

Cell Group Bible Study
A Heartwarming Hospitality Sermon Series 2025

Introduction

Welcome to the start of our church's sermon series and cell group bible studies for 2025! We will be embarking on this journey for 9 weeks based on the sermon series.

Why study characters who have displayed hospitality in the bible?

1. To **benefit** those whom we want to show hospitality to. Jesus tells us that we are "the light of the world" and our responsibility is to "let our light shine before men" (Matthew 5:14-16). In doing so, those who receive the light will come to glorify our Father in heaven.
2. To **be blessed** ourselves as we extend God's blessings generously to others. Jesus declares the truth that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Our Lord does not ever want us to miss out on the blessing of being channels of God's blessings!
3. To **reflect God's nature** and **extend God's ministry**. Ultimately, we are hospitable because God is a hospitable God. We are only able to love because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). And we are called to continue to grow in our Christlikeness each day.

What is a suggested cell group and bible study format?

- a. You can incorporate the elements of the **4 W's** for your cell meeting: **Welcome** (personal thanksgiving), **Worship** (songs), **Word** (bible study) and **Works** (prayer for each other and planning and participating in upcoming events of the church).
- b. Each of the bible study will consist of three elements:
 - a. **Introductory question** for discussion (related to the focus of the bible study)
 - b. **Discussion question(s)** based on the passage
 - c. **Possible application(s)** in daily life
- c. You may not need to include all of the elements in a single cell group session but do not neglect any of the **4 W's** over the long term.

What can be helpful for cell members to be more involved?

1. Everyone should try to **read the bible passage** beforehand or during the meeting.
2. Cell members can be **rostered** to lead in the various elements within the cell meeting: welcome, worship, bible study or prayer. This will help involve more members for the cell.
3. In smaller groups, cell members can **keep in touch** with one another about how they have been applying the lessons learnt in the sermon/bible study throughout the week.

What is helpful for you as a cell leader to have a fruitful meeting?

1. Start and end every meeting **on time**. This honours the commitment that all the cell members have made to attend cell on time.
2. Encourage **everyone** to share and thank them for sharing – there are no wrong answers (unless it contradicts what God says!) and each opinion should be valued.
3. Look to **affirm** what your members are sharing – especially about how God may be speaking or leading them in their lives.
4. Feel free to stop at any point to elaborate if the Spirit is leading you to – **you don't have to complete all of the discussion questions**.
5. Keep your cell group meeting and your members in **prayer** throughout the week.

"Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes."

A Heartwarming Hospitality Bible Study (23 Feb 25)

#8 – Philemon: The Forgiveness of Hospitality

Big Idea – Hospitality involves us acting as mediators for Christ

Key Verse: *“So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.”* Philemon 1:17-18 ESV

A. Introductory Question

1. Share about a situation where you or someone you knew had to mediate between two parties in conflict. What did you learn from that episode?

B. Discussion Questions

[Read Philemon 1]

There are three main characters addressed in this epistle: the Apostle Paul the writer, Onesimus the runaway slave and Philemon the slave owner.

2. Briefly describe the relationships between each character and the others that you can understand from this chapter. (Eg. Paul and Onesimus, Paul and Philemon, and Philemon and Onesimus.)

The Apostle Paul preferred to keep Onesimus near to himself as he was useful in Paul’s ministry. Not only that, Paul had formed a close and intimate bond with him and was deeply encouraged by his conversion. Yet Paul decided to send him back to Philemon who was his former owner.

3. Why do you think Paul chose this course of action even though it was difficult for him to do? What does this tell us about deciding how our own actions should be?

Philemon is a unique letter among all of Paul’s letters. It was not written to any church to instruct them about Christian doctrine. It was also not written to an up-and-coming church leader like Timothy or Titus to encourage him to persevere in the ministry. It was a personal letter to another close friend about a personal request.

4. What was Paul’s main request to Philemon? How did Paul encourage Philemon to make it easier for Philemon to accede to his request?

C. Application

Our Lord Jesus taught about the importance of us ***continually forgiving*** our fellow brothers and sisters of their wrongs against us by appealing to God’s immeasurable and accomplished forgiveness of all our sins in Christ. (Matthew 18:21-35).

5. Is there someone who has wronged you whom you find difficult to forgive? How does the bible study today help you in your journey of forgiveness?

Often it is difficult for two parties in conflict to reconcile with each other without a mediator. Paul acted effectively as one by appealing to higher ideals and offering to bear any losses incurred by Philemon.

6. Are there any persons in your life that the Lord is leading you to reconcile with each other, with the church community or with the Lord? Pray for divine opportunity, wisdom and favour from the Lord to act as a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9).

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