



One gathering. Four Questions. Six Women.
A Women at Grace Event
Week of December 7, 2020
Location: Host Homes and Restaurant Patios

Prayer Prompts

- Lord, who would you like me to invite?
- Lord, will you give me the courage to move beyond my discomfort and welcome women to a party?
- Lord, will you empower me with the heart of hospitality to show your love and acceptance and grace to the women who choose to come?

Invite Your Guests: Sample Wording

Dear _____,

I wanted to invite you to join me and a small group of neighbors to share a holiday meal! It has been a difficult year in our socially distanced world, and I thought a small gathering together would be a nice treat. I'd love to catch up with you over a festive meal and some heart-to-heart conversation! I'm hoping this will be a highlight of this year and a time to look forward to 2021. Would you be available for dinner on _____?

I'm hoping to invite 4 more ladies, but definitely want to honor any and all Covid concerns you may have. If you have a preference, would you let me know which option you are comfortable with?

- ___ Dinner in my home
- ___ Dinner outdoors on my patio
- ___ Dinner at a restaurant outdoors or indoors?

I'm hoping to see you!

Location Ideas

You could host your Holiday Table inside your home, at an outdoor dining table, or as dessert and coffee around a firepit. Below are some local restaurants with outdoor patios.

- Culinary Dropout
- Hula Hut
- La Madeleine, also has private indoor dining spaces
- Irene's
- Maudie's
- Jack Allen's
- Mandola's

Plan Your Menu

First, consider if any of your guests have food allergies.

Links to all suggested dinner ideas are on our Grace Holiday Table [Pinterest board!](#)

Simple Dinner Ideas

- Individual Charcuterie plates
- Salad trio: pasta, fruit and Caesar salads
- Chili or Soup with salad and bread

Easy Holiday Supper

- Pear salad
- Pork Tenderloin
- Scalloped Potatoes
- Bread

Tex-Mex Dinner

- Tortilla Chips and Guacamole
- Sheet Pan Fajitas plus tortillas
- Beans and rice

Italian Feast

- Caesar Salad
- Baked Ziti
- Bread

Restaurant Suggestions

- Reale's Italian Kitchen
- Whole Food's Market
- Kerby Lane – they have family size meals packages to go
- Zoe's Kitchen Mediterranean and Greek food
- Corner Bakery
- La Madeleine

Decorating Ideas

We've pinned some festive ideas on this [Pinterest Board](#). Please do not think decorations or craftiness is needed. It can be an added special touch, if you are so inclined. The heart of hospitality comes from how we welcome guests warmly. A relaxed and authentic hostess is a gift to her guests. If you prefer paper plates, go for it! If your excited for the chance to use your fancy plates, that is awesome! A simply set table can be magnified with candlelight or dimmed lights and a holiday music playlist.

Conversation Cards

We will provide conversation cards to help foster intentional and meaningful conversation during dinner. We suggest opening with a card after the meal is over and saving another for the dessert course.

Dessert

The Women's Ministry will provide individually wrapped iced sugar cookies for your Holiday Table evening.

Conversation cards and Dessert may be picked up at Grace Covenant's 360 building on Sunday, December 6 (9a-1p) and Monday, December 7th (9a-4p).

Sample wording to kick off your event

I am so grateful you are here tonight. What a year this has been! I used to take for granted simple gatherings, but tonight I am certainly not. My hope tonight is that we can get to know each other better and leave encouraged and refreshed in this holiday season. I have a few conversation cards that we will sprinkle into the evening, but first, let's eat!

After the Event

- How do you know the evening was a "success"?
If this is your first time to show hospitality, just offering it is a success! In general, success can be measured by how well you feel you've gotten to know the person during the evening. It doesn't matter if your meal was executed flawlessly or your home was spotless. If you have been a blessing to someone else, the evening was a success!
- Pictures! The Women's Ministry would love to see pictures from your event and with your guests. Consider sending in photos and letting us know how your event was!
 - E-mail us at women@grace360.org.
- Consider:
 - Send notes thanking your guests for joining you.
 - Send Christmas cards with a handwritten message.
 - Invite your friends to GCC's Christmas Eve service.

PARTY PLANNING LOGISTICS

Suggested Timeline

Upon deciding to host a party

- Figure out what kind of party your hosting (coffee and dessert, dinner, brunch)
- Get creative, brainstorm fun ideas for your menu and décor
- Decide on a guest list

2 weeks ahead of time

- Invite Guests (Impromptu parties are fun too! Don't think you have to have 2 weeks lead time)
- Decide if your party will be indoor or outdoor, based on feedback from guests
- Determine a budget. Narrow down your brainstorming list to those things you have the time and resources to execute.

1 week ahead of time

- Clean your home
- Plan your menu
- Go grocery shopping for non-perishable items or make arrangements with a restaurant
- Make any decorations you have planned for the event

Two Days before

- Check your RSVP count
- Make a music play list
- Prepare food that can be stored
- Finish making all decorations

One Day before

- Shop for perishables
- Set up tables, chairs, seating areas
 - Label serving dishes with intended food item; place serving spoons in dishes
 - Set out the centerpiece
- Pick up your home
 - focus on bathrooms, vacuuming or sweeping floors, and wiping kitchen counters

Day of

- Prepare the rest of food, and drinks, cut lemon wedges, set out a drinks station, if applicable
- Set out hand sanitizer
- Empty trashcans
- Empty dishwasher
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to calm your fears and steady your heart to show love to those you've invited.

T minus 30 minutes

- Walk thru house for last minute clean-up
 - Tips: have an empty basket ready to fill with random clutter to pick-up; stash it in the garage, a closet, or even in a bathtub
- Turn on music, light candles, rest

Party time ---- Have fun!!!

MENU PLANNING
Suggested Menu based on Type of Gathering

Type of gathering	Suggestions based on your theme
Brunch For busy people whose evening schedules seem always full.	Egg casserole or quiche Easy pancake recipe 2-3 fruit toppings Whipped topping Juice Coffee Milk
Sit down Dinner To break the ice with your neighbors. To catch up with old friends	One suggestion is to do a potluck: You can provide the main dish and ask others to bring in the sides and dessert. It is helpful to let your guests know the categories, e.g. Main Dish – Host Vegetable Dish Salad Bread rolls Dessert Beverages
Chili Dinner	Your favorite Chili recipe Corn bread Salad Tea Thermos filled with hot apple cider for the wait Cookies
Afternoon tea – to catch up with the busy people in our lives	Tasty savory finger Sandwiches Miniature cupcakes Small cookies A selection of teas
Weekday lunch For the women on the run	A double or triple batch of your favorite soup Salad Rolls Beverages
Coffee Anyone? Busy moms with little ones	A batch of cookies or brownies A pot of coffee or tea
Fireside Chat	Firewood and matches Drinks station Smores Station Blankets (in case it gets chilly) Quiet background music

PREPARING YOUR HEART

Conversation Ideas

Questions to Get to Know People Better

- Where were you born and raised?
- Where did you go to school, what did you study?
- How long have you lived in Austin and where did you live prior to Austin?
- What do you love most about Austin?
- What is your favorite Austin restaurant?
- What books are you reading?
- What are you most thankful for, looking back on the past year?
- If you had a couple of hours of free time, what would you do?
- How did you meet your spouse and how long have you been married?
- What dreams do you have for the future?
- What is one thing you have never done that you wish you could do?
- What is the most important thing you have accomplished in your life?

Christmas-Centered Conversation

- What are some of your favorite family traditions during the holiday season?
- What type of activities or events have you found that help cut through the commercialism of Christmas?
- What is it that makes this time of year so exciting for you? Is it just the anticipation of gifts or is it something more?

Questions for Biblical Fellowship

- What brought you to such-and-such church?
- What are some lessons God taught you through ... (parenting, job, ministry, etc.)?
- What is God currently teaching you?
- How can we be praying for you?
- What is one thing you could do this year to increase your enjoyment of God?
- In which spiritual discipline do you most want to make progress this year and what are you doing to this end?
- Who is one person you would like to spend time with asking questions about their relationship with the Lord?
- What is one new way you could help strengthen the church?
- What is one thing you could do to improve your prayer life?
- What habit would you most like to establish this year?
- Who do you most want to encourage this year?
- In what area of your life do you most need growth and what will you do about it?
- What one biblical doctrine do you most want to understand better this year?