

Recommended Introduction to Lesson VI: "What's A Church To Do?"

This is the sixth lesson in a ten lesson series by Rev. Dr. Dianne B. Salter
Intended for all Christians with specific information for the Church council and a Hospitality Team

Wanting to live out God's teachings on Biblical hospitality, that are filtered throughout the whole of the scriptures, is a basic principal of living as a Christian. It is foundational on how we should function as the church.

The church is a whole bunch of individual Christians who are to represent Christ's love to each other- and those outside the walls of the church. In fact in scripture the church is referred to as the Body of Christ, meaning that each one of us Christians represent a different aspect of Jesus to everyone we encounter. As a whole congregation we represent Christ to the world.

Most churches feel they are friendly- but few churches have implemented the Old and New Testament practices of Biblical hospitality. Developing a vision and an intentional contemporary plan that filters throughout the church is the job of the church council. A Hospitality team must advocate for this, and then be given the responsibility of carrying out the plan. The pastor must be on board and must be an encouragement to the concept of God's Hospitality. It is essential that the entire congregation be taught and catches the vision so that it might be practiced by many. It takes a congregation for God's Hospitality to be evident inside and outside the church

Bishop Robert Schnase's definition challenges us to live as a church with a vision to bring others into the family. He says, "Christian hospitality refers to the active desire to invite, welcome, receive and care for those who are strangers so that they find a spiritual home and discover for themselves the unending richness of life in Christ. It describes genuine love for others who are not yet part of the faith."

How is your church doing in extending Christian hospitality?

Before you begin the DVD read the following scriptures:

The apostle Paul is writing to the church at Rome, he desires to help them to grow more into the church that would reflect that God wants to include all people as a full member of God's family. Read the following scriptures from Romans 15: 5-9a; v.13; 20-21 NLT.

May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you will join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews. To show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. He also came so that the Gentiles (that all the rest of us) might give glory to God for his mercies to them.

(Vs. 9b-12 are Old Testament verses that tell us this truth, you may wish to refer to them here:

Ps. 18:49; Deut 32: 43; Ps. 117:1)

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard... . I have been following the plan spoken of in the Scriptures, where it says, "Those who have never been told about him will see, and those who have never heard of him will understand." (1sh. 52:15)

When the church works together as the church is called to do, others will come into a new awareness that God wants them to be part of the family.

Prayer: Pray now for the Holy Spirit to filter all words and thoughts throughout this session.

Now show the 18 minute DVD.

Following the DVD

Group Discussion and Ideas for Practical Application

Pondering and sharing answers to the following questions will be your greatest encouragement to putting hospitality practices into your lifestyle.

Wherever your church may be, you and all in your congregation are responsible to start, or step up God's Hospitality. God wants to take the church to a new level. Be honest about where you believe your church to be.

Read together the scriptures that were read prior to the showing of the DVD. What does this say to your church today? Romans 15: 5-13; 20-21.

1. Begin by responding to Bishop Schnase's definition; "Christian hospitality refers to the active desire to invite, welcome, receive and care for those who are strangers so that they find a spiritual home and discover for themselves the unending richness of life in Christ. It describes genuine love for others who are not yet part of the faith." **How is your church doing in extending this genuine love to bring others into God's family?**

2. Of the "Baker's Dozen for Church Growth" name first those areas where your church is progressing. Specifically identify those areas that need attention in your congregation.

1. Spirituality
2. Pastor
3. **Hospitality**
4. Flexibility
5. Exciting Worship
6. Lay Leadership
7. Quality Care and Nurture
8. Intentional Assimilation
9. New Small Groups
10. Community Outreach
11. Building and Grounds
12. Marketing
13. Visitor Follow-up

Jeffrey Wilson

3. Of the “Seven Member Expectation”, what needs more focus for your congregation to help advance the Kingdom of God in greater ways? How might that happen ?

Healthy Congregations have seven member expectations...

1. Commit to spiritual growth
2. Commit to worshipping with others
3. Commit to financial support
4. Commit to the congregation’s mission and vision
5. Commit to the needs of the community and world
6. **Commit to hospitality**
7. Commit to prayer

Albert L Winseman, *Growing An Engaged Church*

4. Now look at the General Concepts for Church Hospitality, where does your church need to grow? How might your church personalize these concepts to meet your specific church profile? Remembering all the while these concepts are to fulfill, Jesus Great Commission: to “*go and make disciples...I am with you!*” The concepts are:

1. **Every Member** practices “**active love**”, expressing, “*Come experience God’s Love here*”.
2. **The Congregation** must offer a welcoming, loving and caring **environment**, with people and policies communicating this welcoming setting.
3. **The Congregation** must have a **heart for those without faith**.
4. **The Congregation** cannot expect **those unfamiliar with the church to act and live as Christians**.
5. **A Hospitality Plan must be in place, and actively practiced**.
6. **An attractive, welcoming “helpful” environment must be created**.
7. **The church’s hospitality must include ministry with, not simply to the poor**.

5. Now consider how various parts of your church family are functioning so that God’s Hospitality is being woven throughout the entire ministry of the church. If it is not present what are some ways that you can begin to vision such a ministry?

6. If you have a Hospitality Team, “What is your next step?”

7. Ponder the words of the chorus to the song, “If We Are the Body”.

*But if we are the body why aren’t His arms reaching?
Why aren’t His hands healing? Why aren’t His words teaching?
And if we are the body why aren’t His feet going?*

Why is His love not showing them there is a way? There is a way.

*Jesus paid much too high a price for us to pick and choose who should come,
And we are the body of Christ.
Jesus is the way.*

Casting Crowns

What thoughts come to you as you read these words? What would happen if we really were the “Body of Christ”?

8. Personal Silent Prayer: Sit quietly listening for Guidance. Write down those ideas God brings to your mind that will help your congregation be more intentional about extending God’s Hospitality, helping bring more people to experience being born from above.

1. Record thoughts or nudges you felt from God:
2. Who are some people to “pray over” who might be part of this ministry?
3. Consider disciplining yourself to a time line to ask them, and to having them as part of a team that advocates for God’s Hospitality to be an integral part of your church’s vision.

9. Consider how to present your vision to the Church Council.

Leadership Ideas for Group Closing:

Invite the class to pray audibly for their church to take the next step of growth. If multiple churches are represented devise a quick plan so that all churches are prayed for.

Pray that the Holy Spirit would go ahead of you and open the hearts of people you contact to be part of the team, granting them a vision and willingness to put God’s love in action.

Departing in God’s Presence.

*Go forth from this special place rejoicing that you are a full member of God’s family.
The Spirit of Christ goes with you!*