

Week 4: (O)PEN - The Practice of Hospitality and Friendship

Discussion Guide

Review

Last week, we discussed how we can consider blessing others with our words, time, and money. Share about your experience. What were the challenges? What were the joys or unexpected outcomes? How did you see God work through your efforts to bless others, and how did it impact your own heart?

Introduction

We are made for hospitality and friendship. God, existing as the Trinity, shows us that we were created for deep relationships—both with Him and with each other. This lesson focuses on living open lives through hospitality and friendship as a response to God's love.

Discussion

Opening Reflection (5 minutes):

Icebreaker: Share about a meaningful time someone showed hospitality to you. What made it special?

Biblical Foundation (20 minutes):

Read Genesis 1:26

One of the deepest realities of human experience is the longing to love and to be loved. Where does this longing come from? The Scriptures reach back into eternity for the answer to this question and tell us that before anything else—there was a relationship.

God has always existed in community as One God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—experiencing the joy of perfect relationship. From the beginning, we see that God did not create humanity out of loneliness or a need for love, but out of a desire to extend His community of love (Gen. 1:26). The mystery of creation reveals that this God, a perfect community of love, invited humanity into that same community. This understanding of the Trinity is essential for understanding both God and ourselves, as it shows that we, created in His image, are designed to exist in community as well.

We were made to live in relationship with the Triune God and with each other. Just as we cannot conceive of the persons of the Trinity existing separate from one another, we cannot see ourselves as isolated individuals. God created us to live in relationship, to be fully alive only when we are giving and receiving love in open community.

[DISCUSS] How does the doctrine of the Trinity shape our understanding of humanity, and reveal our design for community and relationships?

Read Genesis 3:8-12

The first recorded effects of sin show us that when we close ourselves off to God, we close ourselves off to each other. As Paul David Tripp says, "Sin is antisocial."

[DISCUSS] Opposing Cultural Rhythms: We live in a world that isolates and insulates. What are the cultural or personal barriers that keep you from living an open life? What are some specific ways you've seen yourself or others struggle to build deep relationships in today's world? (e.g., busyness, comfort zones, fear of vulnerability.)

Read 1 Peter 4:7-10

In the gospel, Christ embodies the complete antithesis of the patterns of sin. Where sin fosters separation and isolation, Christ draws near, creating and nurturing community. Moreover, the gospel reveals a new way of life, in which believers are called to actively pursue life together, demonstrating hospitality and mutual care. This invitation challenges the self-centered tendencies of sin, replacing them with a call to connection, love, and the shared life of a gospel-centered community.

[DISCUSS] Considering how the gospel calls us to live in contrast to sin's patterns of separation, what do these verses teach us about the significance of love and hospitality in the life of a believer?

Four categories of Hospitality and Friendship (10 minutes):

What are some practical ways to live out hospitality and friendship in these four key areas?

Friendship: (e.g., weekly coffee with a friend).

Church: (e.g., shared meals with your church community).

Marriage: (e.g., regular date nights, intentional time together).

Family: (e.g., weekly family meals, special one-on-one times).

Which of these categories resonates most with you? Which one do you need to focus on more this week?

Putting it into Practice (15 minutes):

Here are a few ways you can practice hospitality and friendship.

PRACTICE 1: G.R.A.C.E.

- What am I grateful about?
- What did I realize about myself? God? Others?
- What action did I take to pursue my calling as a disciple today?
- What challenge did I face today?
- What did I enjoy today?

PRACTICE 2: BE PRESENT

Put away your phone/electronic device for 1 hour each day to meaningfully connect and be present.

PRACTICE 3: PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

Fight loneliness by intentionally pursuing relationships this week.

- Phone call/catching up/connection
- A meal with someone this week

Evaluate your current rhythms of hospitality and friendship. What simple steps can you take this week to live more openly and intentionally in your relationships?

Closing Prayer:

Pray that God would help you live with open hearts and open hands, seeking to build deeper relationships with those around you, reflecting the love of Christ in your community.