

YEAR OF
BIBLICAL
LITERACY

1. Week 46: Community Values Part 3 - Hospitality

2. Recap & Preparing for CG:

Daily Reading for Week:

- 2 Corinthians 11-13, Psalm 4
- Galatians 1-2, Psalm 5
- Galatians 3-4, Psalm 6
- Galatians 5-6, Psalm 7
- Ephesians 1-2, Psalm 8
- Ephesians 3-4, Psalm 9
- Ephesians 5-6, Psalm 10

Resources for Week:

- Read Scripture Videos: Galatians and Ephesians
- Bring pen, paper/journal, and print-out of CG material for this week

3. Focus of our time together:

We will focus on the hospitality of Jesus and Paul's exhortation to practice unity and hospitality to one another as brothers and sister in Christ. We will then engage in an intentional exercise to get us practicing hospitality with one another by giving one another a safe space to share our stories.

4. Weekly ground rule / goal / value:

Value: Our value this week is the third of our foundational community values, hospitality.

5. Connection and Unity Exercise:

There will be no Connection and Unity Exercise this week, as a majority of the time will be giving every person an opportunity to share.

6. Opening Prayer:

Open your time in prayer.

7. Intro to Discussion:

Last week, we looked at different passages 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 be loved. Hospitality in its very essence is communal; it is inviting another being into relationship. In a fascinating way, Creation—that is, 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 an individual 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 the other 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 hatred between strangers is a dismissal of another's image-bearing existence, then practicing a heart of hospitality is the remedy 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 shows Jesus hospitality by inviting Him into his home and then shows hospitality to the community around him by promising to give half his money to the poor

(a fulfilment 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.

Likewise, Paul in his letters often exhorted the small, diverse house churches he was addressing to practice unity and love for one another. He had particularly strong words for communities who were failing to practice hospitality. In 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, he reprimands the Church in Corinth, whose rich members were getting drunk and feasting while its poor members were often left without food or drink.

“When you meet together, you are not really interested in the Lord’s Supper. For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. What? Don’t you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace God’s church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this!”

This week, we will be practicing hospitality by inviting everyone to share a poem based on their life stories and experiences. The hope is that everyone would feel safe to show up as they truly are and be met with the loving embrace of Christ in community.

8. Questions for Large Group Discussion (75 minutes):

“I Am” Poem Exercise:

The following exercise is meant to help us reflect on the different parts of our story that make us who we are today and to give us an intentional and vulnerable space to hear one another’s stories.

Reflect and Write (15 minutes):

Take 15 minutes in silent reflection and fill out the following template. You can be as detailed as you wish to be. If you have already written an “I Am” poem before, try to think of memories or stories you didn’t write down before.

“I Am” Poem

I am from _____

(traditions that remind you of home),

from _____

(brands—clothing, products, labels commonly used growing up).

I am from _____

(three unique aspects of your home environment)

I am from _____

(plants/gardens that grew inside/outside your home),

from _____

(sounds, touch, scents that remind you of home)

I am from _____

(favorite childhood activities, books you remember most, toys you collected),

from _____

(family member's names/names of people who took care of you).

I am from _____

(names of the places your parents are from),

from _____

(names of the places you've lived in)

I am from _____

(phrases you've grown up listening to, superstitions/oddities your parents/guardians always used)

I am from _____

(food you ate growing up),

from _____

(holidays and traditions you grew up celebrating)

I am from _____

(faith traditions, faith journey, spiritual discoveries),

from _____

(doubts, struggle with faith)

I am from _____

(phrases or words that remind you of a significant struggle you went through),

from _____

(phrases or words that remind you of great joys in life)

I am from _____

(great realizations you've made in life, quotes, mottos you hold dear)

I am from _____

(activities, adjectives, descriptions that you think best describe your identity today)

I am _____

(your name)

Share (60 minutes):

Using Mutual Invitation, invite every person in the group to share their poem with the group. Give each person your full attention. If it would help with distractions, put your phones in the middle of the room. Pay special attention to the places in their story

where you feel strong emotions. Notice if there are any particular ways you can see how Jesus has been at work in their story or if there are any overarching themes.

If you are the sharer, read your poem slowly and deliberately. Notice the emotions that come up in you as you read. Trust that your community will hold you and your story in faith, humility, and hospitality.

After each person shares, the group should thank them. Then have 2 people from the group share **one** of the following things:

1. A question that would invite that person to share in more detail about a part of their story, if they are comfortable.
2. A moment in the poem that led to particularly strong emotions in the sharer.
3. A way that Jesus can be seen at work in the sharer's story.

Group Reflection (if time permits):

Reflect together on the following questions:

1. What was this exercise like for you? Was there anything you found beautiful or difficult about it?
2. Did you notice any themes or commonalities in the stories shared?
3. Did you feel hospitably held by the group when you shared? What was it like to practice hospitality by listening to so many different stories?

9. Questions for Small Group Discussion:

No small group discussion this week.

10. Closing (5 minutes):

Close your time by thanking God for the gift of each person and their story.