

## Generosity

### **Week 4—Hospitality and God’s Grace<sup>1</sup>**

#### **TRUTH**

Many people in the West, if not most of them, have bought into the lie that their homes and possessions are meant to serve their own purposes. “What’s mine is mine and what’s yours is yours!”

Against this backdrop, the Christian virtues of generosity and hospitality are profoundly counter-cultural. And yet Scripture is clear, throughout the Old and New Testaments, that hospitality will be a marquee characteristic of the people of God.

In the book of Leviticus God says, “The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself” (Leviticus 19:34). The apostle Paul commanded the followers of Jesus in Rome to practice hospitality. The word “practice” in that passage literally means that we are to *pursue* hospitality. Similarly, the apostle Peter admonishes his readers to practice hospitality ungrudgingly toward one another (1 Peter 4:9). Meanwhile, the author of Hebrews tells us we should not neglect to show hospitality to strangers (Hebrews 13:2).

Without question, we are to be hospitable! And our friendliness should not be limited to people that are easy to love. We are to be hospitable to *everyone*, whether friends, family members, or strangers.

Of course, boundaries are important. Even Jesus withdrew from the crowds when necessary. We need to practice good boundaries and know ourselves well enough to understand when it’s wise to rest and recharge. Even so, our natural inclination is to be *less* hospitable, not more, and that can be problematic.

What would it look like to steward our homes and let them be used for the Kingdom? Rather than driving straight into the garage at the end of the day and shutting the door, how can we be more welcoming and approachable? Can our homes be warm places where people are brought together, rather than fortresses in which we escape and shut ourselves off from the world? When we are hospitable, we are reflecting the grace and generosity of our God.

The Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:12-24) helps illuminate this idea. In Jesus’ time, there was no organized welfare system. Wealthy people in the community were

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<sup>1</sup> A significant portion of this study was drawn from Tim Keller and the staff at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Copyright, 2016.

expected to help neighbors who had economic problems. But this system was not in any way rooted in compassion for the poor and marginalized; rather, it was based on a system of self-interest. When the wealthy aided the poor, it was done with great fanfare as a sign of their status in the community. In the same way, when those with resources showed generosity and hospitality, the acts were done with the expectation that the favor would be returned in the form of political preferences, economic breaks, and public acknowledgment.

Jesus' teaching was radically different. When He told the Parable of the Great Banquet, He was outlining the typical way a wealthy man in that culture would have sought to sustain and create new relationships with those who received his patronage. But in the parable, the host discovered that the expected guests turned down his invitation. Instead, the invitation was accepted by those who couldn't begin to repay it. This picture of biblical hospitality points to the Gospel itself.

## **EQUIP**

1. How do you struggle with seeing your home and possessions as “yours,” meant to serve you only?
2. Who is a new person, couple, or family you know that you could invite into your home in the next month?
3. Read Luke 14:12-24 (the Parable of the Great Banquet) and Isaiah 25:6-9. Who are the people you are most likely to invite to a party?
4. In verses 15-24 in the parable, two different groups of people are invited to a great banquet at two different times. How would you describe the first group that was invited?
5. How would you describe the second group?
6. How would you describe the feast in the Isaiah passage, and what does this tell you about God and His kingdom?
7. What do you learn from the Parable of the Great Banquet about the heart and intention of God?

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

NOTE: Your study group does NOT need to go through every one of the following questions. Devote the final 30 minutes of your study time to the ACCOUNTABILITY section, and cover as many questions as you can depending on your group's size.

1. Who are the people on the margins of our invitation list?
2. The Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia*, which literally means "love of strangers." What are some ways that we can make room for those who are not typical "party invitees," who are unwelcome and excluded in our society?
3. How can you serve the church or your community by opening your home in the next month?
4. What encouraged/discouraged you from this past week?
5. Without saying something that you are "doing," describe your relationship with the Lord.
6. How have you worshipped the creation rather than the Creator?
7. What lies have you been believing?
8. Describe the situation around one relationship that you would like prayer for?
9. Which spiritual discipline has really blessed you recently? Why?
10. Which spiritual discipline has been neglected lately? Why?

## **MISSION**

1. Village Seven's 2020 emphasis is **For the City: Gospel Love, Living Local**. How can God use you to seek the welfare of Colorado Springs?
2. Do you have a place where you serve in Colorado Springs? If so, how's it going? If not, what are some places where you could get excited to serve and engage?
3. God has placed you at your job, in your neighborhood, and in this city for a reason. Who are people in your life that don't know the Good News of the Gospel?
4. We are praying as a church for God to give us boldness to have spiritual conversations with non-believers we know. How are you doing with this?