



SEVEN RIVERS C H U R C H

A CULTURE OF GOSPEL: **Welcome**

TRANSFORMATION • JOY • **WELCOME** • GENERATIONS • WORSHIP • COMMUNITY • MISSION

Warm-Up Question:

Think of some times when you visited a church or someone's house and felt warmly welcomed. What are some things that are done in such cases?

READ: Romans 15:7; Luke 15:1-3, 11-24

I. THE EXPERIENCE OF GOSPEL WELCOME

- ▶ Rom. 15:7 says "Christ has welcomed you." Discuss how and what that means for you personally. (Note: "welcome" here = "to grant one into his heart.")
- ▶ Read Luke 15:20 from the parable of the lost son. What is so shocking about the way the father welcomed back his sinful son?
- ▶ Read the quote in the sidebar. Do you think of God running toward you like that? What hinders you from think about God like this? (See Rom. 15:7 again)

II. THE CHURCH OF GOSPEL WELCOME

- ▶ Paul asked this church in Rome to welcome one another "just as" Christ welcomed us. What must be unique about the way Christians welcome others?
- ▶ Why is this difficult (think of having Jews & Gentiles, rich & poor, etc). What makes it most challenging for you, your family, friend group or Life Group to welcome others around you "just as" Christ as welcomed you?
- ▶ What might be a goal for you, your family or Life Group to move more toward "welcoming [others around you] as Christ has welcomed you"?

III. THE GLORY OF GOSPEL WELCOME

- ▶ From Rom. 15:7b, WHY did Christ welcome us? What does that mean?
- ▶ How might having a God-centered desire to make much of God lead to more freedom to live a lifestyle of sincere welcome?

What is one main take-away you want to apply in your life this week?

The prodigal's story reframes everything because of how it ends: "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." (Luke 15:20).

The wayward son is not defined by his prodigality but by the welcome of a father who never stopped looking, who is ever scanning the distance, and who runs to gather him up in an embrace. God is not tapping his foot judgmentally inside the door as you sneak in, crawling over the threshold in shame. He's the father running toward you, losing his sandals on the way, his robes spilling off his shoulders, with a laughing smile whose joy says, "I can't believe you came home!" This is what grace looks like... Jesus is the shout of God, the way God runs out to meet us.

- James K. A. Smith

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