

## “In The Beginning”

### Message Summary

This week we begin our Christmas series titled, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel: The Purpose of Hospitality.” This series will survey the biblical narrative from beginning to end with an eye on what it means to practice biblical hospitality. Since Christmas is a time of year when people are most apt to gather with one another we are using it as an opportunity to not only celebrate the first Advent of Jesus but also to help us express God’s heart in hospitality all the while looking forward to and longing for the second Advent of Jesus. The purpose of this entire series is to lead our Missional Communities to practice biblical hospitality as the primary means for reaching their communities with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The first sermon in this series is titled, “In the Beginning.” As we look at the creation story from Genesis, specifically the creation of Adam and Eve, we will see that hospitality is in the very heart of God and is a beautiful display of the Gospel. Therefore, believing that those who believe the Gospel become like the Gospel, our intention is to teach our Missional Communities that biblical hospitality is an expression of believing the Gospel.

In Genesis 1:26-2:25 we examined God’s heart of hospitality and all that He provided in the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve. But as we moved into Genesis 3 we discovered that Adam and Eve turned God’s environment of hospitality into an environment of hostility. But God’s plan would not be thwarted. God promised to restore this environment of hospitality. He did so through His Son Jesus Christ. As a result, Christ-followers are called to create the same kind of environment of hospitality so that the outcast might be welcomed into the family of God, changed by the grace of God, and then obey Jesus in the power of God.

**Consequently, we have made considerable changes to this guide. Use this guide as a tool to help you practice biblical hospitality so that you might lead your group into spiritual transformation in a practical way. It is only a guide that will help you to help others discover, own, and apply the truths of God’s Word. Your role is to facilitate this encounter with God, His Body, and His Word. Use this guide as a flexible teaching tool rather than a rigid group task list.**

### Family Gathering

Think of your small group meeting as a “Family Gathering.” Since your group is made up primarily of Christians, then you are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, when you gather you are gathering as a family. So, practicing biblical hospitality should involve gathering as a family; all the while welcoming the outsider (stranger, unbeliever) and giving them a place to Be, Become, and Do so that they might be changed by the power of the Gospel. So when you have your family gathering this week, consider doing the following:

- **Family Meal** – Families eat together. So, just as you eat with your natural family, spend time eating together as a spiritual family. Share a meal together that requires a recipe and not a microwave. Consider having the host family prepare the main dish and everyone else bring a side. If you don’t know how to cook, find someone in the group that does and get together early and learn how to make a dish. If you have never hosted a gathering in your home, ask someone from the group to arrive early and help you get prepared. Everyone participate in cleaning up; some of the greatest conversations can happen during this time. A good suggestion might be for the men to clean up and give the ladies an opportunity to talk.
- **Family Discussion** – Families talk. So, just as you have discussions with your natural family, spend time talking as a spiritual family. You may need to digress for a little while. You may need to help someone through a problem. You may need to give counsel. You may need to encourage or even correct. During this discussion reflect on Sunday’s message by examining the discussion questions below. Think of this as a “low barrier” bible study; one everyone can enter into regardless of their spiritual maturity.
- **Family Prayer** – Families pray together. Pray for specific needs. Pray for the Weekly Prayer Focus. Don’t rush this time. Intercede for one another and rejoice in answered prayer.

### Family Outing

Families do things together. They spend time recreating, shopping, going out to dinner, etc. Spend some time with all or part of your group this week outside of your regular meeting time. Whether you are going to the park, ballgame, hunting, fishing, or shopping, this might be a great opportunity to invite someone you are trying to reach. Enjoy life together. Remember, you are a family!

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## Message Outline

In the beginning, God made an environment for Hospitality (1:26-2:25):

1. Belong in Fellowship
2. Enjoy His Provision
  - Home
  - Food
  - Rest
  - Safety
  - Work
3. Multiply Worshipers

At the Fall, Adam & Eve made an environment of Hostility (3:1-24):

1. Outcast
2. Enemy
3. Death

Let's use our homes to create an environment for people to:

1. Be
2. Become
3. Do

## Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help make application of God's Word to your Head (What God wants me to know), to your Heart (What God wants me to desire/value), and to your Hands (What God wants me to do).

1. How does the story of God's hospitality in the Garden of Eden change your view of hospitality?
2. What aspects of hospitality do you most struggle with and why?
3. How can we as a Missional Community create a more hospitable environment for others to experience BEING, BECOMING, and eventually DOING?

## Weekly Prayer Focus

- **Church:**
  - Annual Meeting on December 7, 2014.
    - Elders as they prepare 2015 budget.
    - Celebrating all God did in 2014.
    - Wisdom & excitement as we look to 2015.
- **Local:**
  - Practicing hospitality in our communities.
    - Growing relationships with neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances.
    - Opening our homes to new friends.
    - Gospel conversation opportunities.
- **Global:**
  - A & M and family, Southeast Asia
    - December project with S.T.M. Team
    - NDC December trip
    - NDC 2015 trips
    - Safety, provision, fruit