
Session: Celebration

Description

When I was almost six years old my mom died. We lived in a small town and people gossiped. I felt like an oddity – a little girl with no mother. Most day's I rode my bike to the Wilson's house. They had so many kids that I didn't stand out. I liked that.

Their home wasn't fancy, and the six Wilson kids didn't have many toys or personal possessions to speak of. But the door was always open and there was always a peanut butter sandwich and someone to play with. The Wilsons considered everyone to be family. As I look back now, I realize that they recognized, and celebrated the gift of each human being, regardless of socio-economic status, race, disposition, religion or appearance. I'd sometimes even find crabby old Mr. Marley over there having a cup of tea. They graciously welcomed their neighbors into their home with warmth and joy.

Over the last twenty years I've come to think about my "neighbor" in terms of divine proximity versus the physical. Dallas Willard, in *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*, talks about the idea that a "neighbor" can't actually be identified in any way that is of this world. We've all heard the term "Good Samaritan", which is actually an oxymoron if you look at the expression historically. No Jew would have ever applied the word "good"....or even "neighbor" to someone from Samaria at that time. They were outcasts. So today perhaps my "neighbor" is a transgender person, a Muslim, a drug addict or an illegal alien. The whole point Jesus was making is that person, the one that the exclusivist side of us has cast out, is my neighbor.

That's the point. It isn't about who *is* my neighbor, it's about who I will *make* my neighbor.

"Neighbor" is based on my behavior. Jesus taught us to help people in need, but at a deeper level, he taught us that we can't decide who is "in" or "out" or "blessed". "Neighbor" is a matter of heart. Our neighbor is defined by our love.

Sometimes we must do the practical to get to the spiritual. For the Wilsons, the practical (a hug, a peanut butter sandwich, a warm welcome) *was* the spiritual. Every day was a coming home celebration at the Wilson's house.

In this session your family will have the opportunity to practice hospitality by planning a celebration! Hospitality can be a way to express gratitude and thankfulness and to celebrate the goodness of God in the land of the living. Your celebration can be big or small. You might invite one neighbor, family member or friend or several.

Materials Needed

Some paper and a pens or pencils to jot down your ideas.

Handouts

None

Celebration as a practice of hospitality

Read aloud the quote or scripture

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'LORD, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" *Matthew 25:35-40.*

Questions for discussion
(10 minutes)

1. What do you think hospitality means? Do you think there are times when you should not be hospitable? Explain.
2. Have you ever been hospitable and wished you hadn't been? Explain. Have you ever been hospitable, and it brought you joy? Give an example.
3. What do you think Matthew 25:35–40 means? Do you believe that welcoming a stranger or feeding someone who is hungry has anything to do with God? If so what? If not, why not?
4. Has anyone ever welcomed you in, when you needed it? Explain.
5. Has anyone ever **not** welcomed you in? How did that feel?

Rule of life activity

Celebration as an act of hospitality

1. Give each family member a blank piece of paper and a writing utensil.
2. You are going to plan a celebration that includes hospitality. The celebration can be as big or small as you like, and each member of the family will be responsible for one element of the celebration. This is a chance to express gratitude for what you have been blessed with.
3. First decide who you want to invite. It could be one neighbor, a family-member, friends or a larger group. Once everyone agrees write down the name(s) of the invitee(s).

4. Now choose a date for your celebration. Get out the calendars, select a date and write it down.
5. Next discuss a list of tasks to be done for your celebration. Each family member, regardless of age, will be completely responsible for one of the tasks. **Parents of younger kids, this is an opportunity to let go of perfectionism.** Can you imagine how fantastic it will be to have a four-year-old choose the music or an eight-year-old make all the food? You can assist them, but they get to make all the decisions for their task, and they cannot be vetoed. Parents of adult kids – you can throw a party via video gathering if they can't be there in person. Be creative. Decorations might be photos cut from magazines versus balloons, pinecones from outside or beautiful fall leaves.
6. Celebration tasks might include: Invitations, music, food, dessert, decorations, games. Try to do as much as possible with things you already have in your home or things you find outside. This is a chance to show your kids (and yourself, which could be humbling) that hospitality is about love, not fancy store-bought cakes, flowers or decorations.
7. Lastly, as a family (with every voice heard) have everyone say which task they will be responsible for. On one piece of paper write down the date of the celebration, each person's name, and their celebration task under their name. Put it on the fridge.
8. In addition to the main task list, each person writes down **on their own paper** (or draws it if they are little) what **their** celebration task is along with the date of the celebration. **Parents may need to remind kids the weekend before but don't do the task for them.** If celebration items are missing, that too will be a lesson. Remember the Wilsons. Hospitality is about love, not perfection.

Examen

How did it go? Debrief highs and lows

1. Each person shares their favorite part of the conversation / activity and why.
2. Each person shares their least favorite part and why.
3. Did you do a Serving/Giving activity last week? How did it go?

Serving /giving ideas for any time this week: Choose one or create your own. These can be done individually or as a group. You will be sharing your serving experience in the next session.

- Pick up trash in your favorite park, or in your neighborhood.
- Practice helpfulness for a whole week. Clear someone else's plate, put someone else's trash in the garbage for them, ask if you can get them anything.
- Sign your family up to serve food at a rescue mission.
- Sign your family up to bring the snacks to a Habitat for Humanity build one day. Most Habitat for Humanity volunteers stop around 10am for snack break.
- Collect and deliver a care package full of new or unused items (or purchased items) for children and moms living in a women's shelter. Oftentimes domestic violence victims leave their homes quickly, with only the clothes on their backs.