry that when we someday spend more time in Mexico, hospitality may become a discipline. Let me explain.

In Mexico, you don’t have intimate little dinner parties; you have festivals. For instance, entire towns celebrate their namesake one weekend a year. The festival of San Francisco (*Saint Francis*), José’s hometown, was held a few weeks ago. His daughter showed me (on video chat) her bustling kitchen, including whole turkeys swimming in a 25-gallon pot of simmering *mole* (mo-lay—a yummy, savory/sweet sauce containing, in my opinion, “everything but the kitchen sink”).

Parties in Mexico rarely exclude anyone. Celebrations following weddings and baptisms are open to the entire town and beyond. You may invite a few people, but you expect them to ask their friends and family. The point is, the host never knows ahead of time how many people are coming. The influx of hungry people may last for three days. For me—the type A perfectionist/planner—this will be a challenge.

A dream we had when we first married was to share our abundance with the less fortunate in Mexico. Two decades later, José still yearns to take food and clothing into isolated mountainous regions where poverty is extreme. At home, strangers inevitably will show up at our door and ask to buy a plate of food. Jose remembers what it’s like to be poor. He will say, “No, *bienvenidos a todos!* (everyone is welcome!).”

If I were teaching, I’d allow time to contemplate how other cultures practice the open table. It’s one thing to take a few cans of vegetables to a local food pantry; it’s totally another to feed an entire town. Quite frankly, I will struggle to adapt to Mexican open-table culture. Will I be a grumpy or a cheerful giver?

As a church of Christ-followers and kingdom-seekers, will we reflect Jesus as we lovingly serve, or will we forget how the Bread of Life had compassion on the crowds? Jesus tested Philip by asking, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” (John 6:5).

- What is your answer when Jesus puts that question to you?
- Is hospitality a gift or a discipline for you?

—Helen Tellez

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**Helen Tellez** has been a writer, editor, and copy editor for church and secular organizations for more than four decades. Formerly from northern Indiana, she now resides in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with her husband, José, where they run a clothing alterations business. Being married to José for 18 years has opened her eyes to the world beyond rural, white America, and she is grateful for the changes in her Christian perspective.

## Resources for this session

### *Salt & Light Videos*

These teaching videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each session. They are available on [MennoMedia's YouTube channel](#). **Joanne Gallardo** is the presenter for Unit 3, Open Table Fellowship. Joanne is a conference minister in the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference.