



PREPARE MODULE #1

LEADER:: SMALL GROUPS | EASTSIDE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

COMPETENCY: Create an Environment that Makes People Feel Welcome, Wanted, and “At Home”

OBJECTIVE: Help your group to make friends and develop relationships that help them take next steps in following Jesus by creating an environment that makes people feel welcome, wanted, and “at home.”

ASSIGNMENTS:

- *Assignment 1 // Interview someone who makes people feel welcome, wanted, and “at home”*
- *Assignment 2 // Read Luke 19:1-10 and answer questions*
- *Assignment 3 // Read Welcome and Wanted section and answer questions*
- *Assignment 4 // Read “At Home” section, watch Refrigerator Rights video, and answer questions.*

ASSIGNMENT 1

Interview

Think about someone you know who makes people feel welcome, wanted, and “at home.” Ask them what they do and what motivates them to do it. Take notes:

ASSIGNMENT 2

Luke 19:1-10 (ESV)

[Jesus] entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I'll give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Zacchaeus was a Jew who collected taxes for the Roman Empire, which occupied Israel during Jesus' life. As such, he was seen as a traitor to his people. He was unwelcome and unwanted in Jewish society, but Jesus didn't care. Or perhaps more accurately, Jesus did care.

Jesus took the time to stop and talk with someone who society said should be ignored, and then goes a step further and visits Zacchaeus' home for dinner, in spite of the potential damage to his reputation.

There is so much to unpack in this story. We've already touched on the fact that being like Jesus means making the unwelcome and unwanted feel welcome.

The second thing we learn is that making people feel welcome and wanted doesn't require a lot of resources. Certainly, if we have a big house and lots of space, then we should invite people over for dinner. We should welcome people to come stay in our home. We should use the blessings God has given us to bless others, to make them feel welcome and wanted.

And frankly, even if we have a small house with a little bit of space, we should use it well. When Will Johnston, one of Eastside's staff members, and his wife Rachel lived in a 600 square foot apartment, they would invite people over. They hosted small groups, and one time they even had 11 people—none of whom they were related to—over for Thanksgiving dinner. They had to move the coffee table into the bedroom just to squeeze everyone in.

But what we see with Jesus is that he makes Zacchaeus feel welcome and wanted in his own home.

Jesus didn't have a place to call home. He didn't have a space to invite people into. But because of who he was and the way he made people feel, he made them feel welcomed and wanted even when they were in their own homes.

The third lesson we draw from this story is that making people feel welcome and wanted changes them. One of the key goals of small groups at Eastside is to help people follow Jesus, to help them take next steps in their faith, to help them grow to think, act, love, and live more like Jesus.

We see here that when Jesus makes Zacchaeus feel welcome and wanted, it changes Zacchaeus. Jesus doesn't tell him that he needs to give money to the poor. Jesus doesn't command him to pay back anything he had stolen. Jesus simply notices Zacchaeus, makes him feel welcome and wanted, loves him, and Zacchaeus responds by beginning to show that same love to others.

QUESTIONS:

1. *What was it about Jesus, the things He said and did, His personality traits, that made people feel welcomed and wanted?*
2. *Which of these traits do you possess? How about the person you interviewed in assignment 1? Which do you lack? What one or two of them will you be intentional about cultivating?*
3. *How can you leverage the resources God has given you—be they many or few—to make others feel welcome and wanted?*

ASSIGNMENT 3

Recently, Will Johnston, who we mentioned earlier, was driving from Chicago to Kansas City. Along the way it occurred to him that he didn't need to be in Kansas City until the next day, and that his godchildren and their parents—his good friends Josh and Kelly—lived in St. Louis, which was only about an hour and a half out of the way.

The problem was that nothing had been planned. Will called Josh at one in the afternoon to see if they would be up for a house guest that evening. If Will was going to make the detour to see them, he would be arriving about 4:30.

As it turns out, they were in the middle of a kitchen renovation, and there had been family coming and going. Josh, however, didn't even need to check in with Kelly before telling Will that they would love it if he spent the night. When someone asks if they can impose on you at the last minute and you're ecstatic about it, that is the sort of thing that makes someone feel welcome and wanted.

What Josh and Kelly didn't know when they invited Will to stay was that his trip to Chicago was unplanned. He had caught a last-minute flight to be with his dad who had been rushed to the hospital and needed open heart surgery. Stopping off to see old friends and read to his godchildren was exactly what Will needed.

We often aren't aware of what is going on below the surface in people's lives and don't realize until later—if ever—just how much we can impact people by making them feel welcome and wanted.

QUESTIONS:

1. *Jot down a list of times, places, and groups where you have felt welcome, wanted, and "at home." Are there any common threads running through those experiences?*

2. *Jot down a list of times, places, and groups where you have decidedly not felt welcome, wanted, and "at home." Are there any common threads running through those experiences?*

3. *What are one or two practical things you can do to make others feel welcome and wanted?*

ASSIGNMENT 4

We've talked about making people feel welcome and wanted, the next step is to help them feel at home. It's moving from, "We're glad you're here." to "You can be yourself here, and we'll still be glad you're here."

Check out this nine minute video from comedian, psychologist, and best-selling author Dr. Will Miller: youtu.be/9bqzyZm_soo?t=952 (watch 15:52-24:30)

Refrigerator rights are powerful. When someone has people with whom they have refrigerator rights, people with whom they feel at home, they're better able to deal with all of the stuff life throws at them, and they're more open to allowing someone to speak into their lives, to encourage, exhort, challenge, and inspire them to be more like Jesus.

