



A LIFE OF BEING A DISCIPLE

LESSON 3 – HOSPITALITY (LEADER GUIDE)

Opening Prayer

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Precursor: The focus this week is on using our time and talents to show hospitality to others. Through hospitality, as messy and dangerous as it can be, relationships are built and Jesus is shared.

It's important to note what the Greek word means to get at the heart of what God asks of us. The word is "philoxenia," which means "love of strangers." In other words, this is not love for those we already know and love. In Jesus' day, it took days to walk a long trip and inns were scarce. It was common to invite a travelling stranger into your home. Can you imagine? For various reasons, that may not be the way "love of strangers" looks in our day and age.

Hosting Hospitality: Below is a list of ways that we might love strangers. On your own, pick out two that would be comfortable for you to do and one that you are not comfortable with. Be ready to explain why you picked the ones you picked with the group. Are there any you would add to the list? **TWO minutes**

- Invite a visitor at church out for lunch after worship.
- Invite a church member who has never been to your home for a meal.
- Invite a friend to come with you to church and lunch afterwards.
- Have a 60-second conversation with five people you don't regularly talk to at church.
- Talk to someone you don't know well and introduce them to someone you do know well.
- Find someone in the church who seems to be involved in everything and ask how you can help them.
- Visit shut-ins with a devotion or simply for a visit.
- Find a way to introduce yourself to your neighbors.
- Make cookies for neighbors and deliver them in person.
- Host a block party at your house.
- Arrive to church 15 minutes early on Sunday to greet people.
- Sit next to a new member/one you don't know every Sunday.
- Assist with coffee/treats for a Sunday.

The purpose is to get everyone thinking about possibilities to be hospitable as they are now motivated by the Holy Spirit through the Word to carry it out. God willing, no one's list is identical, showing God can use us in various ways because of the variety of ways he has knit us together. Pick on a few to report and ask for show of hands who also had that one...

TAKING TIME TO INVEST IN OTHERS

1. Jesus says we must work *while it is day*, because we cannot work when night comes. What does he mean, and what does it have to do with our desire to show love to strangers?

The Last Day is coming—now is the time to work! You rest when you sleep. So how much should we relax during the day? Not much! God gives us opportunities all the time to intersect with “strangers,” but often only one time with an individual. It is day—we will want to take advantage of the opportunity. After all, for many people in your life “you’re probably never going to see them again” (a comfort if you’re playing truth or dare, but a warning if you’re looking for opportunities to show God’s love).

“As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.” (John 9:4)

2. Through the Holy Spirit’s work of faith in our hearts, we “reap eternal life.” How does the fact that we have an eternity in heaven waiting for us motivate us to show hospitality?

Draw a line that represents 10,000 years (which itself is tiny compared to eternity, but even with just 10,000 years)—how much space would your life of 80 years take up? Not much (for those that want to show this—on a 10-inch line, it would be just over 1/16th of an inch). Okay, now let’s say the line is 24 hours—how long would that space be? 11 minutes. Okay, imagine you wake up and your alarm won’t shut off like on Ground Hog’s day and you sit up and hit your head on the headboard, you stub your toe on the bottom of the bed, the coffee maker is broken, and you hop in the shower to find water heater went out. How good was the first 11 minutes of your day? Not great. But then the rest of the day is the best day you’ve ever had—everyone is nice to you, you meet the love of your life and get engaged that same day, you win the lottery three times without even playing, you get promoted at work, you name it. If at the end of the day, I came up to you and asked, “So how was your day?” What would you say? “Oh, the first 11 minutes was awful!” No! You wouldn’t even remember it because the rest of the day was so great. That’s what it’s like knowing that heaven is waiting for us. Knowing that this life is just a speck of time and that beautiful heaven awaits, I can focus my life and my time to serve God and my neighbor. And actually, the line doesn’t even do it justice. What does the hymn writer, John Newton say in the hymn “Amazing Grace?” “When we’ve been there 10,000 years, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we’d first begun.” What better way to use our time than for Jesus and those he desires to reach through me?

“Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” (Galatians 6:8)

3. Read Luke 7:36-50. List at least three reasons the woman was comfortable approaching Jesus in this way?

- *Jesus' reputation. How important it is to have a good reputation with outsiders!*
- *Jesus' message. This woman had likely heard his preaching somewhere and repentantly and gratefully wanted to express her thanks for his love. Do we exude love to those around us?*
- *Her need. The woman knew that Jesus had the solution to her greatest need! You have that same solution for the strangers in your life!*
 - The Pharisee - How did Jesus "love this stranger?"
He spoke the truth in love. He lovingly corrected the Pharisee's sin in a tactful way. Loving strangers does not mean that we accept sin, but tactfully and lovingly lead them to God's truth.
 - The woman - How did Jesus "love this stranger?"
He sent her away with the gospel of her forgiveness and encouragement to live a God pleasing life. This is the goal we have with every stranger we encounter.

4. Read Jesus' encouragement below. For what reasons did Jesus say this?

"When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:12-14)

- *Jesus stresses the importance of being humble and not considering yourself more important than anyone. (See the lesson in verses 8-11 about picking seats at banquet.)*
- *Jesus stresses the importance of seeing the need for love in others (e.g., poor, crippled, lame, blind)*
- *The true judge of one's character is not how you treat those who can repay you, but those who can't.*
- *This is who he is. Is this not how Jesus dealt with us in our salvation? What a powerful motivation!*

5. Evaluate the importance of the following characteristics when it comes to the topic of "loving strangers."

- **Expectations:** (i.e., I want everyone I meet to know Jesus!) *This helps to cross the bridge from everyday conversation to the spiritual when I realize what's most important for this person.*
- **Be genuine:** (i.e., don't pretend to be someone you're not) *If you are one person at a party and another person at church, there's a problem! People can smell hypocrisy from a mile away!*
- **Care about people:** (i.e., don't just be friendly, be a friend) *Don't give the impression that the only reason you're being nice to someone is because you want to tell them about Jesus. Actually care about the person as a person and opportunities will present themselves to witness. This takes a sacrifice of your time!*

GROUP ACTIVITY

- How do you turn the conversation from everyday matters to the spiritual? Let's practice p, P, S, s witnessing. *If the leader is comfortable with this, demonstrate how to turn the conversation using the problems people share with you in life and turning the conversation to show how Jesus answers it. If the leader is more comfortable with "God's Great Exchange," he could demonstrate that for the group and perhaps invite someone to try it! Here's how the leader could approach this activity:*

"I want to demonstrate for you p-P-S-s. It stands for problems—Problem—Solution—solutions. The idea is to listen to a problem that a friend or family member or neighbor or co-worker has and help them see the solution that the Bible gives. You turn the conversation from a person's problem to see the big "P" problem of sin so that you can tell them about the big "S" solution of Jesus. That will lead you to more specific solutions to their individual problem.

- *Let's just take the problem of low self-esteem. Let's say that's the small "p" problem that your friend is struggling with.*
- *I have never really liked the phrase "self-esteem." You see I don't think anyone can truly have high self-esteem because the "self" is the problem. The Bible says, "Even my righteous acts are like filthy rags." Even my best attempts aren't that pretty because I'm imperfect. That's the big problem of "Sin."*
- *However, something is worth whatever you're willing to pay for it. What are you worth? Well, Jesus paid for you with his own blood on the cross. How much is that worth? Priceless. You are worth more than you can imagine. That's the big Solution of Jesus.*
- *Now the small solution is that you have Christ esteem. It doesn't matter what others say about you, it doesn't even matter what you say about you. All that matters is that God looks at you and says what he does about Jesus, "This is my child, who I love. With you I am well pleased." Whatever the problem, whether disappointing family or the feeling of no point in life or alcohol addiction, show how Jesus solves it with his Word and how you as a Christian friend are there for them to help!" At that point, give the groups one topic each to see how they would turn the conversation. Anger at God because of the death of a loved one, alcohol addiction, disappointing family, and the feeling of no point in life might be ones you could dole out to the group.*

p:

P:

S:

s:

- What are the characteristics of those who have the gift of hospitality?
Love of people in general. Make people feel immediately welcome. Approachable. Thoughtful of others needs. Love to meet others' needs. Generous with possessions.
- Share a time when you have seen someone's hospitality was a blessing to others or to yourself.
Answers will vary.

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Bumper Sticker! Take 1 minute to come up with a bumper sticker slogan illustrating a truth about hospitality.

Glad you're following so closely, come on in!