

Hospitality: A Loving Response to a Lonely City

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[0 : 00] Thank you very much. So I want to let you know that I resisted an important temptation last evening. I've been thinking, obviously, about loneliness. And I picked, well, actually, Ed read me in our home. I'm reading and Ed's reading, but he interrupts me all the time to read from books, which is good because we read different kinds of books. And I wouldn't read what he read necessarily. So anyway, he read from this book called *Traces of the Trinity*. Excellent book. I think Harvey probably recommended to Ed because Harvey is guilty of a number of expenses in the Norman household. Recommending books to Ed. But this one begins a chapter on loneliness with this. One is the loneliest number there will ever be. And lonely is the saddest experience you'll ever know. Thus says Three Dog Night. Three Dog

Night was a popular band in the 60s, I think. Or maybe, yeah, 60s because 70s. Anyway, so I thought, oh, yes, one is the loneliest number. I remember that. So I googled it and heard the lyrics and they've been running in my head ever since. So I thought, you know, what a fantastic introduction to this talk. But then I thought, can I betray my husband by playing you a pop song from the 70s? And it just seemed like I couldn't do it. He even gave me permission, but I still couldn't do it. So you have to, but that was the song that was running through my head. But then somehow when driving to church this morning through the cherry blossoms and knowing that Vancouver is considered one of the most livable cities in the world, what are we these days? Two? Three? One? Anyway, we all know. So beautiful. Such a wonderful place to live.

So lonely. Alexander referred to the study that was done two years ago. I actually looked it up and read it. And it's, it talked about that the, that the identified by many, many people, majority of people in this survey was isolation and disconnectedness. Isolation and disconnectedness amid this great beauty.

Isn't that sad? I think that UBC, you all know UBC, a beautiful campus, strikingly beautiful. And it's a very, it's a very lively, large campus. You know, the reason I do, the reason I do campus ministry, this is a well-kept secret, is because I love being on campuses.

I'd either have to become a student again, which I've done already several times in my life, or do campus ministry in order to have legitimacy on campus. So, but there are 51 students up at our UBC campus in Vancouver. There are 14,000 faculty and staff. That's a lot of people. How can it be so lonely? In an institution that is supposed to be all about the exchange of ideas and a community of scholars, people are profoundly lonely. I find this all the time in students. And to be honest, it distresses me a great deal. Recently in our international student Bible study, I said, so, you know, what did you do on the weekend? And one guy who's a visiting scholar from, from China here without his family, as many international scholars are, he said, he said, I don't know anyone in Vancouver. So I went fishing. I went wherever he goes to somewhere and fished. And he said, I would rather have been with people.

[4 : 45] And all those people and all that loneliness. Another thing that I found in this book, *Traces of the Trinity*, is this comment.

Because as I've been thinking about this, I've been trying to say, why, why, why? This is what Alexander Solzhenitsyn said. Sorry, no, I thought I read that. But it's the great Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann. I automatically read Solzhenitsyn. Ooh, that's bad. I'm glad I caught it. This is what he said after coming to the United States. And it's true here as well. For years, people have rushed to America for an easier life, not realizing that deep down, life is much more difficult there. First of all, America is a country of great loneliness.

Each one is alone with his own fate, under a huge sky in the middle of a colossal country. Any culture, tradition, roots seem small there. But people strongly cling to them, knowing full well their illusory character.

Secondly, this solitude in America demands from everyone an existential answer to the question, to be or not to be. And that requires effort. Hence, so many personal crashes. In Europe, anyone who falls, falls on some ground. In America, he flies into an abyss. So much fear, such angst.

[6 : 22] I think that's true. I think there are other factors as well, because it's not just North America, it's the Western world, is the concept, the philosophical concept of individualism.

The individual has been raised to such a level that people feel that there is no one around them. They are responsible for everything about themselves. This is a heavy burden. Not long ago, an Iranian couple came for dinner at our house. I've talked before about this.

And they started, they were, we were exchanging information as we do and talking about our families. And they asked me, so your brothers and sisters are all Nova Scotia. How often do you see them? How often do you talk with them?

Well, it turns out that they talk to their children around the world, not all in the same place, once a day.

[7 : 44] They were appalled at my lack of motherly love that I don't. And I was thinking, what would my sons think if I insisted on talking to them every day?

That might be the end of our relationship. It's hard to be lonely in that kind of culture.

When I was in Israel, I lived with an Arab family in Haifa for a week in a small apartment with the husband and wife and three of their four adult children in a small apartment, and me in a small apartment.

And there were people coming through all the time. And when there wasn't anybody extra there, they were talking on their cell phones, Skyping or emailing.

And it was, the volume of conversation was quite high. And I'm hiding away in my room to get a little bit of alone time.

[8 : 50] And I'm thinking, this is why there were desert fathers. Have you ever wondered about that? Because they lived in that kind of culture. The only thing they could do if they were an introvert was to go into the desert.

I might have become a desert father, even though that could be challenging in many ways. But in our society, no, it's not like that. I don't speak to my children every day.

I love them. I pray for them. I think of them. But I don't speak to them every day. And so this sense of, you know, it's all about me. And individualism automatically breeds selfishness.

Not only is it all about me, but what's in it for me? If I invest in two hours to prepare a meal for somebody, what's in it for me? We have before us the spectacle that's recently been in the news of, you know, many thousand dollar plate political dinners.

Where you pay a lot of money to go and sit next to a cabinet minister. Well, sorry, I don't think it would be worth my money. But it's so that you lobby for your business so that you get an advantage over everybody else.

[10 : 05] That's hospitality. That's a dinner. That's what it's like in our culture. And then tied in with this, of course, is the busyness that we all experience.

Because if I'm the only one that matters, I've got to take care of myself. I've got to work really hard. I've got to think about my retirement. I've got to make enough money for myself for the rest of my life. I have to work really, really, really hard. And everybody around me is doing the same thing. I'm in competition with them for a limited number of dollars for me to live on when I'm older. So they're all tied in together. And then an interesting and important component of our loneliness is the value that is placed on sex.

So the way to avoid loneliness in our society is to have sex. But not sex as it was intended by God for us to have, which was about intimacy and closeness and commitment and companionship and being together for years and years and years.

[11 : 30] Sex was meant to be part of that. And instead, we have made it into like going to the bathroom. Necessary. Yeah, a bit of a relief.

Yeah, whatever. That's what we've made sex. So one of the gifts that God has given us, not the only one, but one of the gifts as a response to loneliness has been trashed in the pig pen.

I know I'm speaking strongly, but when you work with students, you get to see this firsthand. It is so tragic. So I may have mentioned this at another time.

I mention it quite often. There was a survey done when hooking up first became a term that's used for what's happening among young people, where you get together for sex, maybe several times,

maybe a hundred times.

But there's no relationship. It's all about sex. And Globe and Mail did an interview with someone, a young man, who was speaking about hooking up with a particular girl.

[12:35] And the reporter said to him, you know, what do you talk about? And he said, we don't talk. And the reporter said, well, wouldn't you like to sometimes talk with this person?

And he said, yes, I want to talk to her. I want to have a relationship with her. But for her, it's just about sex. This is so sad.

This is the reality. And then another component in our loneliness is what is meant to be the opposite, and that's the social media.

If you have 3,000 friends on Facebook, wow, how could you be lonely? 3,000 friends. Imagine it. You could spend all your time finding out what those 3,000 people had for dinner last night. You would get pictures. You'd get pictures. You know, your Facebook would be full of selfies.

[13:40] Right? You know, with wild animals or movie stars or cherry blossom backdrop. You could not be lonely. Oh, you see what lies we tell ourselves.

You see what lies are out there. There's no companionship. There's no conversation. There's no talking about the things that really matter. Now, having said that, of course, you can talk about things that really matter on Facebook, and some people do.

But that's not what it's for, and that's not what people expect. And I'm, you know, like people do when they rant.

It's always about generalities. Right? So, when I rant about Facebook, it's a generality. So, we are lonely.

Our society is lonely. So, we're believers. We're Christians. Should we care? We're not as lonely as they are.

[14:41] I hope. Should we just let them get on with it? They've chosen it. Well, I don't agree. I can't agree. You know, first of all, loneliness is a destructive force in our society.

There are people in the mental illness field who say that there would be so much less need for psychologists and psychiatrists and counselors.

If people had one person in their life that they could talk with, talk deeply with, they could call them up and say, I am having a terrible day.

This is the day that my father died 20 years ago and I miss him so much. They could do that. But instead, there's nowhere that they can say things like that.

And so, they bottle it up inside them and it comes out in depression, in forms of mental illness. And so, that's one reason.

[15:50] The phrase in the report that was done, isolation and disconnectedness, those are two components for most people who are mentally ill.

And as a result, people around us are hurting profoundly.

And in response to that, we believers must care. When we see our fellow human beings hurting so much. And I think also, we need to care because God cares.

God cares deeply about these people. He cares about us. And he calls us constantly into a relationship, into communities.

I will, mindful of the time, I will quickly read one of my favorite passages from Ephesians.

[16:53] Talking about, Paul sets out in Ephesians 1 and 2 and 3, the great and wonderful truths about our faith. All of the gifts that God has given us, all of the blessings that we have in Christ.

And then, Paul says, Remember that at that time, before you knew Christ, you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people, and members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit.

This is what God is doing among us. This is what he's building. And he wants other people to come and be part of his family, to be part of his household. No longer to be strangers and foreigners, to be brought into his family.

[18:16] And so, when we care about people who are lonely, we want them to experience what we are experiencing. We want them to be brought into the very family of God, to belong, to belong.

And, you know, we're called to be merciful because God is merciful. We're called to forgive because God forgives. We're called to care about people who are lonely because God cares about people who are lonely.

And we are called to hospitality because God is hospitable. I deeply believe that hospitality is a godly Christian response to the loneliness around us.

I think that we have done ourselves a disservice by putting hospitality into the category of gifts. You know, some are evangelists, some are teachers, some are prophets, some are hospitable, right? They've got the big house, they've got the money for the dinner, they've got all that it takes. They have the gift of hospitality. Thank God for the gift of hospitality. That's not what I read in the scriptures.

[19:32] I'm going to turn now to Romans 12. Alexandra, I'm trying to cover three of the four pillars of Learner's Exchange. You will notice that I'm not going to say anything about Anglicanism.

That's not because I'm not a lifelong Anglican. So, Romans. Romans.

That amazing book. Chapter after chapter of careful theological argument, right?

And coming in chapter 11 with the great doxology, the culmination of Paul's theology.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of the Lord?

[20:34] Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God what God should repay them? For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever. Amen. That's the culmination. Then what does Paul talk about?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your true and proper worship. That's our response. So, he goes on. In my particular Bible, the headings of chapter 12 are a living sacrifice, what I just read to you.

Humble service in the body of Christ. And then, love in action. This is how, in practical terms, we live out our faith.

And, tucked away, verse 12. No, sorry, verse 13. Share with the Lord's people who are in need.

[21:39] Practice hospitality. Two words. It's in there. And, if those were the only two words about hospitality in the Bible, I could quit now.

I've given them to you. Right? You heard that? Practice hospitality. Not pray for the gift of hospitality. Practice hospitality. Don't enjoy always the hospitality of others.

Practice it yourself. But, that's only the tip of the iceberg about hospitality in the Bible. So, I want to give you, talk about a few more things.

I love reading about hospitality in the Bible. I think I don't, you know, I'm a transplanted Nova Scotian.

In Vancouver. I left Nova Scotia in 1971. 1951. Um, and I've always felt a bit like a stranger.

[22:38] A bit like a foreigner. And, so, for me, um, belonging and having a sense of home, they've always been elusive.

I've always longed for it. And, I've all, it's always been elusive. And, then it hasn't helped that we've moved around across the continent many times in different cities. So, for me, these glimpses of true home have always been very important to me.

So, um, the, one of the, um, most interesting, I think, and one that, it is so easy to let this one slip by.

Okay. John chapter 1. You thought you knew everything about John chapter 1. I've been studying John chapter 1 with the grad students. But, we only did the prologue. So, uh, the next day, John was there again with two of his disciples.

When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, look, the Lamb of God. When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Jesus, turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, what do you want?

[23:48] They said, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying? Come, he replied, and you will see. So, they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him.

And, it was about four in the afternoon. John, as we all know, uh, de-chronicalized the stories of Jesus. Right?

Instead of giving us a chronological order, he arranged things around important concepts and ideas. Um, this must be important.

It's at the very beginning. The disciples are wonderful for asking stupid questions. There's Jesus, and they've just been told, he is the one who was to come.

He is the Lamb of God. He is the Messiah. And so, they start to follow him. That's a good decision. They're smart. But then, when he says, what do you want?

[24 : 53] What do you say when the Lamb of God asks you, what do you want? So, they deflect the question, the answer to the question, because they don't know how to express it, probably, or they're ashamed, or what.

And they say, um, where are you staying? It's what you say when a stranger's in town. Oh, yeah, where are you staying? You know? Uh, so, Jesus' first interaction with these men is to invite them into the not home, he didn't have a home, into whatever home he was staying in.

Whatever place he was staying in, whatever room he had, whatever hovel, whatever. He said, come, come and see. You can see where I live. That's, that's the first invitation to everything else that happened to the disciples.

Come and see. Come into my home. Because homes are important. When we invite someone into our home, we're saying, come, come and get to know me.

Actually, come and get me, get to know me in a way that you can't know me unless you know where I live. And, and, and, gee, that's so, there we have it, right?

[26 : 09] Hospitality without a home. That's important. You don't have to have a home to practice hospitality, according to Jesus. Um, um, Jesus, um, feeding the hungry, the miracles of the, the bread and the fishes, right?

When we talk about that, we concentrate on the amazement of all those people getting enough to eat. Um, I, uh, students come to our home every Tuesday night and I always cook probably, you know, way more than I think I'm going to need for 10, 12 students.

Um, there's rarely anything left over. Um, unlike the, unlike the crowds around Jesus, there are not enough to fill 12 baskets full when the students have left. Um, but, um, food is so much more than filling our insatiable appetites for more food.

I think that Jesus recognized that people were hungry. They'd been sitting there probably all day, but when, but it says he had compassion on the crowd, compassion for their spiritual need and compassion for their physical need.

And in, in, in the teaching, um, in the teaching space, non-physical space that Jesus created around himself, he was aware of the physical needs of the people, deeply aware and longing to meet those needs.

[27 : 50] So that is Jesus, part of his practicing hospitality was caring for the physical needs of other people. Um, there are a number of very interesting examples of, um, the wrong way to do hospitality in the New Testament.

So there's Mary and Martha. Now, I think, I think women, um, who, um, spend a lot of time in the kitchen, do, do a lot of housework.

Um, I think we have always been puzzled by the story of Mary and Martha because poor Martha, of course she cares about the, what the dinner is going to be like when Jesus is there.

Of course she's going to care, cares about all those dirty pots and pans. Of course she cares because that's, that's her job. That's probably a lot of her identity. And then, when Jesus says, well, actually, Martha, you've kind of got it wrong.

It's not about the pots and pans. It's about being together. It's about talking. It's about sitting down together and giving each other our full attention.

[29 : 10] That's what it's about, Martha. Poor Martha. She had got it wrong. How annoying. You know, in my, in my imagination only, not in scripture, but in my imagination, I, I, I somehow have the feeling that Martha is probably a very plain woman.

You know, often when there are two sisters, there's one who's beautiful and one who's plain. She's the plain sister, in my thinking. Um, and yet she found, she found her life's vocation in, in her kitchen and in her home.

And that, um, that is not a bad thing. The, the mistake that she made was not carrying her with the pots and pans because actually somebody has to do them sometime, right?

Or you can't cook the next meal. The, the problem, the problem was that her priorities were, were out. and that became the priority.

Instead of, all of this work that I am doing for this meal is about creating a comfortable, spacious place where we can, we can be Jesus' friend.

[30 : 22] We can listen to him. We can talk with him. We can tell him things. And he'll listen. And Martha hadn't quite got that. I hope she learned.

And I hope she didn't feel too badly. Um, so, not such good hospitality is hospitality that focuses on all those things.

Like, how wonderful is this, you know, what, how wonderful is this, can I make this meal? Um, I, I had, I've had some, um, culinary disasters in my life which have taught me that, yeah, like Martha, I probably need it to hear.

So, when we were newly married, we, we didn't even have our, our own, um, home yet. We were, we were living in someone's house while they were on vacation until our apartment became vacant. And, um, there was a, a woman who'd come to give a, give a, a summer course at Regent named Dr. Ruth Etchells. and Ed had known her in England and he said, oh, you know, we should invite her for a meal, you'll really enjoy getting to know her.

[31 : 34] And I said, sure. I was, I was 22 and had never cooked meals before and, and didn't really grow up in a home where people, I didn't really grow up in a home where people came for dinner.

And of course, I had read Ruth Etchells' book. She was an English professor and I was, I was really intimidated to meet her. But I thought, okay, well, I'll do the best I can.

And I got a recipe from a friend, really good recipe, and it called for, um, chicken. Right, okay, you go to the store and you buy chicken. I can do that.

Um, what I didn't know because I was a new cook is that there is a difference between broiler chicken that you cook under the broiler and boiler chicken, which is hen, old hen, which needs to stew for at least 80 hours before you can put your fork in it.

So, so, I got to the store and there was, there was, you know, uh, this kind of chicken that began with a B. Well, I had heard of broiler chicken from the recipe, so, okay, this must be it.

[32 : 42] And, it was like, mm, like, 49 cents a pound instead of a dollar 49 a pound. Or whatever. Whoa! You know, this is really good.

So, I bought the boiler chicken and I treated it as broiler chicken according to the recipe. And, and so, we sit down and, um, pick up our, say grace, pick up our knife.

Thankful for the food. You should never be thankful for the food until you've tried it. And, and, and, you couldn't put the chicken, the fork in the broiler, no, boiler chicken.

No, no. It was very embarrassing. Ruth Etchells, an absolutely lovely woman, said, Susan, this sauce is delicious. Well, that's just as well because that's all we could eat.

The sauce and the rice and the vegetables. Um, so, you know, that was a Mary Martha moment for me and we went on to have a lovely evening. I'm, I really did enjoy meeting her.

[33 : 50] I'm so glad I did. Um, uh, so, um, yes, it's not, it's not about the best food ever.

It's about conversation and getting to know one another and caring about one another. Um, and then another, um, story about bad hospitality is, um, the story, um, which in my Bible is, um, headed, uh, Jesus anointed by a sinful woman.

So we know the story. Jesus is invited to the home of a Pharisee and it's probably a big, big party, lots of people, lots of amazing food. Um, and this woman of the streets, a prostitute comes in and, and pours out, breaks a jar, precious jar and pours it out on Jesus' feet and is forgiven or told that she is forgiven.

Um, and, um, Jesus uses that opportunity to tell a story, as we all know, um, about, you know, people owing money, who, who is, should be, should be, um, um, which of them will love the forgiver more?

Simon answers probably begrudgingly. I suppose the one who has a bigger debt forgiven. Simon maybe even got that, you know. And then, um, he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, do you see this woman?

[35 : 35] What an extraordinary question. A room full of rich men, Middle Eastern men, no women, and there's a prostitute who's been making a spectacle of herself.

Um, and, and Jesus says to the host, do you see this woman? Talk about elephants in the room. Do you think Simon, the Pharisee, had missed seeing this woman?

I don't. I think she was all too glaringly obvious to Simon. But he, Jesus is calling on him to look at her in a new way.

You think you see this woman, a prostitute, a dirty, filthy prostitute. You think you see her, but you don't really see her at all. And, then, he says, he really gets down to it here, I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet.

[36 : 46] They hadn't been washed, they were pretty dirty. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

Simon was not hospitable.

He had the big house, the big party. He knew all the right people to invite, but he didn't know how to treat his guests, all his guests.

He would have made sure that all the big people had been cared for. Why had he invited Jesus? Isn't that an intriguing question? Did he really want to know?

He got more than he bargained for when he invited Jesus to his house. And in other parts of the Bible, we're told don't just invite the important people.

[37 : 51] Don't just invite your own family, the people who are going to pay you back. hospitality is not about being paid back. It's not about I invite you to my house and you invite me to yours.

That's not hospitality. That's just tit for tat. That's just common social interaction, courtesy.

Hospitality is when you invite people and you have no expectation that they'll invite you back.

Maybe they will, maybe they won't. That's not the point. that's a hard one to learn. And I think it's one of the reasons that we hesitate to invite strangers.

We don't want to put them under an obligation. How can I accept your hospitality when I can't pay you back? I don't know. Interesting to think about that one. but my absolute favorite story of hospitality is at the very end of John, if I can find it.

John 35. Oh, no, John 21. Okay, so at the very beginning of John, we see Jesus inviting people into his room.

[39 : 13] at the very end of the Gospel of John, we have another story about hospitality. And this time, everything has changed for Jesus.

He has completed the mission that he came to do. He has shown people his father. He has taken the burden of sin on himself and died.

He has begun passed the climax of his restoration of the universe so far.

There's a climax still to come. He has passed the test. He's done what he came to do. And now he's leaving his disciples to carry on the work.

Can you imagine leaving the salvation of the cosmos in the hands of those particular eleven men? Would you do it?

[40 : 19] So, the church, the future of the church rests on them. What would you do?

The very least we would do is to write out instructions how to run a church. Problems you will encounter along the way.

Godly responses to those problems. An instruction booklet, right? You're leaving the church in the hands of eleven people, none of whom passed the test.

Talk about passing, none of whom passed the test. They all failed. They're only now beginning to get who Jesus is and what he came to do. So what does Jesus do?

Well, they're out fishing. How many of you have been out fishing through the night? One person.

[41 : 23] I grew up in Nova Scotia. I am the daughter and granddaughter and great-granddaughter and great-great-great-great-great-granddaughter a fisherman. And I've been out in the night, on the water, catching fish.

And before the dawn, you come in before the dawn, or just as the dawn is breaking, you've fished in the night, and number one, you are cold. Even if you're in the Middle East, you're cold.

And you're hungry. And you're tired. And you've pretty much had it with fish. Especially, you know, because either you caught nothing, or, as in now, the disciples had that problem first, but they didn't have it after Jesus said, throw your net on the other side of the boat, and you'll find some fish.

Some fish is a great maritime expression, some fish. That's right, some fish. They got right some fish, those fishermen. And then they come into shore, and when they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread.

Isn't that amazing? You're about to leave 11 failed men in charge of the biggest project imaginable in the cosmos, and you barbecue on the beach, and you invite them to come and have some fish and bread.

[42 : 53] And I bet that fish tasted really good. so, no instructions, almost no instructions about the church, but there was Peter, and Jesus graciously gave him the opportunity to repent for betraying Jesus three times, for denying him three times.

and we know, you know, this is, I know you all know this, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

Three times Jesus tells them variations on feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, feed my sheep. So, those are the instructions for the leader of the church.

Feed the people. And you know, we evangelicals, we love this because it's all about Bible studies and sermons and spiritual food, but it's in the context of barbecued fish and bread, a picnic given by a man who has no home, who is single, you know, the excuse, I can't practice hospitality, I'm a man.

I can't practice hospitality, I'm single. I can't practice hospitality because I'm homeless. Jesus practiced hospitality as a single homeless male.

[44 : 30] And he told Peter, keep on doing it. Keep on feeding people. That's my favorite story of hospitality. hospitality. I do want to leave time for questions and comments because I know that in this room there are many wonderful hospitable people and I want to hear from you.

But I just wanted to end with several examples of hospitality. hospitality. First of all, hospitality doesn't have to be in a home.

One time I was visiting my mother in Halifax and she had gone into a senior's home and I was staying with her for 10 days in the senior's home.

And when you're, you know, 45, it's pretty depressing to live in a senior's home. And Sunday morning came and I went off to church. And there was Grant Biggings.

And Grant was studying in Halifax at that time and we were happy to see each other. And after church he said, oh, Susan, some of us go out for breakfast.

[45 : 42] Would you like to join us? And it was an incredible gift to me. I hadn't had any contact with Christian friends for a number of days.

I was feeling alone in the city that I physically knew quite well, but I was a student there, but that had been a long time before and I was feeling very alone. And it was so delightful to meet new friends, to get to know Grant better.

And, you know, it was an hour, hour and a half. It was lovely. hospitality. Hospitality doesn't require a home. It requires a willingness to include people, to listen, to talk.

I have a colleague in Toronto who also grew up in the Maritimes in New Brunswick, was a journalist and then worked for InterVarsity, and she was in, they invited her to come and take a new job in Toronto.

And she hesitated to leave her little home near Moncton to go to the big city of Toronto, where she didn't know many people.

[46 : 57] But she accepted the challenge and we are all so grateful she did. She's in charge of our PR and publicity and she does a fantastic job. But she moved into a condo in Toronto and and she looked around and knew that she needed to create some kind of community in this gigantic condo where nobody knew anybody.

So, the first thing she did was to put up a notice in the laundry room saying, is anyone interested in joining a amateur writers club?

She's a wannabe writer, more than a wannabe writer, but she very much wants to write. And she thought that might be something. A few people responded to that, a really mixed group of people, and so they started meeting and shared their writing, which is a very intimate thing to do, to share your writing with others and receive their feedback.

So, that went on for a number of months, and a couple of other people joined, and then she decided that she would have a kind of open house in her apartment for anyone in the condo one evening a week.

What a risk. You know, there are hundreds of people there. She doesn't know who they are. So, she did that, and people started dropping by, and I was there one night when this happened. And, honestly, the most eclectic group of people you could imagine, really, truly.

[48 : 45] And then, one of the other women who works for Intersersity in the office found a place to rent in that condo.

So, that added to the community. And then, I still remember, she said to me, well, she said to a group of us, you know, I think probably God wants me to invite people to Bible study.

But she said, you know, can you imagine a less likely group of people to study the Bible? And I said, no, I can't, except students. And so, she invited the people that she knew to, hey, would you be interested in coming and studying the Bible with me?

They knew she was a Christian. And so, a couple of people said yes. And they've been meeting for about two years now. She said, you know, from an evangelistic point of view, not very spectacular, nobody's become a Christian, but we meet and we talk and we care about one another.

And then, a young couple, Heidi and Mark, who went to this church in the 90s, before they moved away, they lived in Kitsilano and full of lots of people their age, they were in their early 30s, and they found that people didn't readily accept invitations to dinner.

[50 : 19] And when they kind of tried to find out why, they realized that people didn't know how to behave, or they thought they didn't know how to behave at a dinner party. They had grown up without knives and forks and plates on a table, maybe candles, no, they had grown up without any sense of what it's like to go to a dinner party.

And so, Heidi and Mark tried to make adjustments, they made it simple, you know, they did everything they could. But they said, well, you know, it's not so much about a dinner party, it's about talking and getting to know one another.

And so they decided that each time they did it, I think it was probably once a month, I'm not sure, that they would say, we're going to talk about this topic and invite people to come with some ideas. And they were, they made sure that there weren't more than four Christians out of a group of about 12. They didn't want it to be, you know, we're here to tell you about Christian view on this, that, or the other thing.

They wanted to invite people into a conversation about things that really matter. Like, you know, what do you do when your dad in Toronto has a stroke and he needs help and you live in Vancouver?

[51 : 42] Things like, you know, how do you deal with homeless people on the street when they ask you for money? things that are important in our city?

Where do you go when you want to find peace? Those are the kinds of things that they suggested that people talk about.

It was great. It was really great. Inviting strangers. Okay, so when we moved to Charleston and South Carolina, and, I mean, talk about culture shock, the deep south is another world.

And, so, and, you know, there we were in it. So, we didn't want to just know church people. And also, my job, grad students and faculty, I wanted to get to know some faculty.

How do you meet people, faculty? faculty. So, so, we prayed. And one day, we were at a coffee shop, our favorite coffee shop, Kudu.

[52 : 50] If you're ever in Charleston, go to Kudu. Tell them you know the Normans in Vancouver. And we were, Ed and I, so we were having a debate.

Not an argument, a debate. I was proposing a new sociological theory about Englishmen. And Ed was fiercely resisting my theory.

So, we talked. And theology came into it and geography and history and everything. And suddenly, we noticed there was a guy sitting behind. He stood up and he came over to the table and he said, I'm sorry, I couldn't help overhear your conversation.

And he joined in. Now, the good thing about that is that he joined in on my side of the argument. I was in need of help.

And so, it turns out that David is a professor at the Citadel, which is a military college in Charleston. Not a believer. And after we talked for another, at least two more hours, and it was six o'clock and Ed said, you know, we really have to go.

[53 : 54] But David, would you like to come for dinner in time? And I was shocked because, you know, Ed is a reserved Englishman resisting all the advances of Americans. And David said, sure,

I'd love to come.

So, we exchanged email addresses and we arranged a time, 6.30 on a certain day. And he told me he was a vegetarian, so that's fine.

So, I had a meal all ready. And 6.30 came. No David. No David. No David. No David. No David. I thought, oh, you know, he's decided it's too risky to go to a house of strangers.

He doesn't, you know. And then, about an hour and 20 minutes after we had invited him, we were just about to eat, he arrived with a container full of very melting ice cream.

and the old streets in Charleston are challenging to find your way around and he got hopelessly lost but that was the beginning of an amazing friendship and when we moved from Charleston we packed up our truck to drive to Vancouver on the hottest day that I'd had there and high humidity and thunderstorms throughout the day and David, his expertise in the military was like arranging transport and he packed our truck so that there was not one square inch of empty space and he sweated, we all sweated we could not have done it without his help and then it was very sweet we all went, or Ed drove our car

[55 : 46] David drove me in his car which had no seats to the rental place where we were going to get a trailer to put our car on so we drove the truck and the car was pulled on the trailer and so we got it all hitched up and we were all ready, we were leaving for Canada and David was fussing around like now are you sure you've got my phone number?

you can call me if you run into any trouble don't forget that on the highway you know, this happens and that happens he was just so worried about us it was very sweet we had endless conversations about faith endless conversations about faith and faith and science and a couple months ago got one of his periodic emails and he said, oh by the way I'm reading a book I know you'll be interested to know that I am reading screw tape letters who knows David's a wonderful guy I'm so glad that we risked inviting him into our lives five after ten time to stop yes just an aside about something I read they don't withdraw physically when they want to be by themselves just inwardly and other people sense that and respect it oh, that's very interesting I guess I need to learn that before I go back thank you, thank you

George oh, sorry, just a sec George was next and then you can yeah no, I just wanted to thank you Susan for her very powerful presentation you're welcome yes did you have a question?

no, I couldn't hear what oh, okay yeah I couldn't hear what he said oh, he mentioned that Arabs have a technique or a withdrawing within themselves when the culture gets too loud and too demanding and that it sometimes looks like remoteness but in fact is a way for people to have introvert time that's helpful yes yes when I grew up in Kerristale we used to go to each other's houses all the time everybody just knew what to do but nowadays that's not the way it is that's right you know there are many families where they don't even practice hospitality to each other one of my students grew up she has a loving mother and father good family only child and she said we never ate meals together she said we were three strangers living in a house they never ate together I read a survey one time that said it was in one of the British papers and it said that 950,000 pounds had been spent on a survey to determine the effect of language development in children compared to how often they ate together as a family oh big surprise families where people ate together more than three times a week the children had better language skills imagine that my reaction

I could have done it for half the price nobody asked me yes Beth it's interesting going to see new apartments and there isn't often a dining room at all there is no place for a table that's right we sit at a little breakfast bar and you can't even at the bay buy a table floor you know that's how it's being reflected yes yes thank God for Nora yes yes yes yes thank you yes yes yes the Swedish priest and I'm Swedish he's coming here twice a year from Toronto and

[60 : 15] I sent up we sent out the message that we sent anybody else who could have him stay over for night over the night because it's lovely to get together we learn from him yes not one reply yes of course so he's coming this afternoon we are having a service at the Danish church in Burnaby this afternoon and he's coming for dinner with other people to my house and staying over and I'm taking him tomorrow noon for on his flight but you know I I had to totally get out of my room and clean out my room yes staying in my room yes it's been a little bit of an effort this time yes but I'm glad that I'm doing especially coming for this clock yes yes yes thank you for doing it it is costly you know when the reason people don't do it often is because it is an act of self-sacrifice to especially having people overnight

I know what you mean we live in a very small two-bedroom apartment and the non-bedroom is full of music books recording equipment my files we have three filing cabinets it's and we sleep in there on the floor when we have people staying overnight and at the moment there's not even room for us to sleep on the floor so you know it's a lot of work but it is so worthwhile you know and so so Tuesday when the grad students are coming for dinner I occasionally not every week thank God I occasionally think why am I doing this is it really worthwhile one night or one yeah one night there was so there was a girl who came to the grad group originally because her cousin in Toronto who is a Christian had been in the grad group and he said Christina you've got to go to Susan's house she has dinner every week so Christina arrived and she had this look on her face what am I doing here I don't know these people I'm not even a Christian anyway she came periodically not every week for about eight months and then one day one night she arrived and it was one of those awful Vancouver nights we can't even imagine them in the sunshine rain rain rain rain all day you know the tenth day thirtieth day maybe of rain and she came a little bit late opened the door and she was soaking wet and she looked in the room of a small our small living room with already you know eight people crowded into it and she said I've had a S-H-I-T-T-Y day and but I knew you guys would cheer me up and you know what she meant was there's food here there's candles here there are people who care about me there are people who actually care that I've had a bad day and you know it's moments like that that I realize yes it is worth it yes yes my brother he went to Nova Scotia because my family they're French Canadian they came there 1750 he's talking with someone on the ferry they found out they're Paysan I was like we are right like that they got food together for picnic took us over to Paysan Island and you grew up in Nova Scotia you find it's very very hospitable that way if this is being put on the internet I'm not sure I can answer that question there are places in the world I've lived in some of them where there is a big reputation for hospitality like in the southern United States the hospitable self it's it's a particular kind of hospitality if you're white you don't invite African Americans the only the only gathering in Charleston in a person's home that I was at where there were African Americans was the choir party at our home hospitality is lavish but restricted so I think I think that societies like Nova Scotia which are closer to the old days when people were hospitable you're more likely to find that kind of thing you are but I would also say that I know a number of people have moved to Nova Scotia and have felt not accepted because they come from away you come from away and it's hard to get past that I met a couple in a bookstore in Mahone Bay one time when we were visiting and they were living in Nova Scotia from Vancouver actually and they said I said so do you have friends to get together they said yes but none of them are [65 : 35] Nova Scotians they're all other people from away I think we have to end now do we so thank you