

Values Matter Discovery Starters

We Value People

17. PRACTICE HOSPITALITY

YWAM affirms the ministry of hospitality as an expression of God's character and the value of people. We believe it is important to open our hearts, homes, YWAM locations and campuses to serve and honor one another, our guests and the poor and needy, not as acts of social protocol, but as expressions of generosity.

[Gen 18:1-8](#); [2Sa 9:1-11](#); [Psa 68:5-6](#); [Pro 22:9](#); [Isa 58:7](#);
[Mat 25:31-46](#); [Act 28:7-8](#); [Rom 12:13](#); [Heb 13:1-3](#); [1Pe 4:9](#)

Value #17 – Practice Hospitality: Close Encounters of the Divine Kind

Biblical Foundation:

The LORD appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.

"My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while. Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. And since you've honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey."

"All right," they said. "Do as you have said."

So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Hurry! Get three large measures of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread." Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees (Gen 18:1-8).

Discovery Starter:

The story of Abraham's hospitality to the three strangers sets the context for the exhortation we read in Heb 13:2, "Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!" Because of this story the ancient Jewish rabbis taught that "Abraham introduced ... hospitality" into the world (*Midrash Tanhuma Yelammedenu*, Noach 14.2) and therefore hospitality was called "the Abrahamic virtue" (*Chizkuni*, Genesis 21.21.1).

Although Abraham's household was a very large enterprise (from within its ranks he could muster "318 trained men" according to Gen 14:14), when it came to serving these unexpected guests he did not delegate it out to his servants. He welcomed these strangers himself. Consider the many verbs which describe his actions: Abraham "was sitting, looked up, noticed, saw, ran to meet, bowing low, said, [found favor, asked, asked], let me prepare, to refresh, ran back, said, ran out, chose, gave, took, [prepared], served, and waited on" his angelic guests. Abraham's intentional activity modeled the heart and function of hospitality. We read: "*let me prepare some food to refresh you*" – this described the activity (*prepare*) but also the purpose of hospitality (*to refresh*). Three times it mentions that Abraham "*ran*" underscoring his diligence. His actions embodied an over-the-top generosity when he asked Sarah to "*Get three large measures*" (the equivalent of 28 cups worth!) "*of your best flour.*" He certainly wasn't simply meeting a minimal cultural requirement. He lavished hospitality on the three strangers and did it in a servant-hearted way as he personally "*served and waited on*" them.

The three strangers are called *xenos* in the Greek Septuagint translation: foreigners, outsiders. In English we speak of *xenophobia*: the fear of those who are different from us. It is important to note that when Paul lists the characteristics of a Christian leader in Titus 1:7-8, he mentions five things that a leader must avoid before proceeding to six things that a leader must embrace. The first of these positive requirements is that the leader must be *philoxenos*: a lover of the stranger, who graciously welcomes the outsider into the family of God in very practical ways. This is true hospitality.

Keep Going:

As Abraham saw strangers passing by his house he invited them to partake in a generous meal. Are there strangers in your neighborhood whom you could invite to join you in breaking bread? How else could you reach out to someone in your community that you do not know, and display the welcoming love of God? Why not take the time to pray with those in your household and develop a plan to show hospitality to someone who is a *xenos* to you this week?

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