

Practising Spiritual Disciplines



HOSPITALITY

Sharing • Relationships • Thankfulness

We look to God and his Word for our worldview and values, and trust his Spirit for our transformation. To become truly hospitable people, we must give God room and permission to let maturation happen (see Romans 12:2).

- 1. Hospitality is Directed Toward the Stranger:** Hospitality is a virtue that is expressed through creating a safe and open space in which strangers may enter and discover the welcoming Spirit of Christ. Margaret Guenther explains the need that pilgrims, spiritual journeyers, have for hospitality: It is a fact of life that travellers cannot survive in comfort without hospitality. However prudent their planning and abundant their supplies, if the journey goes on long enough they will need the care of a host, someone who offers a temporary home as a place of rest and refreshment.
- 2. Hospitality Creates Spaces to be Known:** What is the nature of the temporary home, the place of rest and the refreshment that others need? We have complete freedom to be creative and to follow the Holy Spirit as he prompts us to open our whole lives to others.

We can each identify with the longing for a sense of home and the safe place to offer our gifts in a context of community. Because we live in a fragmented and hostile world of criticism, demands and competition for position and resources, we have so much opportunity to be radically different. Further, in a world obsessed with control and reward, no-strings-attached hospitality is a subversive and healing practice. Practise hospitality with no expected return or reward. As God has welcomed us, we can, by the Spirit, reflect the nature of our initiating, gracious, extravagant God.

- 3. Christian Hospitality Highlights God:** Rowan Williams beautifully describes our calling as Christians to become a place where God happens for somebody else when, by God's grace, we open the door to him by way of acknowledging our own need and failure, pointing to the promise and hope of life with God. This commission requires humility paired with open, intentional and unrushed time for others, and finds its safety and security in a God who has laid the foundation for authentic relationships. Consider finding new and deeper ways to be seen and to share. Let God's work of grace in your life be an open and spacious meeting point for others. God is extravagant in his welcoming and his giving. When Jesus sent out his disciples, he reminded them, "Freely you have received; freely give" (Matthew 10:8 *NIV*). Let's aim toward growing in God's grace that we will freely give in the way we have so freely received.

My Action Plan

→ Offer hospitality to my spouse, a neighbour and/or a stranger.

→ Be creative as I follow the Holy Spirit's prompts to open my life to others.

→ Read Luke 24:13-35. Consider how the guest and host in Biblical stories bring life to one another as hospitality is given.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Cut out and keep in your Bible or journal. Allow these verses to mould your idea of hospitality.

"Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway. We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him. Now that we are set right with God by means of this sacrificial death, the consummate blood sacrifice, there is no longer a question of being at odds with God in any way. If, when we were at our worst, we were put on friendly terms with God by the sacrificial death of his Son, now that we're at our best, just think of how our lives will expand and deepen by means of his resurrection life! Now that we have actually received this amazing friendship with God, we are no longer content to simply say it in plodding prose. We sing and shout our praises to God through Jesus, the Messiah!" (Romans 5: 6-11 *The Message*).

Meditate on the passage and ask God to mature you to become more like him in the way he welcomes and loves.