



## New Community Group Launch Material - Part 5: Hospitality

### **Welcome:**

Greet one another!

### **Opening Prayer:**

First, have everyone put their phones in the center of the room in order to reduce distractions that might keep us from being present and hospitable to one another. Then, have someone open your time in prayer.

### **Read:**

Value - Hospitality

Last week, we looked at different examples of both Jesus and Paul practicing and exhorting followers of Christ to practice humble servanthood toward one another. We then practiced humility by sharing with one another our tangible, practical needs. In humility, we shared our limitations and needs with the community. In humility, we listened to others share and offered loving responses and clarifying questions and asked if the community could meet each person's needs in some way.

This week, we will be practicing our value of hospitality. Hospitality is the creation of space for people's true selves to be known and loved. Hospitality in its very essence is communal; it is inviting another being into relationship. In a fascinating way, Creation—meaning, of the universe, world, and all that lives in it—is an act of hospitality. John Ortberg puts it like this: "Hospitality is making space for people that you don't have to make space for. In this, God is the inventor and lead actor. Creation was God making space for little creatures who were not necessary." Hospitality is a heart posture that leads to curiosity about others and invites people to show up exactly as they are without fear of judgement.

The opposites of hospitality are hostility and indifference. Hostility actively distorts and attacks the image of God in another person. Indifference passively ignores another person and refuses to give them space to be who they are. It is a subtle refusal to engage with an image-bearer of God. Soren Kierkegaard has said, "At the bottom of enmity between strangers lies indifference." If indifference between strangers is a dismissal of another's image-bearing existence, then practicing a heart of hospitality is the remedy. This is key in a world that conditions us to be so busy and hurried we have no space for anyone but ourselves.

In the Old Testament, the Law is full of guidelines for how to practice hospitality toward the poor, widows, orphans, immigrants, etc. by caring for them in basic ways. In the New Testament, there are many examples of Jesus showing hospitality to those around Him. Think, for instance, of when Jesus calls Zacchaeus down from the sycamore tree in Luke 19. Jesus creates a space for Zacchaeus to be known and loved. In response, Zacchaeus first shows Jesus hospitality by inviting Him into his home. He then shows hospitality to the community around him by promising to give half his money to the poor (a fulfillment of Old Testament hospitality laws concerning the

poor, oppressed, immigrant, widow, and orphan) and committing to repay anyone he has extorted fourfold. Christ's hospitality to Zacchaeus leads to Zacchaeus generously showing hospitality to those around him. So should it be with us.

### **Group Exercise: Practicing Hospitality through Active Listening (75 minutes):**

*This week, we will be engaging in a large group prayer exercise surrounding our value of hospitality.*

#### **Read:**

As a community, we hope to build a culture of hospitality and vulnerability. To foster this, it is important for us to understand that in our interactions and sharing times, the goal is not just to share for sharing's sake. When people open up, we will go much deeper than the typical "thanks for sharing" response. Rather, we seek to enter into one another's pain and joy, as Jesus does, hospitably allowing others to come as they are.

To accomplish this, we start with active listening—being present and attentive, and offering the space and time for an individual to share and for us to more fully know them. We will be using the C.A.R.E. Model of active listening in the exercise below.

#### **C.A.R.E. Model:**

Before you begin sharing, have one person read aloud each element of the C.A.R.E. Model. The goal is for every person to share and experience feeling fully known through clarifying questions and affirmation (or the C.A. of C.A.R.E.) and fully loved through the response and empathy (R.E.) of the community. The C.A.R.E. Model is meant to give us a framework for how to engage in active listening well. It is by no means meant to be the only way your community responds or cares for one another. For example, there will be times when practical wisdom and advice is necessary in responding to a person. However, it is important even when someone is requesting advice that they would be fully heard and understood first.

## **C**larifying questions

**Ask questions to better understand what the person has shared.**

- *How did that make you feel?*
- *Can you give an example of what you described?*
- *How can we best support you through this? How can we pray for you?*

## **A**ffirmation

**Reflect back what you have heard, affirming what the person stated.**

- *It sounds like what you are saying is...*
- *That is so difficult/stressful/painful or wonderful/joyful/fun.*
- *I want to affirm that what you are feeling is valid.*

## Response

**As a community, express any offers of solidarity or commitment you are able to make.**

- *You are not alone in this. We are here for you and will support you through this.*
- *You said you want prayer for \_\_\_\_\_, and I am committed to praying for that with you. Is there anyone else who would like to commit to praying with me?*
- *Thanks for letting us know that \_\_\_\_\_ would be helpful. Is there anyone else who would like to commit with me to follow up with (person) next week?*

## Empathy

**Share in the experience with the person by expressing how you feel.**

- *I am so sorry that you are going through this.*
- *It makes me sad to hear that you are having a hard time.*
- *I am encouraged by what you are doing in this situation and feel hopeful that...*

### Reflect:

*In preparation for practicing the C.A.R.E Model, have everyone take a minute to silently reflect on the following questions.*

1. What you are struggling with most in this season OR what is bringing you the most joy?
2. How is God showing up in those struggles or joys?
3. How can this community walk with and support/celebrate with you?

### Share and Respond:

Take turns sharing your answers to the questions above.

After each person has shared, the person on the left *and* right of them will practice empathetically responding through C.A.R.E. statements in the following way:

#### *Person on Left*

- Offer clarifying questions, statements and/or affirmations to further understand the experience and make the person sharing feel **fully known**.
- Refer to **Clarifying Questions** and/or **Affirmation** definitions above

#### *Person on Right*

- Offer response and empathy to join in the experience and leave the person sharing feeling **truly loved**.
- Refer to **Response** and **Empathy** definitions above

After the person on the left and right respond, anyone else who feels compelled to respond may contribute.

Repeat this pattern until everyone has had a chance to share.

**Discuss:**

1. What did you like and/or find helpful about this active listening exercise?
2. Did anything feel restrictive or frustrating? If so, what?

**Closing:**

End your time together with a Unity Prayer. If you need a refresher on what the Unity Prayer is, refer to the description below.

*The Unity Prayer is a kind of corporate prayer exercise aimed at giving space to care for one another in a priestly way by lifting up to God the emotions and experiences which you heard expressed in your time together. Take turns praying short prayers in the format of "Lord, hear our \_\_\_\_\_." Fill in the blank with a feeling that you noticed someone else feeling. You could also fill in the blank with a desire or need that someone expressed. For example: "Lord, hear our discomfort being vulnerable with strangers," "Lord, hear our grief at losses and wounds we've experienced in our past," "Lord, hear Allison's gratitude for her family." When there is a long enough pause that it seems fit, have one person close the time of prayer.*