

APPENDIX A

SIX-WEEK SMALL GROUP GUIDE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The goal of *The Simplest Way to Change the World* is not necessarily to get you into a group, but to help you walk with others as you seek to make hospitality a way of life. However, groups do tend to be a great framework for community and application to take place. It only makes sense to discuss and process these ideas with other people with whom you are doing life.

The hope is for missional communities, small groups, Sunday school classes, church-plant core teams, church staffs, and even entire churches to work through the book together and allow it to shape the way they leverage their homes and lives for the sake of the gospel.

This study guide is intended to be a supportive resource for any leader or group facilitator. We have provided a “Tips for Leading” resource and then a simple, straightforward guide for the six-week study.

TIPS FOR LEADING THIS SMALL GROUP

1. Journal through the assigned reading. Consult commentaries, such as the Bible in Easy English (www.easyenglish.info), to add insight to the original meaning and context of the passages.

2. Pray. Answer all the questions from each week as part of your prep work. Then pray that God will awaken ideas for how each person in the group can make hospitality a way of life.

3. Leave room for other voices. The first level of group conversation is you talking to the group. The next level is that the group talks back to you. The third level is the group talks to each other. When God talks to people, the group is functioning on the highest and healthiest level.

You talk > We talk back > We talk to each other > God talks to us

4. Start your formal group time by connecting. Be creative and have fun. Give the group something easy to talk about before moving into “Heart Matters.”

5. Watch the clock. Because of the open-ended approach to the questions, the deeper the conversations the greater the time challenge.

- Clearly identify your end time at the beginning of the formal meeting.
- Let people answer questions one-on-one and in triads.
- Decide in advance how much time you will spend on each section.
- Designate a group timekeeper.
- Keep moving. Conclude the meeting before people become aware of the clock.

6. Review the past week’s debrief. Coach your group toward action. Reviewing next steps from the last gathering raises accountability for hearing God and following through. Have participants pray for each other concerning their next steps.

7. Become a great listener. Listen to what God says to you about others. Listen beyond what is normal and comfortable for you.

8. Be creative. Anything can get boring, even highly engaging approaches to group learning. If you are not creative, find someone in your group who is and let that person help you.

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 1

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE READ:

- *The Simplest Way to Change the World*, chapters 1 and 2
- Romans 12:1–2

HEART MATTERS

- How do you view your home? Are you more prone to view it as a place of retreat or as a weapon for the gospel? Why?
- Why do most of us assume that ordinary steps of obedience are insignificant? What biblical evidence do we have that this is not true?
- What assumptions about hospitality did you bring with you as you began this study?

SOUND BITES

“Many Christians have bought into the cultural view that our homes are our personal and private fortresses. In our combined twenty-plus years of pastoring, we have observed that the way a typical Christian thinks about their home isn’t all that different from how a typical non-Christian thinks: *It’s the place I eat, sleep, relax, and entertain myself—by myself*” (p. 18).

“When it comes to pursuing biblical hospitality as a way of life, we immediately happen upon a major obstacle: almost everything in our culture is set up to hinder us from pursuing it. Much like those

two young fish, we are so pulled by the drudgery of our everyday lives that we fail to stay attuned to God's call on us to be missional. Our default is to swim along with the current of our culture, not giving a single thought about the water that surrounds our every move and pushes us in the opposite direction of intentional mission" (p. 29).

ZOOM IN

Read Romans 12:1–2.

- How does Paul say a Christian should relate to the pattern of this world?
- Why does the mission of a Christian's life necessitate countercultural living? What happens if you consistently follow the world's values rather than God's values?
- How is hospitality a countercultural practice?
- Which verse did God want you to see/hear/apply?

DEBRIEF

- Which of the four cultural currents (isolation, retreat, entertainment, busyness) that work against hospitality hinder you from using your home as a weapon for the gospel?
- What changes would you need to make for hospitality to become a way of life for you?

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 2

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE
READ:

- *The Simplest Way to Change the World*, chapters 3 and 4
- 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

HEART MATTERS

- Is “hospitable” a virtue you typically use to speak about God? Why is the work of Jesus a demonstration of God’s hospitality?

- When Christians practice hospitality they are modeling the heart of God. How does this serve as the primary motivation for hospitality?

- How has your relationship with God been influenced by the care and hospitality of others? What impacted you most about the love of others?

SOUND BITES

“Throughout the saga of history, God consistently initiates relationship. He is a gracious host, constantly welcoming in wayward sinners who deserve His wrath—a people whose only hope is that He would show them undeserved hospitality” (p. 41).

“After all, a hospitable God will create a hospitable people to represent Him in every age throughout history” (p. 45).

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ZOOM IN

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17–21.

- What does it mean to be reconciled to God? How is this a picture of God's hospitality?

- What is the mission of a Christian, based on this passage? How should this mission shape your life?

- What does your current lifestyle communicate about God's character? If you are a Christian, imagine yourself as a walking billboard for the gospel. What are you saying to the world?

DEBRIEF

- How have your experiences with the church shaped how you view its people? Are you more apt to think of the church as a place of love and hospitality or a place of judgment and disunity?

- In a time when the church is increasingly marginalized and known for negative stereotypes, how can a return to biblical hospitality change its reputation?

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 3

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE READ:

- *The Simplest Way to Change the World*, chapters 5 and 6
- Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–37

HEART MATTERS

- What evidence do you see that your friends are longing for relationships with others? How does this longing present an incredible opportunity for you to practice biblical hospitality?
- Why is it easier to disagree with others from a distance or behind a keyboard than it is to love our actual neighbors? How might genuine, Christlike love provide a context in which you might have more meaningful conversations?
- In what ways is God calling you to ask, “What if?” How is God drawing your heart to invest in particular people or places?

SOUND BITES

“When we are included, invited, cared for, recognized, and enfolded into the warmth of relationship, something in our psyches knows that this is the type of connection we were designed for. This inner knowledge reflects the statement God made over Adam in Genesis 2:18, that it is not good for man to be alone” (p. 56).

“While hospitality has always been a primary way God has advanced His mission, our culture in particular presents a remarkable

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context for practicing it to go viral. People who are far from Jesus need to be recognized, included, and invited into village-like relationships” (p. 57).

ZOOM IN

Read Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–37.

- What descriptions of hospitality do you observe in the life of the first church?
- How do you observe these same marks in the life of the church to which you belong?
- How are you personally working to foster these marks in the church?

DEBRIEF

- What one step toward practicing hospitality have you taken since you began reading this book? How did it go? What observations did you make about the importance of hospitality?
- What happens if hospitality is not accompanied by “our lives as well”? Why is it essential that we open our homes and our lives to others?
- How does your view of your home change if you see it as a hospital designed for care and healing?

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 4

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE
READ:

- *The Simplest Way to Change the World*, chapters 7 and 8
- Ephesians 2

HEART MATTERS

- What excuses do you make in order to avoid practicing biblical hospitality? What truths do you need to remember in order to counter these objections?

- Who can you team up with in order to begin practicing a lifestyle of hospitality? Obviously, if you are married, this is the place to begin. But what other neighbors or church members could you partner with as well? How could this make this practice easier?

- Did you implement any of the practical steps outlined in the chapters you read this week? If so, how did these help you practice a hospitable lifestyle? What other steps could you take to build “hospitality reminders” into your life?

SOUND BITES

“The first thing to remember on this journey is the nature of God. He is sovereign, meaning He rules over all things. He orchestrates all things for His purposes, including who lives, works, and plays near you. You may not consider these people as gifts from God because they have been part of your life for so long that they’ve

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become a backdrop. You are prone to miss them. But every day you pass people who could be blessed through your hospitality” (p. 93).

“Meeting your neighbors may not always be easy, but it is possible! Once you get into the habit of identifying those you can invite into your world, you can move on to building rhythms for making hospitality a way of life” (p. 101).

ZOOM IN

Read Ephesians 2.

- What all did God do for sinful humans, based on this chapter?
- What did God do to bring about the unity of His people? How does practicing biblical hospitality foster this unity?
- What steps can you take to demonstrate that all people—regardless of color, financial background, or political leanings—are worthy of love and respect? How can you demonstrate this through opening your home?

DEBRIEF

- What steps could you take to initiate a conversation with someone new this week?
- What is one creative step you could take to practice biblical hospitality? What would you need to do in order to make this creative idea a reality?

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 5

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE READ:

- *The Simplest Way to Change the World*, chapters 9 and 10
- 1 John 4:7–21

HEART MATTERS

- Which of the weekly, monthly, or yearly rhythms presented in chapter 9 is most appealing to you? Which ones do you think would work best in the places where you live, work, and play?
- What normal events could you turn into a means of practicing hospitality? Which event is the next one on the calendar—maybe a kid’s birthday party or a holiday? What can you do to infuse this event with purpose and mission?

SOUND BITES

“Since we seek to be hospitable people, and not merely people who practice hospitality, we need to find ways to build our lives around this goal. Sure, it will take time. But with a little thought and practice, those rhythms will become habits, and habits become a way of life” (p. 103–4).

“Our mission, as ambassadors of Christ, is to share the good news of Jesus’ work through His life, death, burial, and resurrection. This is the true hope for the world. As a result, we can’t keep from speaking the gospel to those we love—or at least we should not be able to” (p. 119).

ZOOM IN

Read 1 John 4:7–21.

- What do you observe about God from this passage? How should God's character be reflected in the lives of His people?
- How should your salvation motivate you to live a hospitable life?
- How can the love of Christians for other Christians allow outsiders to catch a glimpse of the gospel? How might these same relationships cause you to neglect showing hospitality to those who are far from God?
- What steps can you take to open your community with Christians to those who are far from God?

DEBRIEF

- Which of the practical tips for moving a conversation to the gospel comes most naturally for you? Which of these tips is most challenging? What steps could you take to grow in these weaker areas?
- How does your view of mission and hospitality change with the knowledge that God goes before you, lives inside you, and accomplishes the work for you? How should these truths encourage and motivate you?

SMALL GROUP STUDY WEEK 6

BEFORE THE GROUP GATHERS, HAVE EVERYONE READ:

- *The Simplest Way to Change the World*, chapters 11 and 12
- Revelation 21

HEART MATTERS

- Which types of people mentioned in chapter 11 are currently in your life? How can you take an active step to show them biblical hospitality?
- What feelings do these big steps of biblical hospitality bring to mind? Do you find yourself overwhelmed with the thought of having someone in your home long-term or even adopting a child? What are your objections? What truths do you need to remember in order to counter these objections?

SOUND BITES

“There is a great need for orphan care around the world and also in our own backyards. Christians should lead the charge to be diligently hospitable to children in need. This is a beautiful and compelling act of hospitality that puts God’s lavish hospitality to us on full display” (p. 138).

“Turning our ordinary homes into weapons for the gospel and opening our normal lives to welcome others as Christ welcomed us is a calling that every single one of us can do. No Christian is above or below this call to practice biblical hospitality as a way of life, and

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no other practice so clearly and simply puts the welcoming grace of our God on display” (p. 145).

ZOOM IN

Read Revelation 21.

- How is all of human history going to end?
- In what ways does this truth motivate you to live on mission today?
- How are the pictures John paints in this chapter a portrait of God’s hospitality?

DEBRIEF

- What changes has God brought into your life as a result of this study?
- How can you continue to take steps forward now that you are finished reading?
- In what ways can you encourage other members of your church or small group to embrace the mission of biblical hospitality?