

SESSION 02

# Practice Hospitality



# Overview

The table in first-century Israel was more than just a place to eat — it was a symbol of personal identity and social standing.

To eat and drink with someone was to identify with that person as “my people.” Sharing a table meant sharing life — and that association had a direct impact on a person’s reputation in their community.

This made the table an exclusive place in Jesus’ time — a place to mark who was in with you and who was out. For Jesus, however, the table was not a boundary line or a way to fence people out, but a way to invite people in to God’s community of love.

While our witness should take many shapes and forms, in a post-Christian culture that is often apathetic to the Gospel, confused about the gospel, or at worst hostile to it, our method for joining Jesus in his mission to “seek and save the lost” must become more about compassionate presence.

How can we bear witness to Jesus in a time like this? In a very ordinary setting — one shared meal at a time, around a table with the lost.

# Reflection Questions

When instructed, circle up in triads (smaller groups of 3-5 people) and discuss the following questions:

- 01 Share about one of the people you chose to pray for daily. Who is this person, and why have you decided to pray for them regularly?
  
- 02 What did you sense God speak to you about what they need to experience, and your part to play in that?
  
- 03 If you were to honestly share your level of hope that these people will someday follow Jesus, what would you say? What reflections do you have on your sense of hopefulness?
  
- 04 What new attitudes or perspectives do you hope God forms in you over time through this regular prayer?

# Teaching

## Key Scripture

Luke 19v1-10

## Session Summary

- The practice of hospitality has the potential to cut through the hostility of our post-Christian culture and open people to God.
- Hospitality was the primary method by which Jesus lived into his mission “to seek and save the lost.”
- Hospitality is expressing the welcome of God the Father to all through tangible acts of love, ideally through giving food, shelter, and relationship.
- The New Testament writers command that we carry on the practice of hospitality from Jesus’ life.
- Practicing hospitality starts not by adding yet another thing to our busy schedules, but by opening a seat for our neighbors, co-workers, and friends at the meals we are already eating.





# Discussion Questions

Now it's time for a conversation about the teaching. Pause the video for a few minutes to discuss in small groups:

- 01 What responses have you most often witnessed when people share the Gospel of Jesus — hostility, openness, or indifference?
  
- 02 Reflect on a time when you experienced “radically ordinary hospitality.” What did that look like, and what impact did it have on you?
  
- 03 How does the idea of being hospitable to those who don't know Jesus either complement or challenge your view of the practice of witnessing?
  
- 04 What do you know about your neighbors? What thoughts or emotions arise when you consider having them over for a meal around your table?



IN COMMUNITY — LEARN

# Closing Prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

Jesus, teach us the way of  
your radically ordinary hospitality —  
of simple bread and wine — that we  
may daily give away the sweetness  
of your heart, the comfort of your  
love, and the joy of our Father, with  
this world you long to heal.

Amen.



# Exercise

## Invite someone to share a meal

This meal can be in your home; it can be a feast you prepare for them. Or it can be a food cart down the street from your work; and a quick lunch with a co-worker.

If at all possible, we recommend sharing this meal in your home. Depending on your living situation, you might not be set up for an invitation like this — and that's okay. Remember, this is about hospitality, not entertainment. Your home doesn't need to be perfect to invite people to your table and your lives.

As you think of who to invite, aim for someone who meets three criteria:

- 01 They are in your life — a friend or neighbor or co-worker.
- 02 You've not had them over before.
- 03 They are not yet a follower of Jesus.

The Rule of Benedict says that “all guests are to be welcomed as Christ.” Treat them the way you would treat Christ himself — with honor, love, and service.

For now, unless an opportunity presents itself, don't focus on telling them about Jesus; focus more on listening. Ask as many questions as you can — about their story, their life, their heart, their pain. Move the conversation from the superficial to the spiritual simply through asking great questions.

## ON YOUR OWN — PRACTICE

Here a list of questions that you can consider asking:

- Where did you grow up, and what did you love about your upbringing? Is there anything you would change about it, or wish was done differently?
- In what ways are you different from who you were when you were young? How are you the same?
- What is one of the significant moments from your life that shaped who you are today?
- Who in your life has had a big impact on you, and the way you see the world? In what way(s)?
- Who are the people and relationships that are most important to you today?
- What are some of the goals that you are currently working towards? What dreams and aspirations do you have?
- When you think of the kind of person that you most want to emulate or become like, who comes to mind?
- What do you believe is the meaning of life?
- What are some of the values/rules that you try to live by? Where did you learn or pick those up?
- If you had to sum up this past year in a few words, what would those words be?
- What aspects of your life are you most encouraged by as of late? Is there anything you are finding especially difficult?
- Do you believe in any kind of God, or have a spirituality you live by? What do you believe and what does that look like for you?

# Reach Exercise

## Create a neighborhood map


Use the “Block Map” to fill out the names and details of your neighbors — as in those who live next door. You may not be able to fill much of it out as you hoped. In which case, that’s your practice for the coming season. Practice hospitality as a way of learning your neighbors’ names and stories.

### Block Map

The center square is your home or apartment. The eight squares around it are your eight closest neighbors. Do the following for each neighbor:

- 01 On line A**, fill in their name. Ideally first and last, but just put down what you know. If you don’t know their name yet, just put down a question mark, or leave it blank. Do the same for the next two lines.
- 02 On line B**, fill in any details about their lives you know that you couldn’t get from waving across the street: where they work, where they are from, how long they’ve lived there, what they do for fun, etc.
- 03 On line C**, see if you can fill in any in-depth information: their dreams for the future, relationship status, their faith (or lack of it), experience with God or church, their childhood story, any pain, etc.

ON YOUR OWN — PRACTICE

|                        |   |                        |
|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| a.<br><br>b.<br><br>c. | a.<br><br>b.<br><br>c.  | a.<br><br>b.<br><br>c. |
| a.<br><br>b.<br><br>c. |  | a.<br><br>b.<br><br>c. |
| a.<br><br>b.<br><br>c. | a.<br><br>b.<br><br>c.  | a.<br><br>b.<br><br>c. |

As a general rule, only 10% of people can fill in line A, only 3% can fill in line B, and less than 1% can fill in line C. The point here isn't guilt and shame; it's simply to plot out just how well you know (or don't know) your neighbors, to get you started on the journey to loving them.

This exercise from the book *The Art of Neighboring*, by Vineyard pastor Jay Pathak. Discover more at [artofneighboring.com](http://artofneighboring.com).

ON YOUR OWN — PRACTICE

# Practice Reflection

Before your next time together with the group for Session 03, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions:

01 Where did I feel resistance?

02 Where did I feel joy?

03 Where did I most experience God's nearness?

*Note: As you write, be as specific as possible. While bullet points are just fine, if you write it out in narrative form, your brain will be able to process your insights in a more lasting way.*



# Keep Growing (Optional)

The following resources were created to enhance your experience of this Practice, but they are entirely optional.

## Read

*The Gospel Comes with a House Key* by Rosaria Butterfield  
(Chapters 04-06)

## Listen

Rule of Life Podcast on Witness (Episode 02)

## Continue the discussion

If you would like to slow down this four-week Practice to give your community more time to sit in each week's teaching and spiritual exercise, you can pause and meet for an optional conversation in the Appendix.



