

Gospel Hospitality

SESSION SIX: FAMILIAL SPACE FOR EXPERIENCING THE GOSPEL

In general, hospitality is about treating a stranger as an equal to the host by creating space for him to be protected, provided for and taken care of, all of which is followed by assisting and guiding him on to his next destination.

THE ORIGIN OF HOSPITALITY

Creation: God's Hospitable Act

There is a lot of history to consider in understanding the act or art of hospitality, but it all goes back to the beginning... (Genesis 1-2)

From what we know of the story what can we learn about hospitality from how God creates a place for Adam and Eve?

Israel: God's Hospitable People

Think of the numerous occasions where Israel found itself as the strangers among a host people. In some cases they found a hospitable reception (Egypt with Joseph in charge; the spies and Rahab). In other cases they found themselves treated like enemies or slaves (Slavery in Egypt; Babylonian Captivity). They understood the effects of hospitality personally.

Consider God's commands to His people regarding strangers: Leviticus 19:9-10, 33-34; Deuteronomy 10:18-19...How should this inform how we care for those around us?

Can you remember a time when you, though a stranger, were treated like family in a host environment? Share that story with the person next to you...

Jesus: Good News Hospitality

Jesus entered into a culture informed by a variety of worldviews, Hebrew, Roman and Greek to name a few. In this culture, the concept of hospitality found its roots in several streams.

1. Hospitality was a key virtue in Greek culture (and other nearby cultures) as evidenced by its importance in many myths and stories.
2. The Greek practice of hospitality where strangers passing outside a Greek house would be invited inside the house by the family and treated as equals. The host washed the strangers' feet, offered them food and wine and only after they were feeling comfortable could be asked to tell their names.
3. This practice was under-girded by the thought that the gods sometimes mingled among men and if you hosted a deity poorly, you would incur the wrath of a god.
4. The Hebrew understanding (as briefly considered in the passages above and demonstrated also in the story of Abraham, Lot and the angels– Genesis 18-19)
5. The Latin root words of hospitality could mean host, guest, stranger or even enemy.

In light of this culture, the Story of God and the purpose of Jesus' life what then are the implications of Matthew 5:43-48 and 25:31-46 in regards to hospitality?

GOSPEL INFORMED HOSPITALITY

Another way of describing hospitality is the creating of space that allows people to BE, to BECOME and then to DO...

TO BE:

Rested...

In a broken world, marred and diseased by the effects of sin, people need the space to rest. This is why Jesus called people who were weary and heavy laden to come to him. He would give them rest for their weary souls. In the gospel, Jesus calls us to rest in his work on our behalf so that we can be a people at rest who provide sanctuaries of rest for others.

How do we create space for rest?

Our True Selves...

Before the Fall Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. God had created a place and made space for them to be themselves without covering or façades. Through the gospel, we understand we didn't deserve Christ's sacrifice but are given his righteousness; God is now pleased with us and we don't need to cover up or hide. One of the ways we create space for people to experience and come to know the gospel is by creating space for them to reveal their true selves and see that they are loved regardless of the "wrinkles and wounds" of sin.

How do we create space for people to be their true self?

TO BECOME:

Whole...

The Gospel isn't only about loving sinners or even forgiving sinners. It is also about restoring broken and marred people into healed and whole people who grow to become imitators of Jesus—restored image bearers of God. Jesus created space for people to be and to become (Think Mary, Peter, Thomas, the woman at the well, the blind man, etc...). Gospel hospitality implies creating space for people to be known, to be real, to be loved despite their "wrinkles and wounds" and ultimately to be led, with the Holy Spirit's help, to healing and wholeness.

How do we create space for people to be led toward healing and wholeness?

TO DO:

The works we were created for...

The movement in the gospel goes from who God is and what he's done for us to resting in the person and work of Jesus and then forward into the works he created us to do (See Eph 2:-10). This is the result of Jesus' gospel hospitality. He equalized himself with his enemy – becoming human. He became our servant – to the point of death. He spent all that he had to clean us up – by becoming our sin and giving us his righteousness. Then He sent us His Spirit to empower us to do good works for his sake so others could be welcomed in to the family. When we engage in gospel hospitality we are regularly asking ourselves: ***How do we create space for the stranger to be rested, restored, healed and prepared for the work God has called them to?***

So how do we create space that prepares people for what God has called them to?