

Are You "Practicing" Hospitality?

Good morning; Today we are continuing to try different experiences of doing Church, recognising different people learn best and enjoy, a variety of different styles and formats. Today we are trying out Café style. The first part of the experiment has had a positive result; everyone here in good time 10 to 10, enjoying the Bacon sandwiches, Croissants, catching up with the Sunday papers and real Coffee. A first!

When we were asked to lead and prepare a service on Hospitality I was reminded of 25 years ago when we took 30 people from All Saints to a Christian conference. "The Stoneleigh Bible Week" the first time we took the Big Oven like the one back of Church today and practised central catering in a tent, much to the surprise and envy of the other churches around us.

I went along to an afternoon seminar 2pm graveyard slot on Practising Hospitality 10,000 people on site less than 10 turned up. The speaker said, It's always the same nobody releases how important Hospitality is to God, everyone wants the charismatic gifts, Healing, Prophecy, and Preaching, believing they are more important. It is right at heart of God's agenda for all of us as Christians, it is how we are called to live our lives. Any way the talk changed my life, we have spent the last 25 years trying to work it out, Hospitality as a Christian life style.

1 : 1000 (People in Church 100 / 2500 = ? We have done better today!)

It got me thinking about the "practice" of hospitality.

This morning / evening; I want to share a few thoughts and ask, "Are we *practicing* hospitality?" Individually and as a Church family.

Hospitality is the most mentioned and talked about gift in the bible both in the old and the new testament. This is because God knows human nature struggles to be hospitable to others and prefers its own enjoyment and success.

Hospitality Commanded by God

As we've already heard - Dictionary def.

Hospitality is the friendly reception and treatment of guests, or strangers, in a warm and generous way

God's def.

- First and foremost, it is a heartfelt response, it is a mirror image reflecting God's generosity, and hospitality inviting each of us into his eternal family, by Grace alone. In heart felt response we must show hospitality to others to encourage them to see God for themselves.
- By inviting friends and strangers into our homes and sharing what we have in Love.

- By going to visit others where they are, in their homes, places of work and sometimes desperate need.
- It is opening up of Oneself, and sharing what we have, the giving of Time, Resource, a listening ear, responding to needs, being vulnerable and most importantly offering of Love.

What hospitality is not; it is not to entertain family and friends in your luxury home, with the very best food and wine, so when they go home, they think more of you; and less of themselves. We should leave people feeling better about themselves – this should always be our intention.

Sometimes we may believe hospitality is optional, or someone else's gifting

- As we see in ([1 Pet. 4:9](#)). **"Be hospitable to one another without complaint"**

Hospitality is indeed a command by God, and equally important as other things Christians are called to practise such as coming to Church services. Etc

It reminds me of a verse from [James 1:29](#). Many people in the world don't want to go visit, and see to the needs and suffering of others, for the same reasons they don't want to be hospitable, why, because it can be costly.

Again in ([1 Pet. 4:9](#) we are **Warned: Don't Complain**

God commands us to be hospitable without complaint). This shows that we'll be faced with challenges in order to obey this command, because God already knows some of us will complain about it.

People complain about things they don't want to do. And, there are many things people find to complain about when practicing hospitality.

- It can be inconvenient, especially when working, going to school, or we're tired.
- We think we will have to do extra work like clean the house, cook for guests, and maybe give up our beds.
- Hospitality often takes away from other things we could be doing, such as enjoying our success, wealth, relaxing with family and friends the list is endless.

God realizes sacrifices must be made to practice hospitality, and that some Christians will complain about it. So, we should look at hospitality as a test that reflects whether we're truly God's children.

(Hospitality Is Enjoyable, If. . .)

Hospitality is enjoyable if we love God. Because we love God, we want to do

everything He commands. It follows Therefore hospitality isn't a burden, and we can and should enjoy it.

Hospitality is also enjoyable if we love people.

([1 Jn. 5:3](#)).

- "For this is the **love of God**, that we **keep His commandments**; and His commandments are **not burdensome**"

([1 Jn. 3:16-18](#)).

- " **let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deeds and truth**"

When we're hospitable to others, we show that we love God, because we are observing His commandments.

And because God's commandments are not burdensome, we enjoy the time we spend with others as we practise hospitality. Like Jesus says, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive."

Hospitality: Friends and Strangers

Sometimes we're good at practicing hospitality with family and friends, but not so good with strangers.

But God commands us to extend hospitality to both.

" ([Heb. 13:2](#)).

- **Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers**, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it

Practicing hospitality with strangers may be a bigger test than just practicing hospitality with people we know, because it's harder to open up to people we don't know.

([Rom. 12:13](#)). ("**Practice**" Hospitality)

- "Contributing to the needs of the saints, by **practicing hospitality**

This tells us; We're not only to be hospitable, but we're to "practice" hospitality.

The word "practice" in [Rom. 12:13](#) means to seek after eagerly, God wants us to be intentionally hospitable, like Abraham who pleaded with three angels (thinking they

were men) to stay with him long enough to rest, while he washed their feet and fed them.

In ([2 Cor. 13:5](#)).

God commands us to test ourselves

Let's Test Ourselves and our Church life

We can all ask ourselves three questions.

1. Are we intentionally practicing hospitality?
2. Do the fruits of our lives show that we eagerly endeavouring to be hospitable?"
3. Are we eagerly endeavouring to be hospitable to strangers, as well as family and friends?

Encouragement at end of service – a few examples

- Mission Partners
- Iranian man at Waitrose car park
- Café
- Simple suppers
- Mother in Waitrose Coffee Ministry
- Family Friday
- When I am speaking or talking to clients at work, I often end up talking about some aspect of Marcham church life, in response people usually imagine we are some Big Oxford Church and can barely believe it when tell them we are a small Rural Church in a community of 1000 houses. My response is, it not my Church, its Gods Church which can never be limited by The Building, Facilities or Location. Rather it is powered by Faith and enabled by the Time, Talents and Generosity of the whole Church family.

In preparing today's service, we were both Challenged and Encouraged in equal measure, and pray the same will be true for you.

As we thank God for his generous hospitality to us in welcoming and accepting us when we were strangers, let us be challenged to step out of our comfort zones in these coming weeks and practise hospitality to others – maybe a challenge for Lent??