

# INTRODUCTION TO HOSPITALITY

*Spiritual practice that helps us receive the ways God has welcomed and embraced us, and extend the love of God to others.*

## PART 1 – HOSPITALITY & THE GOSPEL

The Greek word used in the New Testament for Hospitality is **Φιλόξενος** (Philoxenos). *Philos* is used to express “brotherly love” and *Xenos* is used to describe strangers or foreigners. Hospitality is treating outsiders with the same care as we treat those within our community.

When God instructed Israel about the culture he wanted them to cultivate, hospitality was an important pillar.

### **Leviticus 19:33-34**

*When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.*

God invites us into this practice as a way of mimicking the hospitality He extends to us first.

### **Ephesians 2:11-13**

*Remember that at that time you [Gentiles] were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*

This practice carries throughout the New Testament where Jesus, Paul, and Peter encourage believers to practice hospitality both to each other (which, at that time in history would have been an increasingly diverse group!) and to those who require extra accommodation and can't return the favor:

**Romans 12:10-14**

*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor, not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

**1 Peter 4:8-9**

*Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another.*

**Luke 14:12-14**

*Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.*

So hospitality involves loving those who are not like ourselves, it's an essential part of communities in the Kingdom of God, and we are to do it not for self-gain but to glorify God and love others. (And if you are a person who needs extra accommodation and can't repay your host, know that you're just the kind of person Jesus wants in the Kingdom of God!)

**Reflect:**

What are your most memorable moments of hospitality (giving or receiving it)? Why do you think those moments stand out to you? What was special about them?

Do you see Jesus' hospitality to you? Have you received it with joy? Where do you struggle to see or believe that Jesus has extended hospitality to you?

## **PART 2 - HOSPITALITY THROUGH DIFFERENT LENSES**

In American culture, hospitality conjures up thoughts of hosting dinners, house guests, and entertainment. In the Kingdom of God, hospitality can include those things but reaches far beyond that. God directs us to be hospitable in order to extend His grace to the guest as well as deepen the experience of grace to the host. Consider viewing hospitality through these four lenses:

### **1) HOSPITALITY AS PEACEMAKING**

In Matthew 5:44, Jesus instructs His followers to, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Those who, propelled by love for enemies, work toward reconciliation and restored relationships are peacemakers. Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9.) Peacemaking starts with meeting people where they are, listening before speaking, and seeking to understand before being understood. Hospitality is a powerful tool for all of these! In hospitality, we lead with vulnerability by facilitating or creating spaces that make the other person feel comfortable; and we invite authenticity- being our true selves and inviting the same from our guest (this can be scary when there is broken trust!) By this we can hold open, non-anxious space for trust to form and relationships to grow.

### **2) HOSPITALITY AS HEALING**

God invites us to love others, to listen, speak truth in love, share life together, and to create space that allows people to encounter the healing presence of God.

*"Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. It is not to lead*

*our neighbor into a corner where there are no alternatives left, but to open a wide spectrum of options for choice and commitment. It is not an educated intimidation with good books, good stories, and good works, but the liberation of fearful hearts so that words can find roots and bear ample fruit....The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free....not a subtle invitation to adopt the lifestyle of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own." – Henri Nouwen (Reaching Out, 1975)*

Additionally, sometimes hospitality meets physical needs. Practicing hospitality can be providing or receiving care when there's illness or dry socks after it rains. The story of the good samaritan illustrates hospitality as healing - the good samaritan leveraging his resources to help someone outside his community.

### **3) HOSPITALITY AS WORSHIP**

Worship can be thought of acting out of deep love, and respect for a person or thing. Jesus says the way we treat others is how we treat Him! How ought we treat the One we most love and respect?

#### **Matthew 25:34-40**

*Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You as a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You*

*sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it for Me.*

#### **4) HOSPITALITY AS REPENTANCE**

We all face temptation to worship things other than God. Comfort, control, praise, and performance are common idols. Repentance can be understood as turning away from the idol and going back toward God. Extending and receiving hospitality offers us opportunities to repent. For example, we might turn away from comfort when we create a space or an experience that is set up for our guest's comfort, not our own. We may turn away from control when we invite others into our personal spaces and lives. We have the opportunity to turn away from performance and praise when we humbly receive hospitality as well as extending it.

Notably, most of the examples of hospitality in Jesus' life are of Him *receiving* it. Jesus receives hospitality from his birth to His death, and He insists that His disciples depend fully on hospitality when he sends them out with no money, no extra clothes, no provisions (Luke 10.) Since American culture places a high value on independence, having possessions, and self-sufficiency, doing what Jesus did in terms of *receiving* hospitality may be a lot harder for some of us than extending hospitality. That's ok. Practicing hospitality is all the more an opportunity to repent and follow the way of Jesus!

#### **Reflect:**

How does thinking of hospitality through the four lenses (peacemaking, healing, worship, repentance) change how you imagine practicing it?

What barriers do you experience to extending and receiving hospitality (ex. limits of resources, skills, time, etc)? What could help you to overcome those barriers?