

C Change

Small group discipleship resources for the 21st Century



Worksheet 5: Hospitality

what one congregation is doing

Members of the North Ringwood congregation share weekly with the residents at a supported accommodation unit for people battling mental health issues.

On this particular day, sitting outside around a table, a large crowd gathered as they heard the singing. Much laughing and singing ensued.

The manager of the facility turned to me and said, "This is the banquet!" (see Luke 14:15-24)

(Ian Hickingbotham)



"Just as the human need for hospitality is a constant, so, it seems, is the human fear of the stranger... Some societies try to appease strangers with gifts; others exclude or even destroy them."

(Ana Marian Pinenda)

This sheet is part of a series on discipleship in the 21st century. It is offered by the National Assembly as a discussion starter for small groups, in congregations, faith communities or other settings. It may also be used for personal reflection. Low resolution copies of this sheet can be downloaded free of charge from the Assembly website or high quality print versions can be purchased from MediaCom for a small fee to cover printing costs.

Katalina's story

I was brought up in a close-knit, extended family. We always had visitors. So from a very young age I learned what it means to offer Tongan hospitality and welcome all.

In our culture, the hostess must give the best that she has – not the "discarded", not the "unwanted", not the "excess", but the best. If the best happens to be all that we have, then that is what we must give.

This notion of hospitality involves great generosity and selfless giving. As a Christian, I believe this is true to the way of Christ Jesus.

Tongans are deeply spiritual and are also very proud. Our understanding of hospitality is tied intimately to values of respect, humility, integrity and honour.

Hospitality to strangers involves making allowances for things that we would not allow our own to get away with. God may just be providing us with an opportunity to love because we need to love.

The Tongan Christian experience teaches us hospitality where the "stranger" is not to be feared or alienated, but valued and welcomed.

To be authentic witnesses to the ways of Christ, are we not called to love the stranger in our midst as we ourselves need to be loved?

(Katalina Tahaafe-Williams)

“You shall love the alien as yourself” (Lev. 19:34 NRSV)

try these....

1) When a new family moves into your street, invite them for coffee. Help them to get to know the local area. Tell them what you appreciate about your church and let them know they would be most welcome.

2) If your congregation is registered for the Becoming Disciples process, work through the checklist of being a welcoming congregation.

3) Preparing the congregation:
<http://assembly.uca.org.au/TD/disciples>. Make practical suggestions to your church council.

4) Get to know a recent immigrant to Australia, perhaps a person of another faith. (Volunteering to help people with English is a good way to get to know them.) Allow yourself to be enriched by the friendship.

Prayer

Welcoming, hospitable God,
before whom every creature is guest,
I give thanks for all I have,
and all I am able to share.
Let my life be a table of plenty,
where all I meet may come and feast.
Grant me an open heart
to welcome any who come.
Remove from me all selfishness of spirit,
that stranger and friend may find
in me your welcome.

Amen.
(Ian Price)



“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

(Heb 13:2 NRSV)

“To welcome the stranger is to acknowledge him as a human being made in God’s image.”

(Ana Maria Pinenda)

reflections...

- Reflect on a time when you experienced warm hospitality. What did it mean to you at the time? How did it help you?
- How does the theme of hospitality play out in the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)?
- What is it like for people who come to your church for the first time? What could they be feeling? How are they introduced to the people and the facilities?