

**Advent Series:** Hospitality Incarnated: What Christ's birth reveals about how we treat others.

**Sermon Text:** Luke 10:29-37

**Key Words:** Wise, Tenderhearted, Forgiving

**Churches** around the world are celebrating **Advent** season, which is a word meaning, *"To appear or come into a place."* Together, we're remembering Jesus' first advent while anticipating His final advent. We're calling this series: *"Hospitality Incarnated: What Christ's birth reveals about how we treat others."* Our liturgy (the readings, prayers, songs, and sermons) has been crafted to remind us of God's goodness towards us, so we can be formed by His grace rather than a culture of individualism, consumerism, and self-reliance. **We're defining** *"hospitality"* as *"The generous treatment of guests."* So far, we've learned how **Jesus came to redeem how we treat one another**, how **Remembering God's provision changes everything**, and how **Hospitality honors God's design (image)**. Today, our fourth sermon will challenge us to consider this...

**BIG IDEA:** We must strive to be wise, tenderhearted, and forgiving.

**Last time**, we considered 2 significant passages related to our theme. The first was Luke 14 where Jesus likened the kingdom of God to a great banquet that's open to outcasts--people we may prefer to avoid. He said, *"When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."* He pressed this theme further in Matthew 25 by linking our reception of social outcasts to our reception of Him. We've also seen how Scripture is filled with hospitality commands, and our last lesson ended on a mysterious verse suggesting that any guest could be an angel or Jesus Himself. That may seem a bit too mystical for you, and you may not have appreciated everything I said, but the point is simple: We never know where Jesus will pop up expecting to be recognized and received. If that's true, then there are many questions and tensions Christians cannot ignore, starting with the way Jesus described His ministry in **Luke 4:18** while quoting the Prophet Isaiah (61): *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, and to liberate the oppressed..."*

**At some point**, someone glibly asked Jesus *"Who is my neighbor"*, and He replied with a parable about a Good Samaritan in **Luke 10:29-37**: *"A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and left him half dead. By chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So, likewise a Levite, when*

*he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Jesus then asked, ‘Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?’ The lawyer who asked replied, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You go, and do likewise.’”* Priests would’ve viewed other priests as peers, and in our study of John, corrupt religious leaders felt that avoiding certain people kept them ritually pure. Levites should’ve exuded compassion since they, like foreigners, were supported by tithes from every tribe. To make a Samaritan the hero of this story was a slap in the face to a Jewish person, who as we saw in lesson 1, was obligated by God’s law to help everyone, including foreigners (cf. Leviticus 19:34). The part we often miss is how Jesus identified everyone in the story EXCEPT the injured man, which implies his nationality did not matter! Again, the question prompting the parable was “*Who is my neighbor?*” not “*What must one do to be saved?*” This tells me that before hospitality is ever a religious matter, it is first a humanitarian matter.

**Meeting basic needs** shouldn’t be about whether someone loves Jesus, nor should help be used as a carrot to force folks to hear a religious presentation. Salvation is a free gift, not something we trade for a can of peas! Christian debates over who “*deserves*” help remind me of the religious dudes Jesus rebuked in Luke 5:30-32: “*The Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, asking why they ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners? Jesus answered, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.’”* Of course, unless your last name is something like Winfrey, Musk, or Bezos, you’re unlikely to fund unlimited medical care and lodging, right? Yet, we must all wrestle with the kind of neighbor we are. Are we more like the Priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan? As we learned in last week’s parable, we must be willing to rethink our shallow excuses. While I have more questions than answers, God has used 30 years of study, ministry, and relationships to reform my thinking. Some of you are unaware, but Krista and I have worked with agencies for over 2 decades to build our county’s social safety net. We’re neither inexperienced, nor naïve. We try to be discerning, but we’re at a place where we know, like Jesus did, that sin lurks inside of everyone. We’ve learned that Jesus has our back when those we

try to help betray, misunderstand, use, or reject us. Once, I was selling this sweet, gold station wagon. After being offered \$2700 cash, I held out for more. Meanwhile, I lent my car to a recovering addict, who regrettably took it on a drug run! When I got it back, it looked like someone had run it over with a tank, so the junk yard gave me \$250. Has obeying Jesus been easy? No! Has it been worth it? Yes! While we've suffered financially, physically, and emotionally, Krista and I are more committed than ever to serving whoever Jesus sends our way, regardless of the outcome. Why? Well, [like the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3](#), we know that to experience the depths and riches of God's love, we must share in the sufferings of His Son. **Furthermore**, service and evangelism aren't just a one-time encounter. If we want to experience the variety of ways God can transform people, then we must believe He is able to change anyone and be willing to stick with them for as long as that takes. I also think benevolence begins with self-examination, not guidelines about "*who to help*" and "*who not to help*." So, I'll share 3 habits that help Krista and I process our past hurts, so we don't become callous and shut down.

- 1) ***Maintain a soft heart***. Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) says, "*Above all else, guard your heart, for all you do flows from it.*" We're all being formed by something (e.g., who we hang out with, what we read and watch). Are you being discipled by negative people, social media, and the news or are you being shaped by Scripture, prayer, and godly people?
- 2) ***Drop the agendas and try to stay focused***. Assisting others doesn't mean we're affirming their beliefs or activities, nor must we preach at people every time we help them. Also, while I love how the internet raises awareness, it can also exhaust and distract us with needs that we can do nothing about. Galatians 6:9-10 begs us, "*not to grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*"
- 3) ***Seek wisdom and support***. In her book on biblical hospitality, Christine Pohl reminds us that "*Discussions about 'deserving vs. undeserving' poor, whether people will take advantage of generous hospitality, and whether it is too risky to respond to strangers are as ancient as early Christian texts and as current as today's talk shows. Practitioners of hospitality from centuries past can teach us from their wisdom and their struggles*" (Pohl, 8). By studying Scripture and church history we can learn, for example, that the safest and most effective way to help others is to work together and to become a new spiritual family to those without one (cf. Proverbs

11:14; Ephesians 1-2). Be sure to check out our online sermon notes for plenty of examples and quotes to help you process these important questions and tensions.

**Let's pray:** Father, each of us must consider whether we're *striving to be wise, tenderhearted, and forgiving* like Jesus was. In Ephesians 4, your Word commands us to *"no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds...in darkened understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart."* Instead, you call us to *"put off our old self, which belongs to our former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."* Further reinforcing today's topic, you say to *"let all bitterness, wrath, anger, and slander be put away from us, so we can be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."* Holy Spirit, please help us in Jesus' name. Amen.

So, what's your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

**Quotes related to this passage:**

- **A Danish Proverb:** "If there is room in the heart, there is room in the house."
- **Other verses worth considering:** Matthew 16:24-25; 2 Corinthians 9:8
- **Defining our Neighbors:** Claims of loving all humankind, of welcoming 'the other,' have to be accompanied by the hard work of actually welcoming a human being into a real place. Both Calvin and Wesley addressed aspects of the meaning of neighbor and stranger. For Calvin, the obligation to care for the stranger was 'a mutual obligation between all men.' His more universal motivations for care were directed to a very universal interpretation of the neighbor —'the whole human race.' In addressing the question, 'Who is my neighbor?' Calvin asserted that 'Christ has shown in the parable of the Samaritan that the term 'neighbor' includes even the most remote person (Luke 10:36),' and therefore 'we are not expected to limit the precept of love to those in close relationships.' For Calvin, 'to make any person our neighbour, therefore, it is enough that he be a man; for it is not in our power to blot out our common nature.' The parable of the Good Samaritan, Calvin believed, conveyed the truth that 'the greatest stranger is our neighbour, because God has bound all men together, for the purpose of assisting each other.' (Pohl, 76)
- **Seeing our own need:** "John Chrysostom stressed the importance of respect and humility in offering hospitality, criticizing those who 'think themselves superior to the recipients, and oftentimes despise them for the attention given to them.' Here Chrysostom identifies a particularly difficult problem in ministry: that practitioners, while offering a service, can come to disrespect those who receive it, simply because of their weakness and need. Chrysostom also recognized the terrible power of those with resources who could choose to humiliate even as they provided help. His insight offers appropriate warning to contemporary practitioners to consider the destructive aspects of too-rigorous needs tests that can seem designed to shame and embarrass applicants...Sensitive to the disrespect implicit in insisting on knowing all the details of someone's life before helping them, Chrysostom warned that...even if persons were

robbers or murderers, they still deserved ‘a loaf and a few pence,’ because God caused the sun to rise on them like everyone else. If Christ forgave and healed those who had injured him and welcomed into paradise those who had scorned him, how could Christians neglect even a starving murderer, Chrysostom wondered...In a sermon written a few years before his death, Wesley reflected on the social distance that insulated those who could help from those in need: ‘One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor is because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is that [according to the common observation] one part of the world does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know, they keep out of the way of knowing it—and then plead their voluntary ignorance as an excuse for their hardness of heart.’” (Pohl 69-70, 76).

- **Dropping the agendas:** “Wesley recognized the dangers of religious exclusivism for basic human rights and civil justice; for him, benevolence did not require conformity. Christians have a significant stake in being able to maintain distinctions while not allowing differences to be translated into liabilities in terms of basic rights, entitlements, and protections. It is critical to have the freedom to define a Christian identity and Christian community with distinctive beliefs and practices. But, to welcome strangers into a distinctly Christian environment without coercing them into conformity requires that their basic well-being not be dependent on sharing certain commitments. When basic well-being is under attack by the larger society, Christians have a responsibility to welcome endangered persons into their lives, churches, and communities....” (Pohl, 82)
- **Recognizing our limits:** “Hospitality will never be free from difficulty, but to sustain the practice, it is crucial to consider the well-being of hosts as well as guests. It is here we quickly encounter struggles with limits and boundaries because physical and emotional strength, space, food, and other resources are finite. While God often supplies these miraculously, hosts still must make hard choices about how to distribute resources, expend energy, and focus ministry. A number of years ago I was part of a church that decided to make hospitality central to its identity and life. We welcomed hundreds of refugees and many local poor and homeless people into our lives and worship. We shared homes, church, finances, meals, and energy. We attempted to respond to every person’s need. It was an incredibly fruitful and blessed time. Within only a few years, however, the church itself had collapsed under the weight of ministry, the leaders worn out from the unrelenting numbers of needy strangers, the parishioners wary of any further commitments. We were unwilling to close the door, to tell anyone there was no room...Sometimes, as the numbers or the frequency of guests increase, hosts find themselves stretched to their limits. Energy, resources, space, identity, and cohesion of the family or the community are strained. Faced with such pressures, host communities either work out guidelines or give up hospitality, or the community itself gradually disintegrates... Communities struggle with boundaries and they struggle without them.” (Pohl, 127-129)
- **Protecting everyone involved:** “In responding to the needs of the stranger/guest, hospitality sometimes intensified the vulnerability of powerless persons already in the community, especially in the family. Historically, hospitality did not function as a critique of distorted family relations or hierarchy, and at times it aggravated and justified injustices. This is an important feature of two Old Testament stories and the later commentaries on them—the account of Lot’s willingness to sacrifice his daughters for the well-being of his male guests (Gen. 19) and the account of the concubine who was not treated as guest or as family member,

but rather offered to a hostile crowd in place of her master (Judg. 19). Although commentaries on hospitality provided piercing critiques of exclusionary practices in certain settings, they did not address domination and exclusion within families. This should warn us against overlooking the protection and well-being of those closest to us and the vulnerable ones among us as we offer hospitality to strangers.” (Pohl, 79)

- **Acknowledging Complexity:** “Some of the original concerns of hospitality were related to providing safety and refuge to persecuted, endangered, or needy persons. Today hospitality, rights, and entitlements are separate, and they should be. Requiring particular commitments or beliefs in order for people to receive material help or protection is very dangerous; some boundaries are properly removed for the sake of fundamental human well-being. On the other hand, entitlements and rights are necessary but not sufficient for human well-being. Although persons need provision, they also need connection to living communities; otherwise, they remain anonymous and vulnerable. We need a constant, complex interaction between identity-defining, bounded communities and a larger community with minimal boundaries that offers basic protection of individuals.” (Pohl, 83)
- **Maintaining welcome and distinction:** “The wideness of God’s mercy and the generosity of God’s welcome must frame our thinking about limits and boundaries...Jesus and the stranger stand outside, asking our communities to enlarge their borders and to share their resources. As we welcome the poor, the stranger, or the marginal person, they help us to remember that each of us is an alien and a stranger, welcome only by God’s generous invitation. The practice of hospitality challenges the boundaries of a community while it simultaneously depends on that community’s identity to make a space that nourishes life. Sometimes welcome must be limited and distinctions made, however, if only for the sake of other guests or members already within the community. The amount of space available and the physical and emotional capacity of the hosts and guests impose certain limits. For example, hospitable families must face the challenge of balancing their commitment to welcome with their responsibility both to preserve the marital bond and to care for their own children...Edith Schaeffer of L’Abri Fellowship captures some of the tension with which many practitioners live when she writes that ‘because there are more people than we have time or strength to see personally and care for, it is imperative to remember that it is not sinful to be finite and limited.’” (Pohl, 129-132).
- **A warning:** “Calvin wrote that it was crucial to relieve those who were truly in need, and also that it was entirely appropriate to make inquiries regarding the circumstances of persons in need. Without some scrutiny and discernment, he worried that the boldest poor would take everything. However, Calvin’s further warning speaks powerfully to every discussion about deserving and undeserving strangers: ‘Let us beware that we seek not cover for our stinginess under the shadow of prudence.’ Inquiry should never be ‘too exacting’; it should be done with a ‘humane heart, inclined to pity and compassion.’” (Pohl, 148)
- **Having the right goals:** “Colossians 1:19–20 is a profoundly important passage for the process of poverty alleviation: For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. In this passage, Jesus Christ is described as the reconciler of the entire universe. To reconcile means to put things into a right relationship again, restoring them to what God created them to be. Given that poverty is rooted in broken relationships, the fact that Jesus Christ is reconciling all things is truly good news for

the poor, a group that includes all of us. Note that Christ's reconciliation entails more than simply beaming our souls up out of this world into some ghostlike state. On the contrary, Christ is reconciling all things, transforming whole people, both bodies and souls. And it doesn't stop there, for Christ is reconciling communities, nature, cultures, institutions, and systems. Yes, He cares about people's souls, but He also cares about hunger, sickness, racism, homelessness, mental illness, spousal abuse, electric bills, and rent payments. How much does He care? Enough to be tortured on a cross so that He could conquer these problems...Our job is not to alleviate poverty! Rather, we are called to be ambassadors of His reconciliation, proclaiming and demonstrating what ultimately only He can do (2 Corinthians 5:18–20). Yes, we are participants in His work, but we are not the authors of that work. We cannot change broken people, nor can we change a broken world. But Christ is in the process of changing both, and He gives us the incredible privilege of being the instruments He uses to accomplish His mission.” (Excerpts from “Helping without Hurting in Church Benevolence”)

- **A Call to Humility:** “We must always operate out of a gospel-centered humility, reminding ourselves that we too are broken and need Christ's ongoing work in our own lives. We need this gospel-centered humility to avoid being condescending, to be a good listener, and to express warmth and patience...Don't forget that you might be the client. God might have sent that person to sanctify you. Satan is at war with God, which puts him at war with human beings as God's image-bearers (Ephesians 6:10–12). Since the inability to fully experience image-bearing is at the core of poverty, Satan is pro-poverty. He has a vested interest in attacking poor people and any ministry that seeks to truly help them...Because poverty is deeply rooted in broken relationships, lasting and sustained progress usually requires a longer-term, focused effort, not a quick-fix, shotgun approach. Hence, given limited human and financial resources, determining where your resources can truly make a lasting difference is part of sound stewardship....In addition, a blueprint approach tends to exacerbate the harmful dynamic in which the materially non-poor “play god,” speaking and acting in ways that confirm the sense of inferiority and shame that many low-income people are already feeling...In contrast, a participatory approach asks “What do you believe you should do to improve our life, how do you think you should do it, and what actions will you take to pursue positive change?” (Excerpts from “Helping without Hurting in Church Benevolence”)

### **Quotes related to setting boundaries:**

- “Boundaries help define what a household, family, church, or community holds precious. However, the modern world is deeply ambivalent about boundaries and community. Although we yearn for home and a place to belong, often we find ourselves more comfortable with empty space where we can ‘sing our own songs’ and pursue our own plans. Hospitality is fundamentally connected to place—to a space bounded by commitments, values, and meanings. Part of the difficulty in recovering hospitality is connected with our uncertainty about community and particular identity. Hosts value their ‘place’ and are willing to share it; strangers desire welcome into places that contain a rich life of meaning and relationships. By welcoming strangers, however, the community's identity is always being challenged and revised, if only slightly. While this is often enriching, it can occasionally stretch a place beyond recognition. Within much of the biblical tradition, there are tensions between living a distinctive life, holy to the Lord, and the command to welcome strangers. Their relationship is



best understood through the theological framework of covenant—bonds of responsibility and faithfulness connecting guests, hosts, and God. Only in this context can we adequately understand the simultaneous practices of inclusion and separation. Faithful believers who practice hospitality understand themselves to be in a relationship with God whose worship requires holiness, a distinct identity, and attention to the needs of others... Two interconnected concerns in Israelite law—that of protecting and including the weak, and that of maintaining loyalty to God alone—are not separable because God’s holiness includes care for the weak. Laws concerning care for aliens were closely connected to themes of covenantal love and holiness. Israel was told to love the alien in its midst, to care for the sojourner as it cared for fellow Israelites in need, and to permit certain aliens to participate in its religious life. On the other hand, foreign elements that might subvert undivided commitment to Israel’s God were rigorously excluded.” (Pohl, 136-137)

- “The first generations of Christian believers struggled to define minimal boundaries that would allow good relations among converts from different cultural, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds. Certain socially significant boundaries were not to be viewed as relevant in the new community: the usual dividing lines between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female no longer applied ‘in Christ’ (Gal. 3:28). We are given some insight into one of the major struggles the first Christians faced over the issue of circumcising male Gentile converts. Especially significant to Jewish identity, circumcision was declared irrelevant for Christian identity (Gal. 5:6; 6:15). Paul argued in Galatians that if, in fact, Gentiles were to adopt the practice of circumcision, it would make Christ of no benefit to them (Gal. 5:2). However, the issue remained troublesome and was debated by the council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–21). Finally, the leaders concluded that ‘we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood’ (Acts 15:19–20). This was the minimum that Jewish Christians could live with—these minimal boundaries would allow social relations between the two groups. In the greater context of God’s ‘welcome,’ there was substantial freedom in observing or not observing dietary rules and sacred days, as long as such freedom did not cause weak members to stumble (Rom. 14:3, 13). Boundaries were also important in protecting the young communities from false teaching and grave misuses of their hospitality. Every person was to be welcomed; if believers by their life or doctrine revealed themselves to be ‘false’ or immoral, then hospitality was withdrawn. In 2 John, believers are warned that if anyone comes to them with a teaching different from the teaching of Christ, ‘Do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; for he who greets him shares his wicked work’ (2 John 9–11). Just as welcome given to true believers is welcome to both them and their message, and serves to support them and the spread of the message, hospitality to false teachers implicates the hosts in their ‘wicked work.’ Hospitality provided false teachers with material and social support, allowing them to undermine authority and morality, and to cause divisions (Jude 4, 8, 12, 19).” (Pohl, 137-138)
- “Later, in the monastic tradition, the ‘two-fold theme of reception and separation’ remains strong. Both are defined in relation to Christ: Separation and hospitality are therefore two manifestations of the same love: following Christ and receiving Christ. The following draws us out of the world, but there again he comes to us under the appearances of those who are in the world, and we receive him. Then the love which has provoked the separation is verified in



hospitality. In the history of Christian monasticism, ‘tensions accompanied every attempt to reconcile spiritual life with the reception of guests.’ Although guests potentially softened ascetic disciplines and introduced false teaching, they were to be received as Christ and to be provided with care. Both separation from the world and welcome to the stranger were undertaken for Christ’s sake.” (Pohl, 139)

- “Boundaries or guidelines protect guests, maintain communal identity and commitments, and preserve workers. They are necessary in defining who we are, and in providing the kind of ordering necessary to life. While we value the uniqueness and importance of every person, we should also be able to acknowledge difference. Just as families shape their households with varying degrees of freedom and structure, so in hospitality, hosts must find an appropriate balance of boundaries and freedom that allows them to sustain the practice. Boundaries, restrictions, and guidelines will vary with the kinds of guests, type of setting, needs of hosts, and the availability of resources. Jean Vanier suggests that communities who welcome strangers should ask for minimal conformity and provide maximal space for diversity. In his experience, if a community states its commitments, rules, and expectations clearly from the beginning, some people will choose to exclude themselves without being denied welcome from the community. Boundaries are an important part of making a place physically and psychologically safe. Many needy strangers (e.g., refugees, homeless people, abused women and children) come from living in chronic states of fear. A safe place gives them a chance to relax, heal, and reconstruct their lives. If hospitality involves providing a safe place—where a person is protected and respected—then certain behaviors are precluded and certain pragmatic structures follow. Violent actions obviously make a place unsafe, but so can violent words. Restrictions regarding alcohol and drug use provide certain safeguards. Minimal orderliness and cleanliness give people security and a sense of respect.” (Pohl, 139-140)

### Quotes related to the larger context:

- **Advent:** Word with Latin roots, meaning ‘coming.’ Christians of earlier generations spoke of ‘the advent of our Lord’ and of ‘His second advent.’ The first phrase refers to God’s becoming incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. The latter phrase speaks of Jesus’ second coming. In a second sense ‘advent’ designates a period before Christmas when Christians prepare for the celebration of Jesus’ birth. This practice may have begun in some churches as early as the late fourth century. Advent began as a time of fasting. Sermons focused on the wonder of the Incarnation. By the Middle Ages four Sundays had become the standard length of the Advent season. Since then, Advent has been considered to be the beginning of the church year.” Fred A. Grissom and Steve Bond, “Advent,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 31.
- **Confusion about hospitality:** Today when we think of hospitality, we don’t think first of welcoming strangers. We picture having family and friends over for a pleasant meal. Or we think of the “hospitality industry,” of hotels and restaurants which are open to strangers as long as they have money or credit cards. Perhaps large churches come to mind, with their “hospitality committees” that coordinate the coffee hour, greet visitors, or help with the parking. In any case, today most understandings of hospitality have a minimal moral component—hospitality is a nice extra if we have the time or the resources, but we rarely view it as a spiritual obligation or as a dynamic expression of vibrant Christianity. (Pohl, 4)

## **Bibliography:**

- Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).
- The Lexham Bible Dictionary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016)
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- Ed Robb, Making Room: Sharing the Love of Christmas (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020).
- Steve Corbett, Brian Fikkert, and Katie Casselberry, Helping without Hurting in Church Benevolence: A Practical Guide to Walking with Low-Income People (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2015).

**Other Articles/Songs/Videos:** Please ask us about many other resources.

## **Direction for discussion leaders:**

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the discussion around 30mins. Go for a single, not a home run.
3. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

## **Let’s prepare for our sermon from Luke 10:29-37.**

- As you read these passages, listen quietly so the Holy Spirit can suggest areas where you need to repent, change, and grow. Ask yourself, “Who am I most like in this story?”

## **Let’s apply our sermon from Luke 10:29-37.**

- Which character are you most often like in the parable of the Good Samaritan? What qualifies people for help in your mind, and do you tend to view helping others through a humanitarian or religious lens? Please explain your answers.
- What are some agendas and distractions that keep you from sticking with people for as long as it takes God to transform them? How might it help you to develop better spiritual habits and to work more closely with your church family?

## **Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...**

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded)

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://toddengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://toddengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>