

Radical Hospitality

Learning how to love difficult people like Jesus did

Featuring Dr. Richard Beck

groups

INTRODUCTION

People who weren't like Jesus, liked Jesus. Why is that? If Jesus was the perfect, sinless Son of God, it seems like he would have inspired guilt and shame in the imperfect people with whom he interacted. But it was just the opposite. Imperfect people were drawn to Jesus. They couldn't get enough of him. That's because radical hospitality was a key component of his ministry?

So, why aren't imperfect people drawn to the church in the same way? Why don't people who aren't like Christians, like Christians?

Part of the reason is that Christians often struggle to understand the role we should play in society. We struggle to define the line between how to be in the world, but not of the world. Should we let culture influence us? Should we even participate in secular culture? Is it okay to watch that TV show or read that book? At what point does loving someone turn into condoning his or her behavior?

How do you accurately represent your faith to those around you? How do you engage with people on the margins of society?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were family dinners like for you growing up? How important was the dinner table as a gathering place for your family?
2. What did you think of Dr. Beck's explanation of the psychology of disgust? Is it difficult for you to believe that disgust influences the way you interact with other people? Why or why not?
3. During the video, Dr. Beck said, "When we start regulating our moral, spiritual, and church lives through the idiom of purity, the only way we're going to achieve that purity is by expelling unclean people from our midst." Have you ever seen a church or other group of people expel someone for not meeting their standards? Have you ever been expelled from a group?
4. Have you ever worried that being near or interacting with a particular person or group would "contaminate" you morally? If so, what did you do?
5. Read Matthew 9:9-13. In what ways do we tend to demand "sacrifice" from people who are different from us and make us feel uncomfortable?
6. Think of a person or group of people that stir feelings of disgust (discomfort, moral outrage, etc.) in you. In what ways are you tempted to demand sacrifice from that person in group? What would it look like for you to be radically hospitable to that person or group?



APPLYING WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

Our tendency is to reduce religion to a set of rules for attaining purity in the eyes of God. Too often, we think the goal of religion is to be set apart from anything that is morally unclean—to be set apart from the world around us. But Jesus turned that idea on its head. He said God desires mercy, not sacrifice. That is God's heart.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew 9:12–13

