

with a random act of neighborly kindness. **Nextdoor** makes it easy to talk with neighbors about what matters most to you.”

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*Summary - The ultimate purpose of hospitality is to minister to those around us – both believers and unbelievers. Our hospitality is a form of ministry and is a way that we show love, care, concern, and how we can serve others!*

This is Part 4 of a four sermon series preached at Forks Community Church. Scripture passages are in *italics*, my comments are normal type. Booklets are to be read in this order:

Now I am a child of God

Now I am in a family

Now I am reaching out to the stranger

Now I understand

The audio of the actual sermon can be heard on the Forks Community Church website,

<https://www.forkscommunitychurch.org/>



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# Once I Was a Stranger



But Now,  
I know what I can do

Jim Peterson in his book *Evangelism as a lifestyle* tells a story about a Brazilian man named Mario. For 4 years he had had Bible studies with him. Mario was a Marxist intellectual and political activist, an unlikely candidate for Christianity. But he became a believer. Several years after his conversion he asked Jim if he knew what had been the major factor in his coming to Christ. Jim thought it might have been the many hours of intellectual conversation about scripture, but that wasn't it. Mario said "Remember the first time I stopped by your house? We were on our way someplace together and I had a bowl of soup with you and your family. As I sat there observing you, your wife, your children, and how you related to each other, I asked myself, When will I have a relationship like this with my fiancée? When I realized the answer was Never, I concluded I had to become a Christian for the sake of my own survival"

A summary of main principles established thus far:

-Hospitality primarily means creating a safe space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an unknown entity. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where growth can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to bring them into relationship.

**-The ultimate act of hospitality was when Jesus Christ died for sinners to make everyone who believes a member of the household of God. We are no longer strangers and aliens. We have found a relationship with God. Everybody who trusts in Jesus finds a home in God.**

-Let thoughts of how God has dealt with you be an encourage-

We are older with children out of the house and a very flexible schedule. A whole lot different than young family where both are employed somewhere.

Halloween - We live in a neighborhood where there is lots of Trick or treat traffic, grilling hotdogs works well for us. It would be a little silly to expect someone who lived in an area where houses were far apart to try this. But. Something else will work. Densely urban areas will differ from suburban areas. Whatever you do, do it with gospel intentionality and cultural sensibility.

Don't feel like you have to do more than you can

Don't underestimate what you can do

Do what you can

Two helps:

*"A Candle in the Window Hospitality Network*

is a growing online, worldwide network of Christian households *delighting* in hospitality. Our hope is to multiply the blessings we have experienced in our own home through hospitality as our members travel, share a meal and open up their homes to one another." <https://acandle.wildapricot.org/>

**Nextdoor** is the free, private social network for your neighborhood. It is the best way for you and your neighbors to hear what's happening in your local community. Whether you're looking to get to know the people on your street, hire a local babysitter, find boot sale deals, or sell your unwanted household items, At **Nextdoor**, we believe that your neighborhood should be more than just where you live, but a place you are proud to call home. Oftentimes, the simplest way to foster a welcoming community is

## 2. Serve Others Rather Than Trying to Impress Them

Be yourself, but remember Your goal isn't to draw attention to yourself, but to Christ.

## 3. Reject the 'My Home Is My Refuge' Mentality

Jesus is our refuge. Anything else we make our "refuge" is idolatry. When it comes to our homes, we should think *stewardship* rather than *ownership*. A home is a place to welcome and love the broken. Hosting reflects the values of God's kingdom, giving people a foretaste of what's to come.

Be on the lookout for that lone person at your church. Invite them to eat after the service, or drop in during the week.

4. Give open invitations, especially invitations for events that are outdoors. You can put an invitation on NextDoor saying, "We're going to have a cookout. Bring a folding chair and a friend." Remember the 10 percent rule. If you invite everyone, about 10 percent will come. But we need to be consistent about hosting. Be warm in responding to people. Cast wide nets.

## 5. Pay Attention to People's Needs, Likes, and Concerns

Surprise guests with their favorite food or beverage. Supply them with material items they need. These little touches will leave a lasting impression on your guests. It doesn't need to be anything pricey, just thoughtful.

Pay attention to the deeper heart issues: a person's fears, dreams, hopes, and questions. These are great pathways into further conversations. We need to learn how to answer people's questions and speak to their needs rather than giving rote presentations.

## 6. Don't Feel the Need to Copy Others' Practices

ment and a motivation to love Him and others

Where He took you from - past

Where He has put you – present

What He has in store for you – future

-God's example of reaching out to some of the most unlovely people around, US when we were unbelievers, is a challenge for us to think about. But it is also a pattern He expects us to follow.

-The first Christians viewed themselves as part of a brotherhood that transcended all national, racial, and social boundaries. It was rooted in one great thing they all had in common – their adoption as children of God.

-If you belong to Christ, then you are part of this family

If you think someone seems unapproachable, they might feel the same way about you

Love is demonstrated in hospitality and hospitality helps love to grow

Think about how interesting the people here are. Begin to try to discover what makes them special or unique.

Relationships most often take time to grow

To *Live in harmony with one another* takes **time** and **intentionality**

-Not showing hospitality is neglect:

Of the Lord's instructions

Of the needs of others

Of an opportunity for a blessing

-Throughout the Old Testament, God welcomes, establishes, feeds, protects, nourishes and instructs unlovely, rebellious, unbelieving, disobedient people with gracious hospitality.

-Practicing hospitality is a viable means of reaching out to the Nones and other disenfranchised parts of society

-Our neighbors, the stranger, might be a lot more willing to go to a neighbors house then to a strange place like a church. Especially if you have been a good neighbor and seem like a normal person.

-At our house we behave the same whether there are believers or unbelievers there. We don't browbeat anyone or say you have to listen to a Gospel presentation or you don't get desert.

We just act normal. We pray before dinner. We bring God and biblical principles into our conversation.

-We need to expand our vision of hospitality. It is not just something a specially gifted few people can do. It is not just entertaining close friends and relatives.

The Book of Romans is quite interesting. It is often thought of as a major theological work with difficult things to understand:

God's judgement and the Law; predestination and human choice; relationship of law and grace; balance between grace and human responsibility; Israel and the Gentiles.

Culminates in **Romans 12:1** *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

**2** *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*Rom 12:4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

belief. It has absolutely nothing to do with entertainment”

Strategic hospitality is a hospitality that thinks strategically and asks: How can I draw the most people into a deep experience of God's hospitality by the use of my home or my church home? Who might need encouragement just now in the battle against loneliness? Who are the people who could be brought together in my home most strategically for the sake of the kingdom? What two or three people's complementary abilities might explode in a new ministry if they had two hours to brainstorm over dinner in my house?

Strategic hospitality is not content to just have the old clan over for dinner again and again. It strategizes how to make the hospitality of God known and felt all over the world,

### **1. Expand Your Guest List**

When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just. ([Luke 14:12-14](#))

Jesus had already rebuked *the guests* of the party ([Luke 14:7-11](#)); by telling them to treat others more honorably than themselves. then he corrected *the host*. When you have a party—Christmas party, birthday party, or some other significant event—invite those who *can't repay you*. Invite the marginalized. And you will be repaid “at the resurrection of the just.”

Jesus fills up ordinary events with eternal significance.

[.The Gospel Comes with a House Key](#) [Rosaria Butterfield](#)

Before Rosaria Butterfield became a popular Christian author, she was a tenured professor at Syracuse University, a lesbian feminist fighting to advance the cause of LGBTQ equality, and an unlikely convert. In 1999, her life intersected with the gospel of Jesus Christ through a friend's radically ordinary hospitality. From hating Christians to becoming one, the transformation took place slowly and outside a church pew when the church came to her.

“When I lived as a lesbian in a diverse LGBTQ community in New York in the 1990s, someone's home was open every night for anyone in our community. The AIDS epidemic simultaneously terrified and unified us, and it was unthinkable that anyone in our community would be left alone in chronic and extensive ways, especially during such desperate times. My lesbian partner and I opened our home on Thursday nights, and I learned back then how to cook for a crowd of unknown numbers, and make serving others a priority, even in the midst of a frenetic professional life. If the church felt the priority of our brotherhood and sisterhood over and against our fleshly identities, we too would make hospitality a priority. Christian unity would shift our focus from programs to relationships. We would see our lack of vibrant, regular, and distinctive hospitality as the dirty, rotten sin that it is.”

“ Hospitality is about meeting the stranger and welcoming that stranger to become a neighbor—and then knowing that neighbor well enough that, if by God's power he allows for this, that neighbor becomes part of the family of God through repentance and

Which leads us to this passage

*Rom 12:9 Let love be genuine. Might need to be a matter for serious prayer and some hard decision making*

*Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

Competition

*11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.*

*12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.*

*13 Contribute to the needs of the saints intelligent and knowledgeable assessment*

*and seek to show hospitality.* transition

*14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.*

Now talking about those outside the faith community

*15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*

Need to know, Ask, Pray – Okay I will pray for you, better I have been praying for you

*16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.*

*17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.*

*18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

*19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the*

*Lord."20 To the contrary, If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will*

*heap burning coals on his head."21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Or you might turn him into a friend*

**Hospitality is *not* about showing off your house, your decorating skills, or your cooking abilities.** It is not just having friends

over to play games

{although that can be an element of it}. It is not

about you or

your possessions – Business was good, bought a

new rug- expensive Persian carpet, a crowd of be-

lievers and unbelievers

over. Mother in law holding cup of tea tries to sit on floor and spills her tea all over.

Hush comes over the room

Whether it was thinking of typical mother in law issues

Or thinking how they would respond

Or what, but it got real tense

I quickly asked if she was all right and said ‘Don’t worry it’s just a rug’

That response changed everything, people felt relaxed and safe

Hospitality is about God and how he **uses** you and your possessions to serve those you come into contact with – both friends and strangers, both believers and unbelievers.

When we have non-Christians into our homes, it should not feel like a trap where they are subjected to lectures about the Christian faith or why they are going to hell if they don’t repent. Hospitality should be about relationship building, genuine friendships,



helping those in need, being examples, and above everything having the right heart attitude.

When you genuinely care about people because you know that God cares about them, those people will pick up on your sincerity, and they will want to hear what you have to say. So don’t be scared to start a conversation about your beliefs, but the key word is conversation...be ready to listen to what they have to say as well. Ask them what their thoughts are, what kind of background they come from, or what kind of questions they have. They should feel like questions are not only allowed in the discussion but are normal.

One Muslim friend would go through a long preamble and apology before asking a challenging question. I finally told him:

We are friends;

If you have a real question that you want an honest answer to, please ask;

I won’t be offended by your questions, I know you won’t be offended by my answers;

The only thing that would hurt me would be if you thought that you couldn’t ask me hard questions.

This attitude should go for Christians and non-Christians, discouraged Christians should be able to talk about their questions, doubts, and fears in the presence of other Christians without feeling uncomfortable or looked down upon.

It is through grace that we can offer any hospitality at all, and when we remember that...we will carry out hospitality with humble and genuine hearts.