

“The Invitation”

Message Summary

God’s heart of hospitality is displayed from Genesis to Revelation. We saw His heart of hospitality displayed in the Garden of Eden as He gave Adam and Eve everything they needed. But when they turned their back on God and turned His hospitality into hostility, God in His love for His creation, continued to show grace and a welcoming spirit to His people through whom He would restore His creation. Along the way God gave His people a taste of what it was like to be strangers in the land so they might share His heart of hospitality to the outcast.

Israel, however, failed to show and share God’s heart of hospitality to whosoever would come to Him. By the time Jesus arrived on the scene, the people were weary and burdened with trying to measure up to the religious leaders’ standards. They had been loaded with heavy burdens. Not only were they unable to measure up to God’s standards because of their sin but they were unable to measure up to the standards of the religious elite. This was the culture into which Jesus Christ was born, lived, and ministered. But Jesus gave an invitation to anyone who would come to Him. He invited them to trust Him to measure up on their behalf. He invited them to enjoy the rest for their souls that only He could offer. Really, He invited them to enjoy His heart of hospitality.

Consequently, during this season of Advent, when we celebrate Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, we are invited not only to find rest in Jesus Christ but to offer that same rest to those who are outsiders in the family of God. Just as Jesus invited anyone to come to Him we too are called to invite them to Jesus and find rest for their souls. This is God’s heart of hospitality active in the lives of His children.

As you prepare to meet with your Missional Community this week think about those that live in your neighborhood. Maybe they don’t measure up to your standards, but they are important to God. With Jesus, they can measure up to God’s standards so invite them to find rest in Him! Invite them to join you for your Family Gathering this week or to a Family Outing so they might truly enjoy the hospitality of God’s people.

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

The yoke reminds us that...

1. We can't measure up.
2. Jesus does measure up.
3. We can measure up with Jesus.

Therefore, during this Advent Season, let's display God's hospitable character by...

1. Inviting people into our homes that don't measure up.
2. Introducing people to the One that does measure up.
3. Inviting people to find rest in Jesus.

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. Most people struggle at some time in their lives with trying to measure up to someone else's standards. How have you tried to measure up to the standards of others? How have you tried to measure up to God's standards? What were the results?
2. Read the sermon text aloud to the group. How does this invitation give you comfort? How does this invitation display God's welcoming heart of hospitality? How does it inform your "work" in the Kingdom of God?
3. Based on this message, what one thing can you do to display God's welcoming heart of hospitality? How will you implement this in your life this week?

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:**

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering – Week of Prayer: November 30-December 7, 2014

- Missionaries around the world who benefit from this offering.
- The people to whom they take the love of Jesus.
- Our church to pray strategically, give sacrificially, and go continuously to unreached peoples.
- <http://www.imb.org/main/lottie-moon/default.asp>