Week 13 | Doing the Works of Jesus: Meals with Jesus
Exercises

Exercise 1 - "You Were Strangers"

You shall love [the stranger] as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. - Leviticus 19:34

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. - Ephesians 2:12-13

The practice of hospitality, and welcoming others into community, finds its basis in the fact that we were all once separated from God, but have been brought in and welcomed into Christ's presence. Consider the words in Ephesians 2 that describe your condition before Christ: separated, alienated, a stranger, no hope, without God. **Have you ever really considered the helpless state you were in before Christ?** Now consider what it means to have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **In what ways did God seek you out and welcome you into relationship with Him**?

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On a much smaller scale, you may also know the feeling of being an outsider or stranger among other people.

In what ways have you experienced this?

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Can you remember a specific example of someone showing you kindness or welcoming you in when you felt like a stranger?

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Thank God for His grace in accepting you, bringing you near, and welcoming you into a relationship with Him. Thank Him also for others who have extended His kindness and hospitality to you. Ask Him to show you how He wants to love and welcome others through you.

Finally, look to do this in at least one way today. Look out for opportunities to invite others into community and relationship, if even for just a few moments. Ask the Spirit to help you "love the stranger as you love yourself" with your words, actions, and gestures.

Exercise 2 - Avoidance

As we consider what it means to invite others into our homes and our lives, we may realize that we tend to avoid strangers, those who don't know Jesus, or those who don't look or act like us. Pray for insight as you answer the following questions:

Do you tend to seek out relationships outside our church community, or avoid them?

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If you avoid them, why? (Some possibilities are: Self-consciousness, guilt, busyness, fear)

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How do you think God is calling you to take the next step to reach out to others who don't know Him and invite them in to your life?

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Pray the following prayer, based on Colossians 4:3-6

God, please open doors for me to declare the mystery of Christ. Help me to share this message clearly in how I speak and act. Please give me wisdom in how I walk among those who don't know you, making the best use of the time. Make my speech always gracious and attractive to others, so that I always have a good response for everyone who does not know You.

Exercise 3 - Intentional Relationships

Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone. - Colossians 4:5-6 (NLT)

In the previous exercise you considered why it's difficult for you to form new relationships with those who are not believers or in community. Today consider how the Spirit might be calling you to be more intentional with relationships you already have. Take a few moments to pray for wisdom and clarity, and then consider:

Who do you already know (in Jonesboro) outside our church--especially who may not be believers? (Think coworkers, acquaintances, neighbors, workers at restaurants or businesses you frequent, etc)

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How can you pursue deeper friendships with them?

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How can you invite them into your life, your home, your community, etc?

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How can you point them to Jesus?

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Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you an opportunity to be more intentional in one of these relationships this week. Keep this in mind as you go throughout the week and take advantage of opportunities you are given.