

## September: Hospitality

### Week One:

There is a clear call throughout Scripture that God's people are to be a people of hospitality. Hospitality in its simplest terms is loving strangers, but our desire as a church is to grow in personal and concrete expressions of love that seek to include strangers in our circle of care. There are many things that can keep us from being hospitable, including fear of man, believing you don't have enough space or resources to open your home to others, or a lack of love for the strangers around you, but ultimately we are called to love others with the actional, intentional and sacrificial love that was demonstrated to us so perfectly by our Savior.

This week spend time in prayer and confession asking God to reveal areas where you need to grow in being hospitable and pray that God would help you put off selfish ambitions or fears that keep from opening up your home. Read *Genesis 18:1-8* and *Hebrews 13:1-3* and pray that God would be growing your heart in tangibly loving others as Abraham did. Start thinking about 1 or 2 people that you can be inviting into your home this month and make plans for when you can have them over.

### Week Two:

Another theme that we see throughout Scripture is God's love and care for the sojourners and exiles. As God's people we are sojourners awaiting our true home in heaven with the Lord. Most of us have not experienced the heart-ache that comes from being forced to leave our homes physically, but we have likely experienced the spiritual longing for our true homeland with our God.

This week we will be praying that we would honor God with the way that we live in this world as we await the New Heavens and New Earth as well as praying that we would be growing in compassion and care for people around us and across the world who have been forced out of their homes because of war and other injustices. Pray that we would have a renewed awe of the mercy and grace that we have been shown in Christ and that we would seek to be a blessing to others. Pray that we would be compassionate to the refugees and sojourners in our own community and that we would seek to share Christ's love with them.

*"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good works and glorify God on the day of visitation." –1 Peter 2:11-12*

### **Week Three:**

As mentioned in week one, Jesus is our perfect example of humility and we see many examples throughout the gospels of the way he counted as others more significant than himself, seeking to meet their needs, even when it was hard or inconvenient. God doesn't call us to just love others when it is easy, but he calls us to cast off selfish ambition, seeking to love and serve others, just as "the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve. (Galatians 5:13-15; Mark 10:35-45) Not only did Jesus serve those around him each day, but his greatest act of love and service to his people was going to the cross and bearing the Father's wrath on our behalf. Spend time rejoicing in the grace and mercy that Jesus has shown to us and pray that he would help you put off selfish ambition and grow in loving others, even when it's hard or inconvenient.

*"And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to the disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'--Matthew 9:35-38*

### **Week Four:**

While the New Testament culture with expectations that travelers would be provided with hospitality is a bit different from our norms today, hospitality is still the call of Christians today. Part of this call is seeking to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in our own body, as well as praying for and supporting missionaries who are dedicating their lives to sharing the good news of Jesus both locally and globally. While we got to focus on how we can be growing in prayerfully supporting missionaries in June, this month we want to grow in the practice of welcoming one another into our homes as well.

Part of growing in hospitality is having a more others-focused mindset. There are many ways we can be doing this including, inviting a friend who is going through a hard time over, inviting someone to stay with you when they are coming to town, taking meals to people when they are sick or have a new baby, or seeking to meet other physical needs when people need help. Read *Mark 10:35-45* and pray that you would be focused on how you can grow in exalting the name of Jesus and counting others as more significant than yourself. Evaluate how you have been growing in practicing hospitality throughout the month and pray that God would continue growing your heart in loving and serving others by opening your home to bless others.