



## Slice of Heaven | January 20, 2016

### Discussion Guide

#### The Scoop

When it comes to faith, we spend a lot of time thinking about and talking about heaven as if it is a far off place. What if God's intentions are for us to experience heaven here on earth? Our approach to interacting with others, diversity, and differing customs may just be a key to experiencing heaven on Earth that is often overlooked.

#### Key Verse

**Revelation 7:9**

*I saw a huge crowd, too huge to count. Everyone was there—all nations and tribes, all races and languages.*

#### Discussion

It's been said that Sunday mornings in America are the most clearly segregated hours of the week. We have our worship preferences and generally they are things that make us comfortable. Logistically we typically go to church near our homes, and often our neighborhoods are also not that diverse so this is not to suggest forcing the issue. However, if we want to experience more of what heaven looks like, we should consider investigating ways to engage diversity.

1. Have you ever been to a faith-oriented service of another race, religion, or denomination? Explain.
2. When it comes to diversity, what would be the biggest comfort zone stretch for you?

Jesus was often seen hanging with people that were very different from himself and most notably different from the religious people of the time. These are people the Pharisees referred to as "riff-raff."

3. Who are the people that others might see as "riff-raff" in your town?
4. Do you think Jesus calls us to spend time with "riff-raff?"

We have a tendency to see our reality as THE reality...our default is the best way. My favorite thing about the stories of Jesus spending time with people who would otherwise be considered less, dirty, shady, etc. is thinking about the other person's perspective. Matthew, for example, had to consider his own reputation as well. In his circle of friends, Jesus may have been "riff-raff." In fact, you may be "riff-raff" to someone else.

5. Have you ever considered the other side of a diverse relationship? What do they get out of it, what do they give up, do they have the same concerns as you? What do you think those concerns might be?

#### What's Next?

The key to all this is humility and intentionality. Humility allows us to see both sides of a relationship. It evens the playing field and sees beyond our own default assumptions. Intentionality causes us to seek out diversity. If we truly want to experience a slice of heaven here on earth, we may just need to sit down across a table with someone very different from ourselves and share a slice of pizza. Start by being honest about your assumptions about people different than you. Then look for ways to spend a little time outside your comfort zone engaging people that don't look, sound, dress, or think like you.