

“A Scandalous Model”

Message Summary

This Christmas Season we have been examining the idea of practicing Christian hospitality. Hospitality comes from the heart of God and He expects His children to reflect His character in the world. Therefore, we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are to practice this principle not just because it reflects God's heart but because it is a method Jesus used to turn the world upside down with the Gospel and build His kingdom.

After Jesus began His public ministry He began to draw the attention of the religious elite. On one occasion, these men who were proud of their strict adherence to the Law of Moses, were not excited when Jesus called Matthew out of his scandalous lifestyle as a tax collector and then ate with him and other tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees couldn't understand why Jesus would associate Himself with this kind of people if He really was a man sent from God. Jesus, however, explained that just as a doctor helps those who are sick, He came not for the righteous, but for the sinner.

Today many Christians know that Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors and this practice was considered scandalous in His day. We often forget, however, that Jesus has called us to the same practice. Jesus definitely came into the world to save sinners and call them out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9), however, Jesus promised that His disciples would do the works He did and they would do more of them (John 14:12). So asking the Father to protect His disciples from the evil one, Jesus sends us back out into the world so that we might shine the light of His glorious Gospel in the world (John 17:15-18).

Being hospitable requires space in your life. It requires intentionality and sacrificial living so God can use you in the lives of people who need His grace. Hospitality also requires a financial investment as well as an emotional investment. People may take advantage of you or you might lose precious possessions. These risks, however, don't compare with the joy of seeing Jesus restore those He calls out of darkness into His marvelous light!

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!

“A Scandalous Model”

Message Outline

Jesus called you out of darkness into His light.

He entered your world.

He reclined at your table.

He brought you life.

He showed you mercy.

What Jesus has done in you He wants to do through you.

Jesus sends you into the darkness to shine His light.

Enter their world.

Recline at their table.

Bring them life.

Show them mercy.

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. From what kind of lifestyle did Jesus call you? In that former lifestyle, what brought you comfort, hope, happiness? How did Jesus “enter your world”? How did the Gospel satisfy these desires?
2. When Jesus said, “*I desire mercy and not sacrifice,*” He was not suggesting religious duty was unimportant but rather religious duty is worthless apart from showing mercy to those who don’t deserve it. What is one way you can show mercy to others this week? How will you bring this person life through your acts of mercy? How will it affect your religious duty?
3. If Jesus has worked “in” you and desires to do the same work “through” you, then into what dark place is Jesus possibly sending you? How will you bring life? How will you show mercy? How can your Missional Community pray for, encourage, and hold you accountable as you shine His light in dark places?

Weekly Prayer Focus

- **Church:**
Developing Missional Community
 - Family of missionary servants sent on mission by God to make disciples who make disciples.
 - Growing relationships with covenant members.
 - Growing relationships with unbelievers.
- **Local:**
Practicing hospitality in our communities.
 - Growing relationships with neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances.
 - Opening our homes to new friends.
 - Gospel conversation opportunities.
- **Global:**
Drew’s trip.
 - Safe travels.
 - The Gospel to go forth.
 - Churches planted.