

Before next time...

- **As a community**, we not only speak the gospel, we live it through hospitality and deeds of love and kindness. This session's 'before next time' is to plan an event as a group to which you can invite your non-Christian friends and work colleagues. This is an opportunity for your friends to spend time with your Christian community, and for you as a community to practice hospitality.
- **Hospitality in the Bible** is commanded (Rom 12:13, 1 Peter 4:9) and was expected of God's people - both towards each other and to outsiders too. When hospitality is done the Bible way it is generous, uncomplaining, loving and refreshing. It doesn't make guests feel like 'guests' but like members of the family. Hospitality helps people to feel secure, warm, safe and loved.
- As you plan your event think about atmosphere, the process of welcoming guests and putting them at their ease, making sure Christians don't end up just talking and mixing with Christians (!!)- everything that will make your guests feel comfortable. This event will involve time, planning and prayer, so build that into your planning.

Here are some ideas for events - but don't feel restricted, use your imagination!!

- Watch a sport - live or on TV
- Play a sport or go on a walk together
- Run a games afternoon or evening
- Hold a coffee morning for a local charity, which your group runs
- Go to an event (e.g. theatre, art gallery etc)
- Plan a trip out (to the beach?!, to a musical concert - but make sure there's time for food and chatting too!)
- Organise a meal at someone's home
- Get together to watch a special event (e.g. an election or an awards ceremony)
- If for whatever reason you cannot plan an event, then pick a Sunday service for your group to attend together and invite your friends to it. Have a meal together after or coffee together before

PRAY for God to use this event to build relationships - it could be the first of many!

Session 4 Community The Context For Change

Recap and Bible Study

Last time we saw that nothing is more fundamental than God to our happiness, meaning in life, identity. All too often though we create idols which lead us to find our happiness in them. Not only is this wrong but it also leads to our hearts becoming enslaved.

As we look now at the idea of a Christian community, keep in mind that idolatry is also one of the problems we face as we relate to others...

Would anyone would like to raise anything from the 'before next time'?

- Read together Philippians 2:1-11

1. Looking at v2-4 what seems to be the problem in the church in Philippi? (You might like to look at 4:2-3 too)
2. What are the four grounds for unity and humility that Paul lists in v1? How does each led to both unity and humility?
3. What attitude should be ours (v5)? What do we learn about Jesus' attitude in v6-11? In what way is Jesus a model/not a model for us?
4. Think about the differences that there are in your group. On what grounds could you separate and divide? What is the one thing that unites you?

Get someone to read 1 Peter 2:9-12 aloud and then...

Watch the DVD

Use this space to jot anything down you find helpful from Tim Keller

Was there anything from the DVD which was new to you, or which you thought was particularly striking? Anything you were not sure about?

1. Tim said, "We are a 'holy nation' - different, distinct from the world and the people around us. And yet at the same time, we're supposed to be a 'royal priesthood' - deeply involved in the lives of the world and the people around us." Do you feel that you are part of the sort of community described in the DVD? If not, why not? What could you do to make this happen?
2. Tim said, "We will not know God, change deeply, nor win the world apart from community." To what extent have you experienced this?
3. What practices make a good, strong, healthy Christian community? Brainstorm practical ways by which your group can deepen its life together as community.

4. How can we love people we do not naturally like?

5. Look at the following list derived from Romans 12

Love honestly, speaking out against what is wrong (v9)

Love even unattractive people, because they are brothers and sisters (v10)

Love by making others feel honoured and valuable (v10)

Love by being generous in practical ways with your home, money and time (v13)

Love without bitterness. Don't pay others back or get resentful of others (v14)

Love with empathy. Be willing to get emotionally involved with others (v15)

Love with humility. Be willing to associate with people who differ from you (v16)

In which areas do you as a group tend to be weakest and why? What steps could you take to improve?

Spend time in prayer

- pray for your life together as a community of God's people
- pray for one another - in the particular struggles you face
- remember to pray for each other during the week - and drop a note?