

# WEEKLY REFLECTION

Rarely do we consider community a spiritual discipline, as community is part and parcel of what it means to be the church. Community is meant to be a privilege, and so it is as we find new relationships in Christ and belong to a new spiritual family. There is an intimacy that should be present with our brothers and sisters in Christ, as Jesus died to bring reconciliation with God and with man. But the thing is, people are messy! Unlike God, who is only good, there are good and bad sides to every person. Even we ourselves cannot know fully how deep our treachery runs. (Ps. 19:12; Jer. 17:9)

Yet Jesus' heart is for His people to be one, just as He and the Father as one. (Jn. 17:20-21) The apostle Paul emphasizes in his letters to the church the importance of loving one another and extending grace to each other. Apart from seeking out a Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy to walk closely with—someone who invests in us, walks alongside us, and whom we can pour into—Paul calls us to the disciplines of hospitality (Rom. 12:13) and service.

It is hard to be hospitable, especially in Hong Kong where time and energy are at a premium. The last thing we want to do after a long day of work is to be around other people and to go out of our way to love on them, but that is what God calls us to. He calls us beyond mere performance of hospitable acts to having hospitable spirits, such that all who enter into the family of God feel warmly welcomed. Similarly, we are asked to serve one another in the spirit of servanthood, humbling ourselves the way that Christ first humbled and emptied Himself for us. Whoever wants to be first must be last, and so it is as we aim to “love one another with brotherly affection [and] outdo one another in showing honor.” (v. 10)

# QUESTIONS

## QUESTION ONE:

The concept of hospitality can be described using the Greek word “*philoxenia*”—meaning “friend to the stranger.” This shows us that hospitality should be practiced not just with friends and family, but also with those that we do not yet know. Hospitality is not just the act of welcoming people on a Sunday morning or inviting them to spend time with us at our homes, but making space for them in our hearts as well.

Can you recall an experience that you had of outstanding hospitality? What about it made it so memorable, and how did it make you feel? Why is it so important for Christians to be hospitable, and how might the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32 inspire you to grow in this respect?

## QUESTION TWO:

Philippians 2:1-8, titled “Christ’s Example of Humility” in the ESV translation, is a key passage for us to reflect on as we take actionable steps towards servanthood.

What does the passage tell us about the heart of servanthood? What are some of the motivators that we should have as we look to serve others? When was the last time we served someone? What is the attitude that we have when we serve others, and how is it similar or different to what is described in the passage?

## QUESTION THREE:

The discipline of community can be a difficult one indeed, especially as people can remind us of unhealed or old relational hurts and wounds. While we may want to hide from others and avoid community as much as possible, author John Ortberg writes that “We generally sin alone, but we heal together.”

What are some of the difficulties you might have with practicing the discipline of community? What might be behind some of these difficulties, and how can your life group be walking alongside you to encourage and empower you to be more disciplined and intentional in the way that you love like Christ does?