

## The Ministry of Hospitality

Some informal notes from some training sessions and talks in 2008, 2011 and 2017. Jane Tooher

### Part 1: Introduction

What's been your experience of hospitality?

Why do you think we've chosen to look at hospitality today?

*The story of the Bible can be summarised as 'God's hospitality to us'. Why would someone say that?*

"Hospitality is nothing short of a way of life because of what God has done for us at the cross in making us friends with him. Whether we are male or female, young or old, single or married, whatever our ethnic background or socio-economic circumstances, God has given us what we need to be like him in showing hospitality."

As a child, when friends rang to ask if I wanted to stay the night, I'd say, "Just a minute, I'll go ask my mum". However, I never normally even asked her. I would sit holding the phone with my hand on the receiver, and after a while I'd say, "Sorry, she won't let me". The reason I didn't ask wasn't because I thought my mum would say no. I had five brothers and sisters and so I'm sure she would have been glad to have one less child to look after. The reason I didn't ask my mum - besides the fact that I was a liar - was because I was shy and there were very few places I felt at home. I felt at home in my parents' house and I longed to stay there. The thought of staying at someone else's home didn't appeal to me, as it didn't feel like home.

I'm not so shy anymore, but I still long to feel at home, and that is a common human experience isn't it? It's true the world over, whether we are male or female, children or adults, we long to feel at home. We long to be somewhere where we can feel relaxed, be ourselves, and not feel awkward. Not self-conscious. We long to be somewhere where we fit.

In 2006 I moved from Sydney to London to work in a church. Before I left, numerous people gave me their opinions of what they thought the cultural differences were between English and Australian people. Whilst often amusing I was also sometimes left feeling confused. I was told that Australians are rude, blunt and direct. That they talk too much. On the other hand, English people are reserved and polite, so I shouldn't express my emotions as much as I normally would. I was told that certain people will only make friends with others from a similar school background, so don't expect them to be friends with you. I was told that Christian single public school men (our version of private school men) wouldn't want to speak to me. And there was a range of other comments as well, which left me feeling quite self-conscious and wondering whether I would fit in, whether I would feel at home, and whether in fact anyone would want to speak to me at all!

So it was interesting that the very first thing an English person said to me at Heathrow airport was, "Welcome home". This was due in part to the fact that I was born in England and so I showed an English passport at customs. I felt welcomed immediately, but since I never remembered living in England, I wondered if it would in fact feel like home, and whether I would continue to feel welcome.

When we move to a new place, whether that is for study, marriage, work, a new church, we want people to make us feel welcome don't we? We want to fit in. Feel like we belong. Feel like we have friends. Feel settled. It's a normal, healthy and good thing to want to feel at home in your new community. Other factors might make us wish at times we were living somewhere else, like the climate and distance from family, but if we feel at home because of friendships, then it makes the other things not so difficult. Friendship is what many of us crave for. Friends help us feel like we belong and that we're accepted, rather than feeling self-conscious, isolated and lonely. Friends help us feel normal and therefore good friendships help us get on with life more easily. Without good friendships, life is more difficult.

When we are feeling like a stranger, feeling isolated, if someone then treats us as a friend, relates to us as normal, with appropriate affection, that person makes a huge impact on us don't they? It's like we move from an outer circle of stranger, to a closer circle of friend.

Imagine there are concentric circles where you move from the outer circle of stranger, to a closer circle of friend. And it can just be a little thing, like one conversation that makes that happen, and the person most likely is totally unaware of the positive and profound impact they are having on us. One such conversation happened to me not long after I had moved to London, and I'm sure William, the man I had the conversation with, had no idea the positive impact it had on me and how it helped me to feel at home in my new surrounds. When we have moved into that circle of being treated as a friend, we feel more connected, more at home in our new community and we then feel more able to welcome others.

For most of us, we want to feel at home, and we feel that desire is good and so it is worth pursuing. Yet in our striving to feel at home, we can too easily leave God completely out of the picture. Much of the world offers us so much to 'feel at home' with: clean water, abundant food, good jobs, comfortable housing, and stable governments. All of these things help us live in an ordered society and are good gifts from God, yet the problem is, we often pursue and trust them because we think they can make us feel secure, rather than pursuing, serving and trusting God first. We can fool ourselves into thinking we deserve certain things, certain relationships, that we have a right to them, that God would want us to have them, and so we justify certain behaviour. Yet are we seeking God and his kingdom first? In our striving to feel at home on this earth, we can exclude others and put distance in between them and us when we feel they are a threat to us looking good, when they are potentially competition with us. Or when we think they are different to us, or if they seem to not be able to offer us anything financially or

socially. We can put distance between those we assume are too much hard work. We can too easily assume things about people without being willing to get to know them. We can focus on differences that we think are a big deal, rather than on similarities and on that which lasts for eternity. We can too quickly use the world's framework for thinking about people, rather than God's framework and his perspective.

Christian hospitality is an antidote for all of this. It's an antidote for seeing people from the world's perspective. As we seek to practice hospitality, we begin to see others and ourselves more clearly because we see ourselves from the perspective that is real, that matters, and that lasts: God's perspective. How does practicing hospitality do this?

### **What is hospitality?**

The key Greek word for hospitality in the New Testament is made up of two words: 'phileo' which is one of several Greek words for love; the love you have for a friend. The second word is 'xenos' which is the word for strangers or aliens - aliens as in a non-citizen sense. So literally, hospitality means 'love for strangers'.

It's helpful for us to remember the alien sense of the word stranger, because the Biblical usage of stranger implies someone from a foreign area, rather than someone who is necessarily unknown to us. It is similar to how we might use the word 'foreigner'. My friend Anita is an American who lives in New York. When she visits Sydney, the Australian government recognises she is a stranger, and on one level, since I am not an American citizen nor live in the States, she is also a 'foreigner' to me, even though I know her.

Even when keeping in mind that stranger can mean either someone you know or someone you don't know, as long as they are from a foreign land, hospitality is not limited to loving strangers. It's not limited to loving someone from another country. The origin or make-up of a word doesn't always determine its' meaning, in fact, the origin is often forgotten altogether. What's more important in a word's meaning is how the word is used over time.

As we look at the New Testament we see that hospitality was understood to be broader than loving strangers. Hospitality is sometimes used in contexts where it's clearly strangers that are on view, so e.g. "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb 13:2; cf. Gen 19:1-22).

But it's also used within the church family context e.g. "Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you." (Rom 16:23a); "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." (1 Pet 4:9).

2000 years later, in the western world anyway, this is still true to a degree in how people understand hospitality. It's welcoming, showing love, to those we know or to a stranger. So we might use it in the context of having people over for

a meal, or having them come and stay at our home. Usually in these private situations it's with people we already know. But we also speak about it on a community level. Are we welcoming visitors at church, or helping a new colleague settle in at work, are we being hospitable to tourists in our town, our city? However, whether it's on a private or public level, what's common to both is that we normally associate those that practice hospitality with only certain types of people.

On the public level, we associate it with those who work or invest in the 'hospitality industry'. Our hotels, resorts, holiday lettings, tourist information offices and the like, and we judge that some are more hospitable than others. When a place is welcoming, it makes us feel refreshed. Other places however, we don't feel so welcome in, whether that's the holiday house that is musty and dirty, or the pub that has lumpy expired milk with the breakfast provisions. Within the hospitality industry, reputation is very important, and ones reputation is driven by client satisfaction, and so the host is normally at pains to satisfy the guest.

Often when we use the term hospitality on the public level, such as in the cases of the hospitality industry, it's for financial advantage. Normally the owners and managers want to look good, want that business deal, want to impress so the other person will feel confident in them. We want people to keep coming back to us with their business. Just like we associate only certain people with public hospitality, we may too easily associate only certain people with private, or non-commercial hospitality. But for the Christian, this is a mistake isn't it? As we look at the Bible, we see that God's expectation, both in the Old and New Testaments, was that all of his people would show hospitality.

In many Christian circles today we assume that hospitality is what women are gifted in much more so than men. And we can assume those women who are gifted in it are typically married, good cooks, with largish houses, accommodating husbands, and children that love having people over.

However, the Bible makes clear that showing hospitality is a characteristic of a genuine Christian. It's not an optional extra. It doesn't depend on your gender, age, marital status or socio-economic situation. Maybe we assume it's an optional extra because we have a skewed and limited view on what hospitality actually is? When we open God's word, we see that hospitality is much broader than cooking and having people over to stay. It's a way of life because of what God has done for us in Jesus' death and resurrection.

A simple definition for hospitality we will be working with for this discussion is: ***“welcoming others by showing friendship love to them, whether they are strangers or known to you”***

### **Questions for consideration**

1. Have there been people in your life who have shown you hospitality? If so, what did they do?

2. How do you feel about receiving hospitality?
3. What are your fears and hesitations about showing hospitality to others?
4. What do you think are your strengths in showing hospitality?
5. Do you think that God is asking you to extend hospitality to someone? How will you respond to this prompting?
6. What do you think hospitality could look like in your church / ministry situation / seminary or theological community?

## **Part 2: The Biblical material**

### **Old Testament**

“A superficial reading of the Old Testament could leave the impression that God’s purposes are narrowly nationalistic. His covenant with Abraham, and promise to bless his descendants, and his election, deliverance and rule over Israel suggest that the nations are not his concern – except negatively, in the conquest of the promised land when he decrees their annihilation....In fact, throughout her history Israel is to maintain a safe distance *vis-à-vis* the nations in order to protect her own cohesiveness in terms of ethnicity, language, territory, religion and political institutions. So are we left with a negative view of the nations in the Bible? Does the Bible unwittingly encourage xenophobia? This reading of the nations in the Old Testament is in fact a gross caricature. From the beginning God intends Abraham to be a “father of many nations” (Gen 17:4-6) and “a blessing to all the nations on earth” (Gen 12:3), not merely Israel....Despite the nations’ detestable practices, God is concerned for their salvation in books like Psalms and Isaiah.” (Rosner 15-16)

But God also cares for them on a day to day level, and this can be seen in the law: “Old Testament law distinguished between the native Israelite and various types of foreigners...There are two types of strangers: (i) the assimilating stranger, who chose to fit in with Israelite culture and religion. (ii) the non-assimilating stranger, who though having settled in the community chooses to retain an independent sense of identity. This type can be broken down again, into the individual immigrant who is taken into an Israelite home as a guest, and at the other end of the spectrum, the tribe of foreigners who settle in Israel in a clientele relationship to the Israelites.” (Rosner 16)

Some examples...

Ex 12:43-51; Num 9:14. No stranger or foreigner is to eat the Passover unless they have been circumcised, and all their men have been circumcised. There is one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you – no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.

Lev 16. On the Day of Atonement, no-one was to do any work, including the stranger among them.

Lev 17. Laws regarding sacrifices. No blood is to be eaten by anyone, including the stranger among them.

Lev 18. Laws regarding unlawful sexual relations. Same laws applied to everyone, including the stranger among them.

Lev 19:33-34. Laws to protect the stranger sojourning among them:

1. You shall not do him wrong.
2. Treat him as the native among you.
3. You shall love him as yourself.

Why? Because you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.  
What stands out to you about Lev 19:33-34?

- love as yourself
- they were strangers also – identify with them – normally we can think of the differences Israel had with the nations

Lev 25:23. The land is God's, so it is not to be sold permanently. Israel are but strangers and sojourners. They are just staying a little while on this earth.

Lev 25:35f. If a countryman becomes poor, help him as you would a stranger, so he continues to live among you. He is not to become a slave.

Lev 25:45-47. You can do business with strangers. You can buy them as slaves. You can leave them in your will to your son.

Num 15:14-16. Same laws for the stranger and for Israel in how they are to worship God.

Num 15:26-29. When someone sins unintentionally, the same law applies to the Israelite as to the stranger – they are to be forgiven. Mercy for both.

Num 15:30-31. The person who sins with a high hand, either native or the stranger sojourning among them, is to be cut off because he has despised the word of the LORD. Judgement for both.

Num 35:15; cf. Jos 20:9. Cities of refuge, (if you kill someone unintentionally) are for the native and for the stranger. You would be an extremely vulnerable person wouldn't you if you unintentionally killed someone? God's law protected those who did that. Not just the Israelite, but the stranger among them.

“At face value, the biblical laws relating to the stranger in the land of Israel model a generous and hospitable approach to the foreigners in their midst, without insisting on assimilation. In Israel's case this was motivated by the personal experience of once being strangers themselves, a motivation which may have a broader application than first appears in the light of New Testament teaching on all Christians as aliens and strangers.” (Brian Rosner, 17)

## **New Testament**

(i). The apostle **Peter** seems to think all Christians have the gift of hospitality. 1 Pet 4: 7-11, (nb v 9). Peter here is not only writing to women in the church who were good cooks. He is writing to all Christians. Male, female, rich, poor, good cooks, bad cooks. Show hospitality.

We can think I don't have the gift because I don't have a big enough house. I don't have a husband that likes having people over. I'm not married. My house is always a mess. My kids would always interrupt us. I don't have enough money to

have nice food. So I don't have the gift of hospitality. Peter assumes all Christians do.

(ii). The apostle **Paul** seems to think all Christians have the gift of hospitality. Rom 12 Paul is writing to the church at Rome, about what the Christian life looks like. That your whole life is a living sacrifice to God, and in verse 13 he says, seek to show hospitality. Not some who have the gift seek to show it. All of you who are Christian, all of you who are a living sacrifice to God, seek to show it.

(iii). The writer of the **Hebrews** likewise in Heb 13:2. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained strangers unawares. The author is writing to Christians generally. The word for entertaining here is different to the word for hospitality, although similar. In the sense here, (active), it literally means, "having received strangers". Whereas we can think of entertaining today as putting on a show.

(iv). **The Lord Jesus**. His whole life. One passage where he commands us to, and tells us that we will be held accountable for how we have acted in this area is Mt 25:31-46.

There are some gifts that only some Christians have, and there are gifts that all Christians have. We have been shown hospitality by God, and we are to show it then to others. All Christians in that sense have the gift of hospitality.

### **The New Testament verses – what they have in common**

If you notice the verses we have just read out from Peter, Paul and the writer to the Hebrews, there is something they all have in common.

They recognise the fact that hospitality will not come easily to us. That is why they write the command in the first place. And these writers know our hearts don't they?

They know what we are like.

The writer to the Hebrews says don't neglect to show hospitality, and we can so easily neglect to show hospitality can't we?

Paul has a similar idea in Romans urging us to seek to show hospitality – pursue it, find it out. Make it part of your life.

Peter says to show hospitality without grumbling. Why does Peter need to say that?

Because it comes easy to us to grumble when we show hospitality.

When I left a previous church, some of the staff gave me some money and I used it to buy a cane day bed when I moved to my new home. I had people soon after I bought the lounge, and realised when they had left, there were stains on the cover. And what was my reaction? Grumbling. I soon realised how ridiculous I was. I was feeling so good about myself that I had people over. They had a good time. Annoyed they had stained my new lounge. I soon realised how full of myself I was. I decided to leave the stain on there. Not to get it off. So it would remind me of being hospitable, and not grumbling when things get dirty. When things don't go to plan.

The writers of the New Testament recognise hospitality will be hard for us, and yet they don't say, "Don't do it", do they? They say **pursue it**.

We can think someone who has the gift of something, finds it easy. But someone who we think has the gift of preaching, is normally someone who has spent years and years, working and praying at their gift.

Someone who has the gift of evangelism doesn't sit back and wait for people to come to her. Someone with the gift of prayer doesn't normally jump out of bed every morning thinking I want to get out of bed and pray.

Gifts are like muscles. They need to be worked, otherwise they go to flab and they are useless. But if they are worked, they become stronger.

### **Some helpful thoughts about hospitality to consider**

When we think of hospitality, we can think we need to spend hours cooking. That we need to spend a lot of money. That it needs to take a lot of time.

Yet...

*"Hospitality should not be thought of as a woman's chance to demonstrate her skill in the kitchen and the beauty of her home. Entertaining seeks to impress; hospitality seeks to minister or serve. Entertaining puts things before people. Our concern is more with the home and what our guests will think of it, than with an interest in the people themselves. Hospitality puts aside pride, and Christ is then able to sanctify the most 'ordinary' of homes, making them holy and useful, because the tenants have given themselves and their possessions to him."*

Karen Mains, *Open heart, open home*, (Pub: Pickering and Inglis), quoted in Derek Cleave's book of the same title but different book (?), *Open heart, open home*, (Pub: Day One, 2000), 28.

We also as humans compare ourselves to others don't we? We think Claire has the gift of hospitality because she has a big enough house, a husband who is on-side, enough money for really nice food, good furniture, a really clean house, perfectly behaved children, or children out of sight or sound.

But when Scripture speaks about hospitality, none of those things come into the equation. The emphasis is to love, and the emphasis is for all Christians to love. For all Christians to be hospitable.

Obviously, our situations vary enormously. For some of us, it will never be possible to have people in our homes. But we can create opportunities outside our homes.

### **We live in an inhospitable world**

Acknowledging and reminding ourselves what our world is like, what we are like, will help us have a more realistic view on hospitality.

*"Generally this is an inhospitable world. The philosophy seems to be 'I don't want to bother you and I don't want you to bother me.' The wide-spread practice of Christian hospitality would do so much to offset this in reaching out to our society."* (Derek Cleave, *Open heart, open home*, 28)

To be hospitable, is to go against the grain of our society. Even sadly our Christian society at times. Therefore, it is not like you will necessarily be



reminded often to be hospitable. You may never be invited, or rarely invited, into someone else's home. So the norm is not there for you to copy. Growing up, your parent(s), may have rarely had people outside the family for meals. So it may not come naturally to you.

### **Bridges are harder to build than walls**

It is much easier to keep relating to those we know, build safe walls around us, than to make the effort to get to know others.

And it is easy in many ways to put on an evangelistic event and see who comes. Or rely on Easter and Christmas meetings. We wait for people to come to us.

Yet there are some people in our community though who will probably never come to a church meeting on a Sunday, or an evangelistic dinner.

These events are easy for us in that we can organise the food quite easily, the speaker gets to say what they want to say. The night is over.

But to build relationships is hard work. To have people in our homes is hard work. To have a small scale event in our homes is hard work, as it requires that we need to know people more for them to come in the first place. But these are often very effective aren't they?

### **Feel overwhelmed and so do nothing**

A common error we can fall into when feeling overwhelmed about hospitality is that we do nothing.

*"Most of us consider hospitality an important virtue. We want to be open to others around us, and we are intuitively aware that by sharing something of our lives with others both they and we ourselves are enriched. But the practice of hospitality is difficult. The busyness of our lives makes it hard to create time for others. When inviting people whose lives are in shambles, we are often painfully aware of the inequity between the hosts and the guests. The secret satisfaction we get out of hospitality makes us feel guilty: the altruistic character of our actions often doesn't stand up to honest self-evaluation. And then there is the fact that hospitality opens us up to potential abuse, so that we quickly erect boundaries that offer protection. Faced with the other, we feel called to practice hospitality, but we soon realise that face-to-face encounters result in complex situations. Genuine hospitality appears to be elusive; the violence of exclusion always lurks around the corner. So what are we to do when hospitality becomes an insurmountable problem?"* (Hans Boersma, 15)

Well often when we are faced with issues that are really difficult, we avoid the issue don't we? Especially if it is an issue were we think we can keep living without dealing with the issue. So we can end up not really be hospitable, and then we wonder after a while why we don't find our church friendly, or why newcomers say our church is not friendly.

Peter, Paul, the writer of Hebrews, and Jesus, command us to be hospitable. And we can react against commands. They can get our back up. We don't like being told what to do. And in the case of hospitality, we can seem to 'justify' not being hospitable by saying it is too hard; saying we have wrong motives for doing it...But Jesus, Peter, Paul, and the writer to the Hebrews tells us to do it. If we follow Jesus then he was hospitable and he wants us to be also.

### **The error of being too individualistic and too intimate**

Our culture is obsessed with self-fulfilment, because we are self-obsessed. So when it comes to issues like forgiveness and reconciliation, (the big issues of our Christian faith), we can think how we should forgive or be reconciled, so we are a better person. So we will be stronger. More confident. So we won't be carrying around baggage. And we can leave God out of the picture. We forget that people need to be reconciled to him, and we can worry more about our feelings. We forget that people need to repent because of the wrong they have done God first and foremost. Not the wrong they have done us. We privatise and individualise things. Make things all about me. This is a consequence of living in a individualistic, therapeutic culture. **This thinking effects how we view hospitality.** We can end up basing a lot of our decision making on how we feel. What will make me a 'better' person supposedly. And our culture tells us that:

- (i) An enduring, profound human relationship of closeness and warmth is the most – or even the only – valuable experience that life affords.
- (ii) We can achieve such an intimate, meaningful relationship only through our own personal effort and will.
- (iii) It assumes that the purpose of human life is the fullest development of one's individual personality, which can take place only within such intimate relationships.

(See Patrick R. Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 24, who critiques this thinking.)

And much of the Christian church has been influenced by this thinking. And we need to examine ourselves and ask if we have.

If we are focusing all our time and energy on intimacy, (i.e. staying within our own community), we fail to

*“recognise the need to retain permeable boundaries that enable others to join the community in worship....**Hospitality reaches outside the boundaries of the community...it runs counter, therefore,...to individualism.**”* (210 Boersma)  
[my emphasis]

### **The simple teapot**

*“Perhaps the most powerful tool in Christian social involvement, a tool with the potential to make a huge impact on our communities, is the humble teapot. Let me explain. Within a short walk of the average town church in the UK there are likely to be 10,000 people, including: 1200 people living alone, 580 of whom will be of pensionable age; 1500 people who talk to their neighbours less than once a week; 50 people who have been divorced within the last year; 375 single parents; 18 pregnant teenagers; 150 recent or contemplated abortions; 250 people who are unemployed; 1700 people living in low income households; 1100 people with some kind of mental disorder; 100 bereavements within the past year; 2700 people living in households without a car; 60 people in a residential care home; 1280 people who have been victims of crime in the past year; 40 homeless people in temporary accommodation; 15 asylum seekers. The most striking thing about these statistics is how many of these problems can be met in some measure by simple human*

*contact. It can simply involve sharing a cup of tea. A Christian friend of mine was talking with a social worker in a poor area of London. This social worker is a Marxist so he has no particular sympathy for Christianity. My friend asked him whether the church made much of an impact in the community in which he worked. The social worker said, 'If you mean the public face of the church – its pronouncements, its projects and initiatives – then the answer is resoundingly no. But if you took away all the kindness and neighbourly acts that Christians do – visiting the sick, shopping for the housebound and so on – then this community would fall apart.' Community involvement need not involve big projects with local authority funding. What counts is ordinary Christians with commitment and compassion."* (Tim Chester, 132-133) [my emphasis]

“Hospitality that is truly evangelical does not have the feelings of well-being of individual Church members as its first concern. True hospitality reaches out to the other and can never be satisfied with erecting impermeable boundaries. The gospel is the true antidote to the self-enclosed economy of exchange that characterizes a therapeutic view of forgiveness. The good news of the gospel, in its very nature, expands boundaries as it reaches out to those beyond the Church. The gospel is the Word of God that invites everyone to repent and accept the lordship of Jesus Christ. The Sunday morning preaching of the gospel has an open or public aspect. Every Church is at heart ‘seeker church’, seeking out and extending hospitality to those beyond its boundaries. With Jones **I am concerned that repentance is being lost from our vocabulary and, therefore, that hospitality loses its association with the public divine invitation for all to return to God.** The North American Church needs to recover the notion that **inasmuch as hospitality has a place in the liturgy, it is the hospitality of the gospel. It is literally an evangelical hospitality, in which God offers everyone his hospitality of forgiveness and reconciliation.** It is, therefore, the gospel itself that constitutes the Church as a public with a distinct telos. When the hospitality of the gospel loses its centrality, the Church loses its public space and so its distinctive character. The good news is a public invitation to repent and to abandon our narcissism in favour of genuine altruism and so become a hospitable community that models the evangelical practice of other-focused forgiveness and reconciliation. Such evangelical hospitality invites others into the eternal kingdom of God. The preaching of the gospel has often, and to my mind rightly, been viewed as God’s primary means of grace. The public proclamation of God’s Word is the way in which he liberally extends his good news; it is truly *evangelical* hospitality. **We need to have a keen eye for the importance of preaching as God’s public gift of hospitality to the world. By recovering the significant place of the expository sermon in the liturgy, the Church will be able to recover the communal, public invitation of God among the ‘company of strangers’. In this way the Church will in turn be equipped to demonstrate and extend forgiveness and reconciliation to other strangers, who will no longer feel excluded from a privatised and closed intimate family fellowship. Our congregations will more and more tend to lose their social homogeneity; they will no longer be ‘lifestyle enclaves’.** The preaching of the gospel – evangelical hospitality – is the

expression of God's desire for everyone to be saved (1 Tim 2:4)." (Boersma 211-212) [my emphasis]

### **Some practical helps...**

1. Clean bathroom; music on; a couple of books on the coffee table to ease discussion; if you find it hard to think about things to talk about generally with people, think of some things you would want to talk about – ask about them; their family, where they grew up; seen any movies lately etc; exercise they do
2. Many people find dogs and cats difficult; many people find a lot of mess difficult – throw things in a cupboard
3. Lots of tea / coffee – it's inexpensive and relaxes us and them; it is normal for the other person
4. Initiate prayer. Now you might be thinking, no way Jane. Just ask, "What is one thing I can pray for you for?" "What is something you can be thankful to God for?"
5. Read the bible – this will also help direct your prayer. Thank God for them in your prayer that they could come over, or you could meet up together in the park or wherever it was.
6. Start creating traditions in your home / when you meet with people. E.g. like praying; guest gets to choose the dessert, etc. Try and start Christian traditions, and just say to people, "This is what we do in our home..." or most likely you won't need to say that.
7. Listening is key to hospitality – because when we listen we are saying the other person is important. That we want to get to know them.
8. Swallow your pride; try not to keep apologising for mess, not nice food etc. If they ask if there is something they can do, allow them. (obviously depending on who they are, how they are feeling) This can often make people feel more comfortable, make them feel less like a visitor and more a member of your family.
9. Use other places than at home: coffee shops; parks; before church; after church.
10. Think of inexpensive meals; and think of quick meals to prepare, and write them down; have a meal(s) ready in the freezer; keep in pantry pasta & pesto or a tomato based sauce – quick easy meal in very little time – can look good no matter what part of Sydney you live in.
11. Have an attitude of being willing / wanting to learn from the other person.
12. Pray for the gospel to be proclaimed; pray for the preachers at your church. The proclamation of the gospel is hospitality.
13. Remember we are strangers in this world – sojourning just for a little while – don't create a home where you are so snug, that very few other people feel at home there; that you don't allow other people in; that home will soon be gone, and you will be in heaven, your true home.
14. Survey to use at your church / bible study groups. Ask questions like: what is hospitality? What makes you feel welcome at church? What makes you feel

welcome in someone's home? What makes you unwelcome? Do you think our church is welcoming? etc

15. After people leave, thank God for the time you had with people – this can help create a more positive view in your mind; can help you remember good things that happened. After church, thank God for the gospel being proclaimed – hopefully it was proclaimed from the pulpit and in conversations afterwards.

**References that are quoted / used:**

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