



RADICAL HOSPITALITY

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Part of hospitality is being welcoming to new faces, but that is only just the beginning. Radical hospitality is grounded in the biblical term 'philoxenia.' Philoxenia is often translated as 'hospitality,' but it is a compound word that literally means 'to love the stranger.' So the term challenges us: how do we love with excellence the strangers that enter our doors each day? This is more important than any other service the Church can provide.

Radical hospitality is about more than just an open invitation. Visitors to UM Church for All People (C4AP) consistently remark about the incredible hospitality they encounter: "I just felt so welcomed," "I felt I belonged here," "I was accepted," "I felt the love of God immediately." Pastor John Edgar says that for C4AP radical hospitality means "being authentic in valuing one another." It means wrapping our arms around those that the world has discarded or turned away, and assuring them beyond any doubt that they matter, that they are loved and affirmed.

In the story of Mary and Martha, which of the two women showed Jesus the greatest hospitality? Too often, our churches run around forming programs or creating 'ambiance' to make people feel welcome. But Jesus calls us to listen and to form relationships. Sometimes, this simply means being present, accompanying someone on their journey. We want to do, we want to fix, but most often we are called to simply be with.

Radical hospitality also requires that we are vulnerable ourselves as well. We must not just serve meals, we must sit and be served as well. We must not just pray for others, we must share how they can be praying for us as well. Otherwise, we leave no room for the love of Christ to shine through the gifts and graces of others. When we are vulnerable and form authentic relationships of mutuality, true community and solidarity begins to form.



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It takes work to model this kind of love. It takes humility and perseverance. It takes a desire to see the image of God in all of God's people, and to confirm God's loves for them, no matter how that person may respond.

Finally, radical hospitality is also about caring for one another enough that we are willing to sacrifice deeply on the other's behalf. It means setting aside one's own comfort and preferences for the sake those around you. It means caring for the injustice in others' lives, and working daily to right those wrongs. It means putting love into action and demonstrating in meaningful ways that God has not forgotten about any of God's children. Radical hospitality means showing the daily practical outpouring of God's love to each person we encounter.

Discussion questions:

1. What are some of the common themes in the above article? How is radical hospitality manifested at your church?
2. Who would make you uncomfortable sitting in the pew next to you? How can you and your church be more hospitable to those you circled?
3. What were some of Jesus's acts of radical hospitality in His ministry? What was the effect of that hospitality on the people He encountered?
4. How do new visitors experience your church setting? What are some simple steps that your community can take to be more radically hospitable?