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## Understanding and Implementing **Hospitality**

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**Key Passages: Matthew 25:34-43; Luke 10:30-37; Acts 4:32; Romans 12:13; 16:33; 1 Timothy 5:10; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:7-11; 3 John 1:5-8**

### **The Quintessential way to Grow your Church is to Understand and Implement Hospitality!**

**How do you treat people at church? Really, *how do you?***

#### **Open Question: How would you define Hospitality?**

Are you a hospitable person? What about with people you do not like? You may not have to invite them into your home, but how do you treat them? How do you treat people at church? Really, *how do you?* Most people in any given church would say they are not treated well as far as feeling welcomed or connected! Yes, our church is different, and perhaps much better than others, but I believe we can be even better for our Lord's glory!

#### **Introduction**

One of the most important calls that Christ gives His church is to be welcoming to people. We are His ambassadors, so, Jesus uses us to be His welcoming arms to draw people from the outside into His presence! He is the Seeker; we are the ones He seeks, and sometimes we are the ones He uses to seek others. It is God's desire that all of His children will be saved, and, yet, few will accept His grace. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to save people, and we are the instruments through which He works. So, we must be a church who welcomes not only Believers, but also those who may never before in their lives have been inside of a church. This ministry of Hospitality has the role of being His ambassador.

#### **Our role is: "Welcoming people and Connecting people into the life of the church."**

This may be hard at first until we get our welcoming "sea legs." As our American culture is so individualistic, we tend not to bother with others, assuming they can take care of themselves. After all, we have brochures and signs everywhere. So, you may wonder, *where do I fit in?* We fit in to be the human warm touch, encouraging others with a smile, and making others feel special, because they are. It is our endeavor to help you learn how to be more welcoming, and give you the tools to improve. In that way, we can be the church that God has called us to be!

## **Why Study Hospitality?**

When we know how we are and how we come across to others, then compare that to what God has called us to, we will be able to realign ourselves to His precepts, grow in our character and maturity, and serve Him better! Why? Because, we are given an incredible gift, one which we could never earn; because, He first loved us. We do not need to do anything; we do not need to be hospitable. And, the fact is most Christians are not; that is why most churches are dead (along with no real teaching). But, because we are saved, because we are forgiven, and because He loves us, we will choose to respond out of our gratitude for what He has done for us. We can choose to be hospitable even though we may not be naturally inclined to do so. Because we desire to love, and serve Him and His people, we are to love, care, and be hospitable.

## **The Definition of Hospitality**

Hospitality is a willingness to share, with discernment, what God has given us, including our family, home, finances, and food. It is an attitude of stewardship, where we do not own anything because we are merely the caretaker for the real owner, God. He desires that we share His stuff and His love, and we comply out of reverence and gratitude to Him. In relationships, it is honoring the boundaries of others, and sharing all we have without strings attached. In the church, it is to be welcoming, regardless how we may feel (Matthew 25:34-43; Luke 10:30-37; Romans 12:13: 16:3-16; 1 Timothy 5:10; Hebrews 13:1-3; 1 Peter 4:7-11; 3 John 5-8).

- Here are positive examples from Scripture (Genesis 12:14-20; 20:4-15; 1 Kings 17:10-24; Luke 19:1-10; Acts 16:14-15; 28:2)
- Here are negative examples from Scripture (Numbers 20:18-21; 21:21-31; Judges 19:15; 1 Samuel 25:10-38; Luke 9:51-56; 10:30-37)

## **The First thing we all must ask ourselves is this: Is the Character of Hospitality working in me?**

We need to ask this before we undertake this ministry. If not, we will not be good at this at all! We will be the noise of 1 Corinthians 13:1, instead of the love of 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8. We have to be willing to take a look under our hood (Galatians 2:20-21; 6: 3-5), the hood of how we come across to others—our personality, disposition, and our attitude. So, when we hand out that cup of coffee, it is handed on a saucer of love and care, not a saucer of obligation or pretentiousness. This is critical stuff! When we get ourselves right in our character to the best of our ability (as none of us will be perfect, Romans 3), and in a growing fashion, we then can better serve Him with real, authentic passion and conviction.

## How can I find out?

Take a careful look at this character and fruit of Hospitality from God's most precious Word, by examining the passages above. Now ask yourself:

- 1. How do I exhibit Hospitality in my daily life?** Such as, how do I treat my neighbors? How do I come across to people when I am at church? If someone came up to me or sat next to me, how would they feel about me? 2 Corinthians 5:20 tells us, "*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us.*" Therefore, our actions and reactions tell others who we are and who we are representing. Will it be your bad day, or Christ's love? What message are you sending?
- 2. What can I do to develop a better willingness to be Hospitable and to value people?** Do you realize that everyone with whom you come in contact is a valued child of God who is deeply loved, and that Christ would have died just for them, as He did for you? "*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). It is not possible for us to be best friends with everyone in our life, but what we can do is be friendlier and show Christ's love to others so that they say, "Hey, this church is great, because the people treated me good!" "Most people leave a church not because of the pastor or doctrine, even though that is important, but because how they were treated." (from "Pew-Sitting," a 10 year research study on why churches fail, doctoral dissertation by R. J. Krejcir, 1992- 2002)
- 3. What blocks Hospitality from working and being exhibited in me?** There are times when our daily lives are in chaos—from getting the kids ready for church, a fight with the spouse, problems at work, or problems with our health—to name a few. So, when we bump into others, we bring with us all of our stuff in life—our feelings, anger, experiences, joys, fears, and expectations. In 2 Corinthians 4:18, we read, "*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*" We must learn how to govern our emotions and expectations so our eyes are upon our Lord and not on others or ourselves. When we do this, we can much better accept our "stuff" and count it as Joy (James 1:1-3); we can treat others in the manner we would like, and, most importantly, how Christ would like!
- 4. How can I make Hospitality function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainly and stress?** After you have taken that honest look under your personality hood, what did you find? Now, what can you do to start to implement what Christ has called you to in temperament and attitude? First, consider the

spiritual disciplines of the Faith, such as daily Bible reading, a good devotional such as “My Utmost...,” real prayer, where your needs are not the only item on the table, and be a learner—be willing to learn and grow. If you have trouble, then consider pride as the main problem. John 3:30 tells us, “*He must become greater; I must become less.*” We have to purge pride so He is more and we are less!

### **Why is all of this important?**

You are the front door of the church! You are also the backdoor! That means for someone to feel comfortable at your church, he needs to make a connection, build a relationship, and feel welcomed. People need to feel that this church is their church. This is even more important than our teaching and doctrine (which is essential, too!). Have you ever wondered why the Mormons are growing and are so popular, even with a corrupt theological system? Because they know how to treat people! When you walk into a Mormon Temple, you are welcomed; you feel they care for you! You may overlook the illogical and false teachings because you are with family, people who love you and who are coming across as authentic. People need to feel validated, and they need a sense of belonging. The Church is to fill this role, but all too often, other things that are corrupt fill in that gap. That is why drug abuse is so rampant and why you see jet skis being towed by RV’s on Sundays. People will find a place to belong; let us make them welcome in our church!

Most conservative evangelical and reformed Christians assume since we have good teaching, and the Holy Spirit is in our lives, we do not need to bother with care. This is contradictory to Scripture. A week does not go by that I do not talk with someone at our church who tells me they attended worship services for weeks, months, even years, and nobody has ever talked to them! When this happens, we become the backdoor; people will leave our church because they never developed connections and relationships because people did not care or reach out to them! Some people are bold and friendly and make those connections naturally themselves, while others are more reserved and others need to go to them. Will you be the one to go out of your way to give a kind word and an invite? You are the person who is called to reach out. If you think, “Hey, I do not have the gift of hospitality!”—most of us do not; however, we are still called to do so. The people with the gift of hospitality will be better at it, and motivate the rest of us to do it.

### **Let us look at what happens when we do not do as God calls:**

**Unfriendliness, Inhospitality, Animosity, and being Annoyed** are the opposites of being hospitable. These ill-begotten feelings will allow you to push others away, and give up precious friendships as well as opportunities for personal growth through networking, connections, and fellowship. These are rotten fruits (Galatians 5:19-21) of egocentricity, as you only see the world as it revolves around you, and you miss seeing

the value of others. With this attitude, you will not develop good friendships or be effective in the church, neighborhood, or workplace. These are the quintessential attributes that cause churches to close their doors. Over 4000 churches in the United States close every year while 1100 new churches are planted (source: CTT Facts and Barna.org). Our problem is not what or who we are, it is how we are! Hospitality will make the difference—you can make the difference!

Unfortunately, what normally happens in the Church as a whole is strife, dysfunction, gossip, and slander, because our pride gets in the way of His call. Thus, being people who are welcoming or the exercise of our gifts will be neutralized, turned into weapons of dysfunction. Instead of reaching out and discipling, we fight amongst ourselves, or develop false doctrines. The Body cannot do things well or function when we are puffed-up with ourselves. We cannot function by pretending, or out of hate. For us to be used by Christ effectively, we must be infused with love and do our part with joy.

## **Break into Small groups**

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What part does Hospitality play in your relationships with church members, friends, coworkers, and family?
2. How does being annoyed counteract Hospitality? What is the cost to others (God, family, friends, neighbors, church, workplace, etc.) when you are a person who is inhospitable?
3. What happens to your relationship with God, with others, and with the opportunities God gives you, when you are unfriendly or are unwilling to share?
4. When have you been filled with Hospitality the most?
5. In what situation did you fail to be Welcoming when you should have?
6. What issue is in your life that would improve with more Hospitality? Do you just give advice, or do you also lend a hand?

Hospitality is rendering unto others what God has given us, including comfort, and the sharing of our food and friendship. It is often considered to be a Spiritual Gift. As a Spiritual Gift, Hospitality is the ability to provide an open house and a warm welcome to those in need of food and lodging (Acts 16:14-15; Romans 12:9-13; Romans 16:23; Hebrews 13:1-2; 1 Peter 4:9). Many Christians use the excuse, *since I do not have the Gift of Hospitality I do not have to welcome others*. This is a very dismal view, and totally goes against the precepts of Scripture. It is, in fact, sin to think this way! Yes, it is a Spiritual Gift, and those who possess it will be extra diligent to put it into practice, and network with others to make this Gift function in abundance. It is like love; we all are called to love (1 Corinthians 13).

Hospitality also means we are contributing to the development and growth of our family, friends, and fellow Christians. Hospitality is the door to discipleship. Without hospitality, Discipleship cannot function—and Discipleship is the quintessential call that Christ gives us, the Church, to do, above all else (Matthew 28: 18-20)! We must be willing to go beyond our preconceived needs, comforts, and ideas to provide an ambiance which contributes to the physical and spiritual growth of people around us. If we do not, how will they know we are Christians? If we do not, how will Discipleship and the growth of the Church happen? It is not just a gift—it is a call to us all! So, exhibit good Hospitality by practicing Godly Character and good social etiquette. Be the one to help others feel important. Be the one who returns the kindnesses you are given. Be the first one to greet visitors who come to your church, and invite them to your home for fellowship, and lunch. Godly Hospitality will not expect anything in return!

### **The Hospitality Team Role:**

#### **“Welcoming People and Connecting People to the Life of the Church”**

We are to provide hospitality services to visitors and members on a weekly basis, and help facilitate the hospitality table at worship services, including the production of quality coffee and light refreshments with an inviting atmosphere and an attitude of love and care. We are also to answer people’s questions, have an up-to-date list of church resources and activities to give out, and help people find what they are looking for from worship services, small groups, Bible Studies, Sunday School classes, workshops, pastoral help and such. This role may also include conducting follow-up for visitors with letters, home visits, and interfacing with pastors and church staff for ministry and personal needs for both members and visitors. With this role, we will be able to strengthen the connections and fellowship between congregation members to stimulate both spiritual growth and social interaction through various congregational connections and events for the purpose of building relationships and sharing Jesus.

### **Knowledge Points:**

- We are best able to function in ministry by concentrating our efforts to grow in our relationship with Christ as a daily love endeavor (Hebrews 10:19-25; 11:1-3).
- The knowledge of who we are in Christ will be the driving force of how we are with others (Galatians 2:20-21; 6: 3-5; Philippians 3:10)!
- To be successful at hospitality means abandoning our radical American individualism that fears and avoids being vulnerable and being accountable. Our relationship with Christ is a personal endeavor; however, it functions in the crucible of community. It cannot be, "just Jesus and me." We are to be dependent upon Christ and function in fellowship. As iron sharpens iron, we cannot be sharp unless we rub with others (Proverbs 27:17; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 3:8-12).
- Our skills of being friendly will make the difference in whether a person makes this church a one-time visit, or returns to become an active member (Proverbs 17:17a).
- Our willingness to be effective with our participation in the life of the church will be the model to others around us (Colossians 3:12-14).
- Hospitality is the steppingstone to the life of the church; without it, people may not be able to make the hurdle to the front door, as the backdoor is much easier to use (Philippians 2:1-4).
- Understanding how people feel when they visit a church will help us have the compassion and sensitivity to relate to them and be a caring help in their spiritual journey. Remember how you felt. People may be fearful, closed off, overly excited, cautious, or frustrated. Our understanding and ability to listen and offer help will make the difference. Even if they never come back, or, if they make this church their home, our responsibility is to model Christ (1 Peter 4: 8-11).
- We need to have the awareness that our attitude is essential for a positive church environment (Psalm 84:1-4).
- Know that God desires us to also grow, not only in our faith, but also in our values, character, and maturity (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Having confidence in our Lord and in our faith will help us reach out to others, even if they snap back at us (Colossians 4: 2-6).
- Do not be discouraged when others do not accept your warmth. There will be people who have bad days, are frustrated with personal matters, or who simply had a hard time with parking. Just do your best to be welcoming, regardless of how they may treat you! We are not responsible for how they treat us; we are only responsible for how we treat them. Do not take it personally, as you are serving Christ; what they do to you, they are doing to Him (Matthew 10:22, 32; 25:35-36; Luke 6:31).

- We need to know that God loves us deeply, as He does others, and the finished work of Christ enables us to receive His love so we can replicate that love to others around us while feeling safe and secure in His presence (Romans 5:8).
- Our growth in Christ will produce compassion, kindness, humility, forgiveness, and sympathy for others. If not, you are not growing. Remember, we are not in control—He is (Romans 12:15; Philippians 2:3-4; Ephesians 4:32)!
- God desires that we reach out to others as He has reached out to us (John 13:34-35; Acts 2:46-47)!
- If you are having a rough day, try to be in a mindset of prayer; try to see the other person as Christ may see them. Our ability to communicate warmth using hospitality-related language—body language as well as welcoming words and a smile—may help the other person, and make their day (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)!
- What are the practical steps you can take to cultivate these points?

### **Hospitality Team Objectives:**

1. Oversee the Hospitality Table for all regular and special church services. This includes finding volunteers (to prepare the table, provide the coffee and any refreshments, or add special touches to the display), providing volunteers with the necessary information to prepare the hospitality table, and making sure the area around the table is clean and inviting.

### **Possible Objectives:**

2. Plan, supervise, and implement larger group gatherings (such as Welcoming Dinners, or networking at the Congregational Picnic and other church functions).
3. Help plan, supervise, and implement annual connecting events such as regional events and Season of Life events.
4. Advertise Hospitality ministries intent and purpose in Church publications. Also, make use of and train members of the congregation to implement the hospitality table and the group gatherings.

### **Strategize how to best produce our Hospitality Table.**

Think through the steps you need to take to put our Hospitality Ministry into action in specific instances. Such as, *where is Hospitality not functioning properly in my church? What can I do about it? What will the table and ministry look like? How should we look, and come across?*



## Considerations:

- Coffee must be good quality! I have found that *Farmers Brothers* <http://www.easycoffee.com/farmerbrothers.html> (see yellow pages) service is reasonable and very good, as is *Superior*. If the church would like to do their own to cut costs, then again, *Farmers Bros* is hard to beat. *Trader Joes* has excellent coffee that can be mixed half and half with *Yuban*, one of the better store bought brands. A good water filter is essential, even if the church has to spend \$500 on a *Multi Pure System* <http://www.multipureco.com/> (the best on the market for the price, and it is well worth it!) Good coffee may seem petty; however, this has proven to be a way to win people by spending very little money comparative to other outreach events. Churches that contract with *Starbucks* have been very successful when coupling it with a good welcoming system.
- How to decorate the table? Delegate to the ladies.
- Serve some kind of refreshments, but not to countermand the H.S. and Missions selling of *Krispy Kreams*. Perhaps fruits and muffins.
- Juice; filtered cold water.
- Have some people in charge of serving and others for greeting, so people are not busy serving and fail to meet and greet.
- Assign who is to do what.
- Develop a Missions Statement and Covenant statement

## More Hospitality Considerations:

- Creating better visitor and new member packets
- Easy to understand Spiritual Gifts Inventories to be made available (Into Thy Word Ministries, [www.intothyword.org](http://www.intothyword.org) has very good ones we can use for free).
- Creating a "Network List" of who in the church can do what, so we know where to send people—from plumbers, to counselors, to Doctors, to what pastor specializes in what.
- Sermon or article on Caring.

- A plan to assimilate new members.
- Calling all members every six months to see how they are doing, and what they need.
- Teaching Church leaders and teachers to be aware of who is coming and who has not been there for a few weeks. Make arrangements for someone to call and visit those who are missed. Even long-time church members will leave their church if they are gone for more than four weeks, and nobody cared enough to call!

When we are selfish and stingy with our sharing, it creates an atmosphere of distrust, and who wants to be a part of a church like that? How we react to the visitor, long-time member, or the non-Christian will distinguish us as Christ-like or hypocrites. Which do you think our God desires us to be?

Do you realize the seriousness of your faith? Christianity is not a recreational activity; it is a matter of your heart. It affects your Will, and moves your hands and feet. Do not forget to be Hospitable! Even though you may not like to talk to neighbors, meet new people, or greet strangers with a kind word and a smile, you are called to do so! Do you try to make people comfortable, or are you careless? You have to be willing to ask, *Am I being kind to others, or am I in such a rush, I have no time?* If it is a rush, then your priorities are skewed, because, to God, relationships are priority number one! This does not mean we are so chatty we neglect our other responsibilities, but we have to be willing to go beyond our comfort zone and engage people with Christ-like character!

*“Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering (Hebrews 13:1-3).”*

### **Suggested reading**

*“Joy of Hospitality”* by Vonette Bright and Barbara Ball

*“Fun Ideas for Evangelistic Entertaining”* by Vonette Bright , Barbara Ball

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Feel free to pass this around to any pastor who is overseas or on the mission field who may need it! We also have several other "Pastors Training Packs" available in various languages on: "How to Study and Teach the Bible," "How to Lead and Manage the Church" and many more. As a missions and discipleship organization it is our call to train pastors and provide resources to Christians and Church leaders all over the world. They may printout any information we have posted, reproduce it, make the needed cultural changes and translate it. All we ask of you is to keep us in prayer, keep the name of our ministry and any copyright information on the resources, and tell other pastors what we have to offer. If anyone does translate any of our material, please let us know and give us a copy so we can make them available to others in their language and culture!



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