Refugee Sunday Materials on Hospitality

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It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.

**Book recommendations:**

*Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, by Christine Pohl

Making Room begins with a quote from Henri Nouwen: “If there is any concept worth restoring to its original depth and evocative potential, it is the concept of hospitality.” Christine Pohl, a professor of Christian social ethics, delves into the rich and sacred history of hospitality as it has developed in Church history. She draws on the writings of contemporary theologians and church members to show how hospitality was defined in different ages of the church, to whom it has been offered, challenges and risks presented by welcoming strangers, and how different writers have grappled with the mystery of Jesus as host and guest in the lives of Christians. Pohl’s own understandings about hospitality began with her involvement in a church that welcomed large numbers of refugees, and she has since spent time visiting various different communities of hospitality. This book is certain to inform, inspire, and challenge the reader to begin the restoration of hospitality in their own life.

Nouwen’s book holds in tension three journeys in the spiritual life: those of loneliness to solitude, hostility to hospitality, and illusion to prayer. The journey toward hospitality focuses on our relationship to our fellow human beings, and specifically deals with the challenge of creating a space where strangers can become friends, rather than enemies. Nouwen’s writing powerfully evokes the mystery of hospitality, and the way it transforms and complicates our relationships to others—he refutes ideas that threaten to dilute hospitality to tea parties and a “general atmosphere of coziness,” preferring instead its transformative potential. Nouwen’s reflections on hospitality are among the most quoted in writings on the subject and are highly recommended.

*Radical Welcome: Embracing God, the Other, and the Spirit of Transformation*, by Stephanie Spellers.
Spellers explores ideas of “radical welcome” as manifested in specific church communities around the United States, as well as more general thoughts about the theology of welcome. She concentrates on Episcopalian congregations, but the book’s ideas and examples are widely accessible and the book has a companion website with many additional resources and discussion guides. (www.churchpublishing.org/radicalwelcome)
Small Group Discussion Materials on Hospitality

Study Option 1: Overview of Hospitality, written by Kristin Zoellner

Leader Guide (Participant Version Follows):

We begin with 2 quotes about hospitality:
“At first the word ‘hospitality’ might evoke the image of soft sweet kindness, tea parties, bland conversations and a general atmosphere of coziness. Probably this has its good reasons since in our culture the concept of hospitality has lost much of its power and is often used in circles where we are more prone to expect a watered down piety than a serious search for an authentic Christian spirituality. But still, if there is any concept worth restoring to its original depth and evocative potential, it is the concept of hospitality.” (66) Henri Nouwen

What are your responses to this quote? It begs the question that hospitality had more depth in the past than it does today—what about hospitality do you think has changed? What makes hospitality so special—do you agree with Nouwen, or do you find him mostly nostalgic?

“Although we often think of hospitality as a tame and pleasant practice, Christian hospitality has always had a subversive, countercultural dimension. ‘Hospitality is resistance,’ as one person from the Catholic Worker observed. Especially when the larger society disregards or dishonors certain persons, small acts of respect and welcome are potent far beyond themselves. They point to a different system of valuing and an alternate model of relationships.” (Pohl, 61)

In what ways might this be true? Do you agree?

The purpose of this study is to understand these two aspects of hospitality: its original depth and mystery (as praised by Nouwen), and its potential for resistance in the larger society. To continue, we’ll look at a number of Biblical examples of hospitality with these ideas in mind. Choose as many of the examples as you would like to use, depending on the length of time available and group interest.

Biblical Examples:

Read Genesis 18:1-19
What is the role of hospitality in this story? How would you describe the hospitality offered by Abraham and Sarah? Many commentaries speak of the three visitors as angelic guests. Upon receiving hospitality from Abraham and Sarah, they deliver the promise that they will have a son, and thus fulfill God’s promise to Abraham that he shall have many descendants.
It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.

*Matthew 25: 31-46
Who is the host in this story? Who is the guest? What does this mean for our own activities as hosts? How does this change the way we see others?

Matthew 26:26-29
In this, the Last Supper, who is the host, and who is the guest?
“Jesus gave his life so that persons could be welcomed into the Kingdom and in doing so linked hospitality, grace, and sacrifice in the deepest and most personal way imaginable.” (29) Pohl

Luke 14:12-14
Why does Jesus tell us to invite the poor and lame to our events? How did this challenge the social norms of Jesus’ time, and how does this challenge the social norms of our day? Can you think of an example of this happening in a contemporary setting? What might be the results of having such a party?

*Luke 19: 1-10, John 4: 7-9 (and continuing if time)
What is Jesus doing, eating at the houses of sinners and drinking water drawn by a Samaritan woman? What is the response of the surrounding community and the person who speaks with Jesus? What is the result of the interaction? (Salvation comes to both; Jesus begins to reveal that He came for the whole world, not just the Jews).

John 14:2-3
Have you ever considered these verses in the light of hospitality? What emerges as we consider together Jesus as the guest in disguise (Matt 25) and the host preparing an eternal place of rest?

Hospitality as a Mark of the Early Church:

Next we move towards discussing hospitality in the days of the early Church.
In the writings of the early Church, it’s clear that hospitality was a necessity, and a marked part of the Church’s life. Churches were encouraged frequently to provide hospitality to traveling church members and preachers, and the writer of Hebrews even wrote: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:2)

Writing of the early Church, and calling the Christians ‘atheists,’ Emperor Julian (AD 362) wrote: “Why do we not observe that it is their benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead and the pretended holiness of their lives that have done most to increase atheism?...For it is disgraceful that, when no Jew ever has to beg, and the impious Galilaeans (Christians) support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us.” (44) (Pohl)
Over time, the community-based hospitality of the early Church moved more into the sphere of private homes, and became a method to increase one’s social stature, rather than a moral obligation to the poor. As early as the 18th century, theologians were mourning the changes in hospitality.

How would you characterize hospitality in 21st century America? What would happen if we started trying to offer the kind of hospitality described in the days of the early Church? In what ways might it become countercultural?

Conclusions:
Reread quote from beginning of discussion, but with more context:
“Although we often think of hospitality as a tame and pleasant practice, Christian hospitality has always had a subversive, countercultural dimension. ‘Hospitality is resistance,’ as one person from the Catholic Worker observed. Especially when the larger society disregards or dishonors certain persons, small acts of respect and welcome are potent far beyond themselves. They point to a different system of valuing and an alternate model of relationships...People view hospitality as quaint and tame partly because they do not understand the power of recognition. When a person who is not valued by society is received by a socially respected person or group as a human being with dignity and worth, small transformations occur...Many persons who are not valued by the larger community are essentially invisible to it. When people are socially invisible, their needs and concerns are not acknowledged and no one even notices the injustices they suffer. Hospitality can begin a journey toward visibility and respect.” (61-62)

How is hospitality related to justice? Who in our larger community today might be in need of such hospitality and visibility?

This discussion is being held in the context of Refugee Sunday—what characteristics of refugees render them in need of hospitality? What are ways that we can welcome them and increase their visibility?

(Volunteer with refugees through a resettlement agency or ESL class, sponsor a family, advocate for refugees through your elected officials, donate supplies to refugee families in need, etc).

The study can conclude here, or move on to address practical ways to become involved in the practice of offering hospitality to strangers, and some of the concerns that this raises.

Applications/Practical Concerns:

-What are some of the risks in offering hospitality? Which are the most significant, and how can we deal with them?
(Personal safety, chance of being robbed or taken advantage of; offer hospitality in communal settings, get to know people in public before inviting them to your home, maintain a loose hold on personal possessions, etc.)

-Who should offer hospitality? What if I’m not qualified to help those with complex problems or issues in their life?
There are people who are in need of professional assistance, but that does not preclude hospitality. The Bible asks all believers to offer hospitality to those in need.

“We will never believe that we have anything to give unless there is someone who is able to receive. Indeed, we discover our gifts in the eyes of the receiver.” (87) (Nouwen)

“‘I believe that hospitality...means to give of yourself...(in) other types of services you can give of your talents or...skills or...resources...The tasks aren’t what hospitality is about, hospitality is giving of yourself.; If hospitality involves sharing your life and sharing in the lives of others, guests/strangers are not first defined by their need. Lives and resources are much more complexly intertwined, and roles are much less predictable.” (72) (Pohl)

- What things are to be avoided in offering hospitality? Are there ways in which I might actually harm my guests?

“Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. 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...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...Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the life style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own.” (Nouwen, 71-2)

- hospitality should not be offered to fill needs of the host, but should be offered freely to those in need
- hospitality should recognize the humanity of their guests before their needs—guests should be received with honor and respect, and graciously allowed to leave when they are ready to move on
- hospitality should not be considered a one-way process; each guest carries precious gifts to reveal to the host
- hosts should always recognize the divine nature of hospitality, that we offer hospitality to Jesus himself, and that as believers, we are simultaneously host and guest ourselves
Participant Version:

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Matthew 26:26-29
Luke 14:12-14
John 14:2-3

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All quotes unless otherwise noted come from:


Collected Quotes and Online Bible Study Resources to assemble your own discussion on hospitality:

Quotes:

Quotes from *Making Room*, by Christine Pohl

Quoting Lactantius: “But in what does the nature of justice consist than in our affording to strangers through kindness, that which we render to our own relatives through affection.” (19)

“In the church, the household of God, hospitality is a fitting, requisite, and meaning-filled practice. Hospitality is important symbolically in its reflection and reenactment of God’s hospitality and important practically in meeting human needs and in forging human relations. Though part of everyday life, hospitality is never far removed from its divine connections.” (29-30)

From the writings of John Chrysostom, “When Christians understand their life on earth as residing in a foreign land, where they are ‘strangers and sojourners,’ they can more readily recognize how uncertain their stay is. If Christians live ‘in a strange land as though in (their) home country,’ they build ‘extravagant mansions,’ and indulge in ‘countless other luxuries,’ wasting their substance on ‘inanities.’ Because, when forced to leave the land of their sojourn they will be unable to take their possessions and buildings with them, Christians should instead use their wealth to benefit those in need.” (115)

From the *Catholic Worker*, “Houses of hospitality are centers for learning to do the acts of love, so that the poor can receive what is, in justice, theirs; the second coat in our closet, the spare room in our home, a place at our table. Anything beyond what we immediately need belongs to those who go without.” (115)

Quoting Miroslav Volf: “The will to give ourselves to others and ‘welcome’ them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity.” (149)

Irish proverb: “It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.” (169)

“Our hospitality both reflects and participates in God’s hospitality. It depends on a disposition of love because, fundamentally, hospitality is simply love in action. It has much more to do with the resources of a generous heart than with sufficiency of food or space. Chrysostom described this generosity of love well: ‘If you have a hospitable disposition, you own the entire treasure chest of hospitality, even if you possess only a single coin. But if you are a hater of humanity and a hater of strangers, even if you are
vested with every material possession, the house for you is cramped by the presence of guests.” (172)

Quotes from Reaching Out, by Henri Nouwen:

“Although many, we might even say most, strangers in this world become easily the victim of a fearful hostility, it is possible for men and women and obligatory for Christians to offer an open and hospitable space where strangers can cast off their strangeness and become our fellow human beings.” (65)

“When hostility is converted into hospitality then fearful strangers can become guests revealing to their hosts the promise they are carrying with them. Then, in fact, the distinction between host and guest proves to be artificial and evaporates in the recognition of the new found unity.” (67)

“In our world the assumption is that strangers are a potential danger and that it is up to them to disprove it.” (69)

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Quotes from Just Hospitality, by Letty Russell:

“Hospitality is an expression of unity without uniformity, because unity in Christ has as its purpose the sharing of God’s hospitality with the stranger, the one who is ‘other.’” (80)

“hospitality is also subject to deformation when it is practiced as a way of caring for so called ‘inferior people’ by those who are more advantaged and able to prove their superiority by being ‘generous,’ rather than using a model of partnership. We need to end the ‘lady bountiful’ frame and strive to meet others as they are, not as objects of our charity, but persons in their own right, capable of making choices about their destiny. If we insist they dress as we do and follow the same manners, we are not exercising hospitality but ‘reforming’ others to match our expectations.” (80-1)

“In the Bible, God’s welcome—hospitality—has at least four overlapping central components: (1) unexpected divine presence; (2) advocacy for the marginalized; (3) mutual welcome’ and (4) creation of community.” (82)
Quoting Koenig on Paul’s writings, “everyday welcomings of the ‘other,’ especially at table, are really acts of worship ‘for the glory of God.’” (84)

Welcoming the Stranger: Quotations to Stir Heart and Mind

Compiled by Richard A. Kauffman

LET ALL GUESTS who arrive be received like Christ, for he is going to say, "I came as a guest, and you received me."
Rule of St. Benedict

A STORY said to originate in a Russian Orthodox monastery has an older monk telling a younger one: "I have finally learned to accept people as they are. Whatever they are in the world, a prostitute, a prime minister, it is all the same to me. But sometimes I see a stranger coming up the road, and I say, 'Oh, Jesus Christ, is it you again?'"
Kathleen Norris, Dakota

FOR THE LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who ... defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.
Deuteronomy 10:17-18

BE KIND, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle.
Philo of Alexandria, quoted in Dan Wakefield, How Do We Know When It's God?

TO OPEN UP and become sensitive to God's own mission could also mean that we begin to recognize the strangers as messengers, sent to us with a particular message, and that, therefore, before we dare preach to them we ought to listen to their stories.
Gerhard Hoffman in International Review of Mission

I BELIEVE we are still here to help men and women to learn to live as each other's guests. We are guests of this life. We are guests of this planet, and we are almost destroying it. ... People should learn a new language, a new way of life, learn to be guests and let others be their guest.
George Steiner, literary critic, quoted in personal correspondence by humanitarian-aid executive Tom Getman

THE SCOPE of who it is that God means to invite to the feast, you see, is not ours to define. We are not put in charge of the guest list.
Don C. Skinner, A Passage through Sacred History

IN AN ERA when many of us feel that time is our scarcest resource, hospitality falters. ...
"In a fast-food culture," a wise Benedictine monk observes, "you have to remind
It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.

yourself that some things cannot be done quickly. Hospitality takes time."
Dorothy C. Bass, Receiving the Day

THAT IS our vocation: to convert ... the enemy into a guest and to create the free and fearless space where brotherhood and sisterhood can be formed and fully experienced. Henri J. M. Nouwen, Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life

YOUR WHOLE LIFE through you ... seek the face you've lost in strangers' faces.
Frederick Buechner, Godric


**Online Resources and Bible Studies:**

**Welcoming the Stranger: What Hospitality Teaches Us about Justice, by Christine Pohl for Sojourner Magazine**

The centrality of hospitality to the social practices of many societies attests to its almost universal importance. Necessary to human well-being, hospitality offers protection, provision, and respect to strangers while it also sustains fundamental moral bonds among family, friends, and acquaintances. In the first centuries of the church, Christians gave hospitality to strangers a distinctive emphasis by pressing welcome outward toward the weakest and those least likely to be able to reciprocate. What can a closer look at this practice of hospitality teach us about the moral life more generally?

For Christians, the moral life is inseparable from grace. It begins in worship as we recognize God's generosity toward us. Our morality involves responsibility and faithful performance of duty, but fundamentally it emerges from a grateful heart. We can see this clearly in hospitality, which is first a response of love and gratitude for God's love and welcome to us. If not shaped by gratitude, when we encounter difficult demands or ungrateful guests, our hospitality quickly becomes grudging. Grudging hospitality exhausts hosts and wounds guests even as it serves them.

Christian hospitality reflects and participates in God's hospitality. God loves the sojourners and provides for the vulnerable. God gives the lonely a home and offers us a place at an abundant table. Hospitality depends on a disposition of love; it has more to do with the resources of a generous and grateful heart than with availability of food or space.
Hospitality also reminds us that our moral life is inseparable from close attention to the life of Jesus. In the gospels, Jesus is present as gracious host and needy guest. He welcomes the outcast and depends on the welcome of ordinary folk. In his table fellowship, he challenges cultural assumptions about who is welcome in the community and in the kingdom. Jesus identifies himself with the stranger and sick such that ministry to them is ministry to him (Matthew 25:31-46). Jesus teaches explicitly that we are to include the poor and infirm (those who seem least likely to reciprocate) in our invitations to dinner (Luke 14:12-14). We know what hospitality should look like when we dwell in and on the life of Jesus.

We learn also that moral actions must be embedded in a larger tradition. Our moral life is not best understood as a series of individual decisions or as the product of unrelated virtues. It makes sense only in a larger narrative that makes sense of our entire lives. The practice of hospitality is nurtured by attention to its rich and complex place in the Christian tradition. Stories and injunctions from scripture and the wisdom and struggles of practitioners through the ages provide the context within which our hospitable responses are formed.

FOR MUCH OF OUR HISTORY, Christians addressed concerns about recognition and human dignity within their discussions and practices of hospitality. Especially in relation to strangers, hospitality was a basic category for dealing with the importance of transcending social differences and breaking social boundaries that excluded certain kinds of persons. Hospitality provided a context for recognizing the worth of persons who seemed to have little to offer when assessed by worldly standards. This rich moral tradition can help to shape a theological framework for contemporary concerns about inclusion and difference.

But locating ourselves and our practices within the historic tradition is not enough—the moral life depends on a community that embodies its deepest commitments. To do hospitality well, we need models for whom it is part of a way of life. We must learn from those who have found ways to practice hospitality within the distinct tensions and arrangements of contemporary society. We also need a community with whom to share the demands and burdens of welcoming strangers.

As we practice hospitality to strangers and reflect on its place in the Christian tradition, additional insights into the moral life become available. To sustain countercultural practices, we must understand our efforts as small pieces of God’s larger work. The ability to continue to welcome strangers in the midst of an unjust world comes from putting our efforts into the larger context of God’s ongoing work of justice and healing.

Hospitality reminds us that justice and friendship belong together. For the Christian, concerns about justice can never be abstract and disembodied. Our efforts must be grounded in the wisdom that comes from living alongside those whose lives have been overlooked or undervalued by the larger society.
Finally, hospitality helps us see that moral practices are shaped over a lifetime. We learn the skills of hospitality in small increments of daily faithfulness. The moral life is much less about dramatic gestures than it is about steady work—faithfulness undergirded by prayer and sustained by grace. The surprise is how often it is accompanied by mystery, blessing, and joy.

Christine Pohl, author of Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition (Eerdmans, August 1999), was professor of Christian social ethics at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, when this article appeared.

From: http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj9907&article=990741g

Chicken & Biscuits and More by Nancy Carter

"Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'” Matthew 25:44-45.

Introduction

"Hospitality" means a variety of things to different individuals, families, and cultures. When I was growing up in the rural Midwest, I associated "hospitality" with "comfort foods" such as chicken & biscuits, mashed potatoes, gravy, and homemade bread, jam, and apple pie. I thought that my paternal grandmother made the best mashed potatoes and gravy. I loved the uniquely soggy bottom crust of my maternal grandmother's apple pies. My great-grandmother often offered us fat slices of hot baked bread. I slathered the bread with real farm butter and her homemade strawberry jam.

Henri Nouwen has described one of the major spiritual movements in a Christian's life is to go from hostility to hospitality. The way we become more hospitable is to practice hospitality toward the real people God sends us. No one can be hospitable in isolation; we must be in relationship with others.

While Christian hospitality might include serving chicken, biscuits, and other "comfort food," it also includes righteous, or just, actions. The scriptures, from Genesis through Revelation, reveal that offering hospitality is a significant aspect of faithful living.

Hospitality in the Bible: An Overview
In the Bible, the original Greek word for "hospitality" is *philoxenia* (fil-ah-zeen-ee-a), which means "love of strangers." We recognize *philo*, the first part of the word, because of our word "Philadelphia," the city of brotherly and sisterly love. The second part of *philoxenia* is present in the first syllables of the English word "xenophobia" ("fear of strangers").

Biblical hosts show "love of strangers" by making sure that their guests receive food, drink, clothing, shelter, and/or respect. When at table, however, hosts serve lamb, calves’ meat, bread, fruit, and wine—foods of their culture. (Not chicken and biscuits!) Food, drink, clothing, shelter, and respect are basic necessities of life. Hospitality and justice are therefore linked in the Bible. When some individuals or groups lack these necessities, justice is not fully present in society.

To address lack of justice in biblical times, Israel created laws to help strangers, widows, and orphans, some of the most vulnerable people in society—people whom Jesus would have called "the least of these." For example, Exodus records this command: "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry" (22:21-23).

The Bible contains references to a number of exemplary hosts including Abraham and Sarah; Ruth; Rahab; Joseph, the father of Jesus; the woman who enters an assembly of men and shows hospitality to Jesus; the Good Samaritan; the father who welcomes home his son who has been prodigal; the "sheep" who are separated from the "goats" at the last Judgment; the couple walking the road to Emmaus on the first Easter; and Jesus himself. In many scriptures, especially certain psalms, God is also portrayed as hospitable. For instance, Hebrews 13:1-2, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, alludes to the stories of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18); Lot, his wife, and his daughters (Genesis 19); and Manoah and his wife Judges 13). These people showed love to divine strangers.

Expansion Of The Theme Of Hospitality

Many of the stories "about hospitality in ancient Judaism centered around the figure of Abraham," who, by Jesus' day, was venerated as a model for hosts. Genesis 18 tells how Abraham and Sarah were blessed with a child after they welcomed divine strangers. Genesis 19 continues the theme of hospitality, with Lot welcoming the same strangers who visited the couple from Emmaus who invite him into their house on the day of the resurrection do not recognize him until he sits down at table and breaks bread with them (Luke 24:28-35). At a welcoming table, strangers who are guests can become divine hosts.

Throughout the historical unfolding of the Bible, the theme of hospitality expands, changing the definitions of neighbor and stranger, host and guest. Unexpected hosts...
and guests appear, challenging our notions of whom God welcomes and whom God finds hospitable. Ruth, an ancestor of Jesus, provides hospitality to Naomi and receives hospitality from Boaz. She is a Moabite, one of the ethnic groups rejected in older scriptures because of their lack of hospitality (Deuteronomy 23:3-6). Rahab, a prostitute who is also an ancestor of Jesus, is rewarded with protection after she gives housing to Joshua and his men.

Ruth and Rahab, as unlikely hostesses, are precursors of the Good Samaritan, a person from a despised group of people who exemplifies hospitality. The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) describes hospitality in answer to a question, "Who is my neighbor?" In the context of the great commandment to love God, neighbor, and self, the parable teaches that those who reach out and help do God's will. It also implies that those who refuse to touch or to help, who cling to laws of purity and cultural prejudices, do not do as they should.

Joseph, the father of Jesus, is an example of a person who lived out the values of hospitality and justice that are held up in many scriptures. According to Matthew, Joseph, a righteous man, takes a Divine Stranger into his house (i.e., his family tree and his home). In Matthew's narrative, Joseph is the first person who must decide whether or not to welcome Jesus into his life.

Joseph first shows mercy by planning to divorce Mary quietly. Had he followed the strictest laws, Mary would have been killed, for Jewish law indicated that women who were believed to be sexually unfaithful should be stoned (Deuteronomy 22:20-29). His compassionate actions do not stop with a merciful interpretation of the written law, however. Upon a direct revelation from God through a dream, Joseph goes beyond the written law and welcomes Mary as his wife. In so doing, Joseph makes Jesus "legitimate," a part of his house.

The law said that those born of an illicit union should not be admitted to the assembly of the LORD (Deuteronomy 23:3). Had Joseph not welcomed Jesus into his house of lineage, Emmanuel ("God is with us") would have been blocked from entering God's house on earth (the formal worshiping community, the synagogue). How ironic it would have been if religious law had forbidden Emmanuel, the very presence of God, to enter God's house. Congregations today may need to ask if they may be shutting their doors to divine visitations because of religious legalisms.

For Jesus, hospitality meant not only welcoming strangers, but also doing justice. His ideas were derived and expanded from similar concepts in Jewish scriptures and tradition. One of the ways Jesus taught hospitality was through parables. In the parable of the two sons (Luke 15:11-32), the father shows hospitality to both sons, the one who has stayed with him and the one who has returned after wasting his inheritance on riotous living. He encourages the older son, who is angry about the good treatment of his prodigal brother, to be hospitable, too. The host does not judge whether or not the
guest is worthy to be loved and helped, but simply provides hospitality. Another way Jesus taught hospitality was through his actions. Some Jewish leaders criticized him for eating with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:10-13; 11:19; Mark 2:15-17; Luke 5:30-32; 7:34-40; 15:1-2). Simon, in whose home Jesus was a guest, suggested that Jesus would not have let a woman wash his feet with her hair had he known she was a sinner. Jesus, refusing to distance himself from the woman, said that she had been even more hospitable than Simon. "Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven." (Luke 7:47)

According to the Gospel of Matthew, the New Creation of God avoids judgmental/exclusionary ways of relating to people by offering an ethic of hospitality and justice. Formerly "unwelcome" people, such as women who had sex with persons who weren't their husbands and "illegitimate" children, were not to be treated poorly anymore, whether that meant capital punishment (in Mary's case) or exclusion from the religious congregation (in Jesus' case). God's House is an inclusive house, with many rooms for the unclean, Gentiles, women, tax collectors, persons with physical and emotional challenges, and others (Matthew 8:1-10:37). The "least of these" may really be God in disguise.

Jesus' story of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) suggests that it is foolish for us to define and treat others as either strangers or neighbors, as belonging or not belonging to God. Faithful people simply practice hospitality, particularly to those who are in need of food, drink, clothing, shelter, and respect. We are to treat the "least of these" with the utmost hospitality, as if they were the "greatest of these," says Jesus (25:45). We are to do what is righteous ourselves and not to judge others in terms of whether or not they deserve hospitality.

Conclusion

Jesus' example, careful reading of the Bible, a community of committed laity and clergy who support each other, and revelation through the Holy Spirit can guide us through the process of developing the best ministry of hospitality for our time and place.

Notes

2. See Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Timothy 3:2; and 1 Peter 4:9. The word for "hospitality" does not appear in the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament), though hospitality is described as a righteous behavior in a number of places. [Click to Return]
3. John Koenig, New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 15. The gospels refer to Abraham's image of host when Jesus praises the centurion's faith and says that many will eat with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in God's realm (Matthew 8:11) and in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). [Click to Return]
Practice Hospitality: A Bible study on evangelism, personal work, and hospitality.

In the last few weeks, we've been studying God's word as it relates to personal work and evangelism. Specifically, we've been talking about calling and visiting people.

Today, I want to continue our study with the topic of hospitality.

What is Hospitality
The Greek word philoxenia, translated hospitality literally means, "love of strangers." It is the act of entertaining strangers or guests.

Hospitality in the New Testament
God commands us to be hospitable.

- We are to practice hospitality (Rom. 12:13).
- We are to be hospitable to strangers (Heb. 13:2).

Hospitality is a quality of the saints.

- It is a qualification of elders (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8).
- It is a qualification of widows who are supported by the church (1 Tim. 5:10).

We must be hospitable toward Christians.

- We must be hospitable to one another without complaining (1 Pet. 4:9).

First century Christians were hospitable beginning at Pentecost, eating meals together in their homes.

- The saints were sharing meals together from house to house, taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart (Acts 2:46).
We will be judged as to whether we've been hospitable to the saints.

- Jesus tells us that judgment will be based, in part, regarding our treatment of the saints. A faithful disciple is hospitable (Matt. 25:34-40).

Hospitality in Our Day and Culture

Circumstances in our culture are different from Old Testament and New Testament days. Today we have hotels affordable to anyone who can afford transportation. The need for hospitality toward the recreational or business traveler does not exist as in Bible days.

Circumstances in our culture are similar to Bible days as they relate to missionaries. Brethren who travel and preach still need a place to stay and their daily needs met, just like Jesus and the apostles. We could have an opportunity to be hospitable when a preacher travels here to teach.

Circumstances in our culture are similar to Bible days as they relate to poor brethren. Jesus tells us that we will always have the poor with us; therefore, we will always have poor brethren whom we can relieve by entertaining them in our homes. If these poor brethren are members of our congregation, we must seek to relieve them of their distress as we have opportunity (Gal. 6:10).

Circumstances in our culture are similar to Bible days as they relate to the social fellowship we have with one another in our homes. Sometimes we may share a meal, and other times we might just visit and encourage one another. Hospitality in this sense is for encouragement and spiritual growth rather than meeting a pressing physical need.

It Takes Hard Work

It's not easy to be hospitable. It takes time, energy, and often financial resources. Maybe that's why Peter commands us to be hospitable "without complaint" (1 Pet. 4:9).

But hospitality is also one of the most rewarding areas of service that we extend to one another. No matter the circumstances, it's rewarding and encouraging to spend time with brethren and be encouraged by one another.

But sometimes I think we make hospitality harder than it has to be. We may not be hospitable because we think our homes have to be absolutely immaculate, or we think we have to provide an extravagant meal, or we're so drained from doing everything else.

Over time, I've learned that all the physical things don't matter (house, food, etc.). What's important is spending time with brethren, no matter what shape the house is in or what there is to eat.
And I've learned that when we put in a little extra work to extend hospitality to brethren, life is much more enjoyable, and we're more encouraged. We have to spend time with brethren to be encouraged by brethren.

Young People
It's important that we teach our children to be hospitable. Our example may be the most important way we teach our children regarding hospitality. If we raise our children in a hospitable home, they'll think it normal to have people over for social fellowship, have traveling preachers stay in our homes for days at a time, and have the poor over to eat meals.

It's important that we teach them to help us prepare to be hospitable. They need to help get the house ready, and make other preparations. Teaching them to get their rooms ready, or giving their rooms up for a house guest, is as important as teaching them to attend church and partake of the Lord's Supper.

Most importantly, young people need support and encouragement to have other young Christians into their homes. Our children need to spend time with Christians, and just not the worldly people they meet at school.

As parents, we are commanded to bring our children up in the training and admonition of the Lord. This means we must make provisions for social experiences that are encouraging and helpful to our children, in addition to providing for all their other needs. In part, hospitality toward other young Christians and their families will greatly help us obey God’s command.

Conclusion
Our Western, twenty-first century culture, is different from the Asian culture in which the Bible was written. Our opportunities to be hospitable to brethren are different from the opportunities afforded first century brethren. We occasionally have an opportunity to be hospitable to poor brethren. And we have numerous occasions to be hospitable to one another on a social level.

Remember that hospitality is a command. And that it must be accompanied with the correct attitude, without complaining (1 Pet. 4:9).

From: http://www.biblestudyguide.org/articles/evangelism-conversational-evangelism/evangelism-practice-hospitality.htm

Hospitality

- Commanded.

Romans 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.
It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.

1 Peter 4:9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

• Required in ministers.

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

Titus 1:8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

• A test of Christian character.

1 Timothy 5:10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

• SPECIALLY TO BE SHOWN TO
  o Strangers.

Hebrews 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

  o The poor.

Isaiah 58:7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Luke 14:13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

  o Enemies.

2 Kings 6:22-23 And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

• Encouragement to.

Luke 14:14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.
Hebrews 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

- Exemplified.
  
  *Melchizedek,*

  Genesis 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

  *Abraham,*

  Genesis 18:3-8 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it.

  *Lot,*

  Genesis 19:2-3 And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

  *Laban,*

  Genesis 24:31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.

  *Jethro,*

  Exodus 2:20 And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread.
It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.

Manoah,

Judges 13:15 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.

Samuel,

1 Samuel 9:22 And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons.

David,

2 Samuel 6:19 And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.

Barzillai,

2 Samuel 19:32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man.

Shunammite,

2 Kings 4:8 And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

Nehemiah,

Nehemiah 5:17 Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us.

Job,
It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.

Job 31:17 Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;

Job 31:32 The stranger did not lodge in the street: but I opened my doors to the traveller.

Zaccheus,

Luke 19:6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

Samaritans,

John 4:40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

Lydia,

Acts 16:15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Jason,

Acts 17:7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

Mnason,

Acts 21:16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

People of Melita,

Acts 28:2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.
Publius,

Acts 28:7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

Gaius,

3 John 1:5-6 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

From: http://www.bible-topics.com/Hospitality.html
It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.

**Other books/resources:**

A Woman of Hospitality, a Dee Brestin Bible study

http://www.seamenschurch.org/images/upload/bible_study.pdf  Seamen’s study, interesting model, and includes some prayers

Creating Space: Hospitality as a Metaphor for Mission (online article)
http://74.125.95.132/search?q=cache:dqvNVlD-ShQJ:www.cms-uk.org/DocumentManager/tabid/81/DMXModule/410/Command/Core_Download/Default.aspx%3FentryId%3D1427+Hospitality,+therefore,+means+primarily+the+creation+of+a+free+space+where+the+stranger+can+enter+and+become+a+friend+instead+of+an+enemy&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox-a  

*Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, by Miroslav Volf.

Sojourners Sermon Booklet on Immigration:  
http://www.sojo.net/action/alerts/080402_Sermon_Booklet.pdf

*Just Hospitality*, by Letty M. Russell.