

Week Three: Lost Son - WELCOME

“Who can I welcome home?”

Setting the Table

What is it?

“Setting the table” is about intentionally creating space in our lives for people who may be far from God or disconnected from the church. The father in Jesus' parable did not simply wait for his son to come home—when he saw him coming, he ran to meet him and welcomed him with joy. In the same way, we are called to move toward people with the love and welcome of Christ.

This isn't about inviting someone to church and hoping the pastor can reach them. It is about sharing our lives with people. It might mean inviting someone into our home for a meal, meeting a neighbor for coffee, inviting a coworker to lunch, or simply making time for someone who needs a friend.

How to do it:

- 1. Ask—Who is God putting on my heart?**

Take a few moments to think about the people God has placed around you. Who might be lonely, disconnected, or far from God? Who have you noticed but never really taken the time to know? Who might feel like they don't have a place at the table?

Ask God to bring a specific person or family to mind.

- 2. Welcome—Make room for them.**

Take one intentional step toward that person. Invite them to share a meal, grab a cup of coffee, go for a walk, or spend some time together. You don't have to have a spiritual conversation or an agenda. Simply make room for them in your life.

If inviting someone into your home feels like too much, start somewhere simple. The goal isn't to host a perfect meal. The goal is to make room for a person.

- 3. Listen—Be present to their story.**

When you spend time together, resist the temptation to fix, correct, or impress. Ask questions and listen. What is happening in their life? What are they celebrating? What is difficult? What are they worried about? What are they hoping for?

Remember, you are not responsible for changing them. You are simply being present and loving them as God does.

- 4. Pray—Ask God to meet them.**

Before you meet, pray that God would give you his heart for this person. During your time together, be attentive to opportunities to encourage them or to share what God is doing in your own life.

A sample prayer might be:

God, thank you for [name]. You know them completely and love them completely. Help me to see them, know them, and love them as you do. Give me the courage to make room for them in my life. Help me to listen well and to be a source of grace and encouragement. Use our time together to draw them closer to you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

5. Keep the table open.

Don't think of this as a one-time project. Relationships take time. Continue looking for ways to make room for this person in your life. Invite them again. Check in with them. Remember what they told you. Celebrate their joys and walk with them through their difficulties.

The goal isn't simply to get someone to church. The goal is to become the kind of people who make room for those who are far from God.

Finally, expect God to show up!

The father in Jesus' story didn't know what would happen when his son came home. But he was watching for him. And when he saw him, he ran.

Who is God asking you to make room for?