

Being Fruitful: Practicing Radical Hospitality

Study/Reflection sheet for Week 1: Oct. 17, 2010

What You'll need: A Bible; A Copy of the book **Five Practices of Fruitful Living** (available at the Maritime Christian Book Room); A Pen; And 15 minutes a day!

What You'll need to do: Read these passages aloud. Take the time to look them up and place them into context. Then spend a minute or two reflecting on what you've read: write down your thoughts if you need to; ask questions of the text – or of yourself and current practice; then let these thoughts percolate through your mind or heart for the rest of the day.

Reflection Texts:

"Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." (Revelation 3:20)

Jesus said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35b)

"We love because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

"Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." (Romans 15:7 – read all of Romans 15:1-11)

"By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God..." (Ephesians 2:8 – read all of Ephesians 2:1-10 for the whole passage)

Read the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) – focus particularly on the reaction of the father, and then the elder son, as they welcomed the 'lost son' home.

Reflection Statement: *"Even with many years of Church experience, many of us may find ourselves still standing on the front porch of the life that is possible in Christ because we've never fully entered in. Or to change the metaphor, we may have left God standing on the front porch of our lives without fully receiving Him. We've left undiscovered the "immeasurable riches of God's grace, "abundant life," and "a peace that surpasses all understanding.""* P. 39 (**Five Practices of Fruitful Living**; Robert Schnase)

For a Christian hospitality must first be rooted in being able to receive. Sounds strange – but think about it: if you cannot – or haven't – experienced grace, love, welcome, acceptance, hospitality, then how can you even begin to offer it to someone else? *"Accept that you are accepted. The first step toward fruitful living involves saying 'Yes' to God's unconditional love toward [you]."* (p. 40) Say 'Yes.' Open your heart: hospitality toward God's love changes everything.

Focus questions (Answer one a day or as time allows):

1. How good are you at receiving gifts? What does this say about your comfort level with grace?
2. Have you experienced a time in your life when love changed you? Did it happen suddenly or was it a gradual awareness? How did it change you?
3. Would you say that you are "accepted"? Do you know the freedom that comes with knowing that you are known, loved, and accepted or do you still feel that you're on the outside looking in? Read Acts 2:37-39 and consider 'opening the door' to your heart.
4. If applicable, how has the gift of God's unconditional love changed you?
5. What obstacles or distractions keep you from fully enjoying God's love? How do your present patterns of living invite God in or cause you to keep God out?
6. When did you last evaluate your relationship with God? What steps can you take to reshape your life to achieve greater openness?
7. In light of this new understanding of *hospitality*: that we must first receive God love into our lives before we can extend God's love to others – how might you start extending it to others?

Closing Prayer: *O God, you have welcomed us and shown us how much you value us and love us through the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to accept the gift of your loving grace. May we offer others the same welcome we have received through your grace, remembering that it is your amazing grace that enables us to reach out in love to others as we relearn the practice of Radical Hospitality. Amen.*

If you have any questions that might have been raised by this study, please feel free to contact me – Rev. Geoff Ross – by phone at 892-2839 or by email at geoffrey.ross@pei.aibn.com.

Starting Wednesday, October 27 there will be a Being Fruitful Brown-bag Lunch Discussion group in the Parlour from 12:00-1:00 – all are welcome!