

The Simplest Way to Change the World – Biblical Hospitality 3

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Date: 20 September 2026

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[0:00] All right. Good morning, everybody. You are the few, the proud who made it to the end. Thanks for coming. The Athenians. The Athenians. The leftists, the right. The right. The right wings.

We're so grateful that you took the time to be with us. Some of you made it all the way through every session. You get a certificate of graduation at the end of this. You don't really. I wish I had that.

But I do have books for you at the end, which is even better than a certificate. If you'd like to go deeper into the topic, I actually have three freebies you can grab.

At the end of this. And I was really encouraged. I read several books for this topic. But these three, I think, kind of capture different aspects of the things that we've been talking about.

One is the namesake of the class, the simplest way to change the world. This one's biblical hospitality as a way of life. Pretty, pretty nice. This one's really angled toward a lot of really practical ideas, which is some of what we're getting into today.

[1:07] So that one's pretty helpful. This one's more of a theological overview going through the Gospel of Luke. And some of those snapshots that we talked about.

This is a really good one as well. But more of a theological lens. So I found that one to be really helpful. And then today, I'm going to reference this one a few different times. But Rosaria Butterfield's book, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*.

If you want just a really challenging, almost biographical, autobiographical perspective, this one is just so compelling.

So well written. It'll change your life. At a minimum, it will challenge you to make some changes. Because I don't know that there's many that can do what she does exactly.

And she's not asking you to do it. But her modeling is just very compelling. And so those are my three freebies. I'll get those out at the end. And you can take a look at them.

[2:04] But yeah, we're going to ask for Lord's help. And we'll jump in. Session three. So let's pray together. Oh Lord, we do ask for help as we think about this glorious topic of hospitality.

Biblical hospitality. Where you have come to seek and to save the lost. You've come to heal the ones that are sick.

The ones that are unrighteous. That need a righteousness that is not their own. Thank you for having mercy and grace on us. Help us to live in such a way where we seek the outsider.

Seek the lost. Seek the sick. Just as we once were. And Lord, help us to build up your church through the means of hospitality around table fellowship. So give us a vision for this.

And a way to live this out. And I pray that you help us now as we think about practical application.

And ways that we can integrate this more intentionally into our lives.

[3:02] So we ask for help now. Praise things in Jesus name. Amen. Alright, just by way of review. I ended last session after we did a survey. These snapshots of the unfolding story of biblical hospitality.

We ended with this reality. That we're called to not just observe the story, but enter into the story. We are a part of this unfolding story right now.

And the Lord has a mission for his people to live out in light. Of what he's trying to accomplish in the world. Redemption of all people.

Bringing them in around this table for a feast at the marriage supper of the Lamb. That's where we're running toward. All of us. So it's not really a... It's not really like an optional mission that you're called into as a Christian.

You're called into his mission. This is what he is doing. This is a question of whether we're going to embrace it wholeheartedly. And have a vision to go alongside what he's already called us to do.
[4:05] And so that's what we're trying to do. This is to flesh out. How can we obey the command in Romans 15? That says, therefore, in light of the gospel.

Therefore, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God. Now in this case, he's writing to the church in Rome.

He's calling them. He's calling them with this command. Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you. So if you think about what that means. Jesus was not physically present with the church in Rome.

So a lot of these people never actually met with Jesus personally. And yet they're being called to welcome one another as Christ has welcomed them.

So what is it getting at? It's not a reference to being a door greeter at the church of Rome. And putting a smile on. And glad handing people on their way in. As wonderful as that is.

[5:06] That can be a component of it. But that's not the end all. Is that how Jesus greeted us? Was a handshake at the door? Or was there more? And so what we see displayed in Jesus' life and ministry.

And what's being imitated by his believers, by his followers. Is that he welcomed us even when we were sinful enemies against God.

In order to make us into the family of God. That's what he's doing. He's bringing strangers and enemies. Those who are far off. And bringing them near by the blood of Jesus Christ.

So there is an evangelistic outward kind of propulsion to this ministry. And there's also a ministry once you are a believer.

And you're integrated into the family. A building up of the family around the table. So it's not either or. It's not just evangelistic. Or just deepening discipleship with those who are already believers.

[6:10] It's a both and. We've got to have that in our hearts and our minds. It's not just one or the other that's superior. It's a both and. It's an all the time perspective of welcoming one another as Christ welcomed us.

Well in her book. This one right here. I just referenced a second ago. The gospel comes with a house key. Annie Rosaria Butterfield describes her conversion to Christ out of a lesbian lifestyle. It's a fascinating book. There's another one called Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert. Which is very compelling as well. It describes more of her journey out of that lesbian lifestyle.

She was a tenured gender studies professor who despised evangelical Christians. She believed they, people like us, hated people like her.

And so she was actually dedicating a portion of her academic career to try to basically attack evangelical Christians for being these narrow-minded people that hate people like her.

[7:15] So she was attempting to write an academic paper. It's similar to like Josh McDowell who set out to disprove Christianity and was eventually converted because of it. Similarly, she was intending to take down evangelical Christians with an academic paper.

And she's like, well, if I'm going to be an honest academic, I need to interact with the population I'm about to criticize and critique in my paper.

And so she begins to relate to some Christians that she found that would represent this pocket of people. And to her great shock, she was welcomed around the table repeatedly.

Not attacked, but welcomed in repeatedly. And over the course of many months, she found herself doubts starting to fall away.

Love starting to take the place of the doubts for the very people that she thought hated her and she had hatred toward. The Lord worked on her life and made her into a new creation.

[8:21] She believed the very thing she thought she was going to try to take out. It's a very compelling story, but most of it unfolds around a table with just ordinary Christians.

But then she's left with this great dilemma where her entire life is built around this identity. And her entire career, it's not just her lifestyle, it's a career that's built around what she thought was true about herself and true about the world.

And now there's this dilemma because this is incompatible with the truth that she's saying she really does believe. So it's a marvelous story and she's a wonderful writer.

And she writes in a very compelling way. So she's drawn into this community around meals. But then she's trying to redeem what her old lifestyle presented.

Because in a very similar way, even though it's a radically different perspective, in a very similar way, she was a minority already before trying to survive with a people, a tribe, that was outcasts in the perspective of people around.

[9:38] So in some ways, it wasn't too far of a hop over to Christianity because we're in a very similar boat in some sense. And she found a home with these people and learned how to extend radical hospitality even before she was a Christian.

But now it has to be filtered through a new perspective through the gospel in light of the mission that he has in all of history. So this book kind of gives her perspective of how she made some of those moves and was trying to integrate biblical hospitality into her lifestyle.

So she was welcomed as a person. She was welcomed wherever she was. And over time, she was won over Christ, knit into this family of God. And in turn, after she became a believer, she eventually gets married.

She becomes a pastor's wife, actually. It's pretty fascinating. Has a gaggle of kids. She's homeschooling. So the book is filled with these just countless stories of very candid conversation, acts of just practical compassion for other people, gospel proclamation.

She looks for opportunities to keep speaking truth around the table again and again. And the result is that believers are built up and unbelievers are challenged and encouraged with this kind of catered compassion that all circles around Jesus Christ.

[11:09] So a very, very helpful book. So Rosaria in this book, she repeatedly states her mission of biblical hospitality this way. And I think I have this on your outline.

She says, let God use your home, apartment, dorm room, front yard, community gymnasium, or garden or table for the purpose of making strangers into neighbors and neighbors into family. Because that is the point. Building the church and living like a family, the family of God. Strong, a strong language.

And I think she intentionally connects it to the family imagery because that in its essence is what the Christian life should be, a family. A lot of us grew up in the South and context where church was just the thing you did on Sunday.

And then you go and you hang out with your real family afterwards for lunch and for football and those types of things. But what she's presenting is we have to have a different vision. We are gathering with our family.

[12:26] We're gathering with our family on Sundays, but it permeates the rest of our week as well as we touch base with each other and text each other and have each other over for meals. There's a broader, deeper vision of how to live this out.

And so that's what she's calling us to. And really, if you look at that statement, she is talking in particular about hospitality, table fellowship. But all of life can be filtered through this lens.

All of life should be filtered through this lens. And if you want to know the honest truth, we do the same class over and over again on Sundays, just from a different angle. This one is the angle of hospitality.

It's around table fellowship. But all of our lives, including our work, our family life, our sports, our marriages, our singleness, all of them should be filtered through the same radical lens of helping unbelievers see the gospel of Jesus Christ and building up the church.

So just don't be surprised if you come back for our next class and it's the same stuff from a different angle. But this is this is just one way, one beautiful way.

[13:34] It's the simplest way to change the world around the table one meal at a time, both unbelievers and believers. And so that's the vision that she cast before us. So I sum it up this way.

So we need Trinity Grace Church needs risk taking Jesus centered hospitality. That addresses the greatest problem of the human race, this relational, moral separation from the living God through Jesus.

So here's my here's my attempt to give the definition. You've been waiting all this time for the definition. What are you even talking about? We're talking about all the things it's not. But if I were to try to sum it up, this was my attempt to capture it.

What is biblical hospitality? Biblical hospitality intentionally using our God given resources to extend the welcome of Jesus Christ for the spiritual and physical good of others.

So that strangers become neighbors and neighbors become beloved family in Christ. I adapted Rosaria's quippy tagline a little bit because I think that that that progression of neighbors, strangers

becoming neighbors, neighbors becoming family, that can happen.

[14:51] But what I really want to accentuate is the how and the quality of them becoming family. What how do they become family? They become family in Jesus Christ in Christ.

We've got to make sure that's accentuated, that that's held up, that it's not just another affinity group of weird people hanging out, another subculture. But it's intentionally anchored around a vision of being built around Jesus Christ.

And I think it's important to say beloved family. Because we can have family that we really don't like and our biological families. And the same can be true. It shouldn't be, but it can be true in the church of Jesus Christ.

That we can have family members around the table that we just kind of put up with at the table. And this is calling us to something different. This is calling us to cultivate a beloved family in Jesus Christ.

And you'll see it all throughout the New Testament in the ways that the apostles, the different disciples greet one another in the different churches. They have this affection and delight and marvel that God is using other people and their personalities and giftings for the building up of the church.

[16:10] The same mission that they're bound together for. That's what we're doing. So I mean even looking around this room. And when you go in just a little bit in the Bain gathering, looking around the gymnasium.

You look around and just say, man, I love these people. I love what God is doing in people's lives. I see more good than bad in the people of God. And delight in what you see.

Praise the Lord. And then go build them up. Encourage them. That's what we have the gift of doing each Sunday when we gather. So that's what I'm going to try to say is biblical hospitality.

And it's aimed at both outreach and in reach. Building others up that are already believers. Does that make sense? Just going to pause. Any questions where we're at so far?

Comments? Can I get an amen? Amen. Yeah, awesome. So what we want to do with the remainder of our time is to look at barriers and bridges to this kind of hospitality.

[17:15] This biblical hospitality. So for starters, I wanted to touch on some cultural barriers. It's not even necessarily particular to you. But just the water we swim in. These are things that I think crop up no matter who you are or where you are.

So here are a few. And I want you to consider this question. Which one do you think is the greatest for you personally and for our church? So here they are.

Just lay them out. Isolation. Often we think of our homes particularly as an oasis to get away from people. It's my safe haven.

I get away. This is the place I run away from. Others. Relaxation. The place where I go to relax and recline.

Not be bothered. Entertainment. Lots of our lives are based on watching other people live on the screen.

[18:17] And then busyness. Busyness. We're just too busy to think about having people over engaging others that we haven't engaged before.

So just take a moment. Look at those. And maybe get with a neighbor next to you and talk it over. What would you say? Y'all can discuss this. What would you say is the greatest barrier?

Go ahead. You can talk. We'll give like 30, 40 seconds and discuss it. Yeah.

To each other is what I meant. Yeah. A pair and share if you will. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. This is like an Applebee's menu. Pair and share. Yeah. It's like an appetizer.

What would you say is the greatest barrier for you personally in this community, in our church? Is there consensus amongst you?

[19:36] All right. Let's talk. What do you think? I've already heard some of you sharing what you think. Go ahead. Pop out. What do you think? Busyness. Busyness. Busyness.

Any others? There's definitely nothing relaxing about being in our home. So, yeah, whether whether other people are there or not external to your family. Yeah, we're like that, too.

Yeah. Why would you say busyness would be kind of the hallmark? So many activities that the kids are involved in. It's just hard. But that's what we have Sunday is our day to, you know, Taco Bell ministry.

Taco Bell ministry. And it is a ministry. Lots of people have gone to Taco Bell with you guys. Us included. Yeah. And oftentimes, like we try to set that whole day just, you know, so that we can leave from Taco Bell and go to the house. Yeah.

So we try to keep Sunday if possible as our day to mingle. Yeah, that's right. Yeah. The day to mingle. Have a Sabbath rest in some ways. And it's relational rest.

[20:54] So let's let's look through these real quick and just consider each one. Some of these cultural barriers that we see. So isolation. And I'm guilty of this, too. Just like I just want to get away for just a minute.

Not that that's always bad. And it maps on to the relaxation aspect. Rest is good. But but how how much of it is really good for us?

Isolation. Often we think of our homes as this oasis get away from people. But what what if we had this mission in the back of our minds whenever we're thinking about people in our community, thinking about our neighbors?

What if we could have God's perspective of our neighborhood or God's perspective of our community, our church? What if we could see how God sees it like, wouldn't wouldn't it be wonderful if this person had a home?

The T-dub student had a home to go to. You know, the single the single lady had a home that she was able to find. I'm looking around this room and I see that happening around almost everyone in here to some degree is inculcating this.

[22:02] But yeah, we want to we want to be a people that doesn't just think about withdrawal and isolation, but seeing people as opportunities to bring them in, to have community, to have relationship, to have fellowship.

That second one is relaxation, another cultural barrier. And like I said, rest is good. We need to be restored. And I think that's I think it's important.

I think probably having a demarcated day of of Sabbath rest. But even Sabbath rest can be relational, relationally oriented. Whenever you think about how it was practiced in the Old Testament, the Sabbath laws and everything, a lot of it was intended to bring people around the table to slow down from from productivity, not relationships.

So I think that that should be a distinction there that we make in our minds. It's not I need to do more this week. We can take our hand off the plow in that sense. And the essence of a of a Sabbath is not necessarily vegging out and watching TV, but it's intended to rest from productivity and build in relationally with others, especially the people of God.

So you'll see that pattern held up in the New Testament particularly. So rest is good. We need to be restored, but we also want to use our rest, even our rest to serve others and to be served relationally.

[23:30] Entertainment, another one. So easy to just get lost in the vortex of scrolling or videos and even even like family movie nights and things like that.

I just wonder if we are saying the best. Yes. You know, I think about that often. What I mean by that is our yes to one thing is a no to every other option.

So are we making the best? Yes. I want to constantly have that thought in my mind. Again, that's not intended to be a guilt trip and make us think, oh, man, I need to just do more and be more productive.

But we want to we want to a rich life. And God intends for us to have a rich life, not merely by reacting to what we see digitally, but by interrelating with other people, with other human beings and being a give and take in their lives.

So entertainment is certainly a category you got to watch out for. And then finally, the busyness one. And last but not least, as many of you have already said, I was just recently reminded of a book that we've gone through a couple of times called Biblical Productivity.

[24:40] It's a very helpful vision for not just getting more things done, but that caveat, biblical productivity, kind of like biblical hospitality, has a different idea of what success means related to productivity.

And one of the things that says early on in that book is that busyness does not necessarily equal fruitfulness, fruitfulness.

And what we're looking for in the Christian life is not just to do more, but to both model and inculcate fruitfulness in our lives, fruitfulness, bearing the fruit of the spirit, keeping with repentance

and relating with other people.

So being busy doesn't necessarily mean being fruitful the way that God intends us to be fruitful and to grow and to relate. And so one of the things that we can do with the busyness factor is like the Taco Bell thing.

Invite people into what you're already doing. Invite people into the thing that you're already doing.

So that's one way to challenge the busyness. It doesn't have to be the either or.

[25:41] It can be the both and invite people over. But there's also a sense of like, do I need to just like pull back on some stuff? Is this really the best menu of activity for me, for my family, given the opportunities and the calling of God on our lives?

And so, yeah, we're constantly we're doing that now. Even this morning, we're talking through, OK, are there things that we need to adjust and adapt or things that we need to nix and delete? Or are there other things that we just need to change a little bit and tweak?

How can we be more fruitful, especially in this area of hospitality and relationships with others? I had a professor back when I was in college.

There were formal things that we would do together. But then sometimes you just be like, hey, I'm going to grocery store. Why don't you just come with me? And I still remember those times because I'm just kind of be bopping around with Matt, this professor of mine.

We're going to UGO to grab some weird discounted food that's shrink wrapped. And it was like stuff that he was going to be doing anyways with for his family. But I had an opportunity to kind of see how he related to his wife and see how he related to his kids and how he helped serve.

[26:55] And it was it was affecting me even now. I think back on that. It was just like an ordinary moment I was invited into to go along with him. And so that's a category I think we should have as we think about combating some of these barriers, breaking down some of these barriers to biblical hospitality.

So those are what we'd say are kind of cultural barriers. But then there's also barriers that might be more specific to to us. And so here are some person personal barriers that I thought of as I was just challenged with this topic of biblical hospitality.

So one is personality. The big question of, well, what if I'm what if I'm an introvert and it's hard for me to to talk with people or I use the language like how do you recharge?

Is it with or with withdrawing from people? Let me just let me just be very candid with you. I don't think we should draw our biblical convictions from secular psychology and this radical bifurcation of introvert, extrovert.

And you got to just isolate yourself from people or be with people to recharge. You're not defined by these things like you can ask for the spirit's help to change. Now, here's here's the thing.

[28:06] Now, either one of those is more godly than the other. OK, so it's not like, oh, well, extroverts really like to be with people, so they must automatically be more godly.

No, that's not true, because I want to challenge both of these. And just give me a moment. The extrovert can be around people all the time and get a lot of energy from it, but they can still be self-focused by doing that.

Self aggrandizing. It can be all about the show and all about the relationship, but not really necessarily about the mission of building other people up. It can be you can be with people and not be selfless at all.

All right. So that's that's one one facet we got to watch out for. But then on the other side, if you're quiet or demeanor, I want to make sure you also understand that that also can be selfish and not selfless.

There's a way to be selfless even when you're a quiet natured person. I just think about my mother in law. She would be like the quintessential quiet natured person and not a limelight person, not a stand in front of crowds on a microphone kind of person.

[29:14] And yet she was asking God for help to look for opportunities to be others focused. And the Lord opened up an opportunity.

She was at a it was like a Waffle House or Applebee's or something like that. She started talking to this waitress that she noticed was very downtrodden. That's one of the benefits of some of the quiet natured people.

You are paying attention to people generally. And she could see that this lady looked like she was having a hard time. So she just said, hey, are you OK? Be OK if I could pray for you.

And so she ended up praying for this lady. It just impacted this waitress so much. They end up exchanging phone numbers. And my mother in law, Barb, she ends up following up with this lady and they strike up a friendship.

And then with fear and trembling, she asked this waitress if she'd be interested in going through the Bible with her. So she starts reading the Bible one on one with this lady for a series of months.

[30 : 16] And then there are other friends of the waitress where she says, hey, there's this lady I'm meeting with. I'm reading the Bible for the first time in my life. You want to come with me? And so this group started to grow around my mother in law, who's this quiet natured pastor's wife.

And she ends up having this real robust ministry that God opened up to share the gospel with unbelievers just because she asked the Lord to help her overcome her fear of others and what they might think of her.

So I just wanted to challenge both of those. We need to submit our personalities, our experiences to the wisdom of God and say, Lord, help me not be self-aggrandizing and draw attention to myself if I'm an outgoing person.

Help me to direct attention and glory to you with my words. And if you're a quiet natured person, Lord, help me to break out and go beyond what my comfort zone is to engage other people for your glory, even if it's just one other person.

So just I think that's a helpful category to have. So that's one personality. Secondly is embarrassment. What if I can't remember someone's name? I should already know.

[31 : 24] This is like one of the biggest fear factors in the Sunday gathering, particularly a couple of you are on the welcome team. So, you know, this very well. Like, OK, I know I've seen you like 17 times.

I still can't remember your name. I just want to encourage you, even on Sundays. This is such a wonderful opportunity. Just today, as people start to come in, look around and see if you can name everybody, at least in your head.

See if you can name the people that you see when they walk in. And if you can't, just take the opportunity to go up and introduce yourself. It will make such a big difference. It helps push us out of ourselves and helps us draw others.

Sometimes you're talking with your friends that you already know. Draw them with you. I want to encourage you to take them with you and say, hey, I don't know these people. Let's just introduce ourselves real quick. You will be shocked.

Finding points of commonality, finding where people live, experiences. It's just this is a vibrant opportunity. I want to encourage you to take advantage of the Lord.

[32 : 30] The Lord's at work in our church. And it's it's a challenge because it keep getting bigger. We keep having more people you don't know. I want to encourage you to keep taking the initiative to push out and to just say, I probably met you five times.

I'm so sorry. What's your name? One of the things I do often is I'll keep just a note in my phone and I'll have to, like, put people's names in there. And maybe something I can remember them by, like, oh, she's from Alaska.

I'm going to write that down. That's that's helpful to me. Or they used to live in California. Used to work for crew. You know, I write little things down to help me remember and attach it to the people. And that is just such a wonderful gift to be able to have something external from my brain to help me train myself like vocab words almost to remember people.

Because I want to love people. But it starts with the entry point of knowing them, getting to know their names. So I want to I want to encourage you in that. Embrace the embarrassment and just push through push through the pain line.

The third is space. Some of you might have we lived in a smaller place at one point, too. We lived in apartments, Park Crest apartments.

[33 : 38] And so we know that that can be a struggle. I don't know if I have space at our place. There's a couple of ideas I want to throw your way. One is talk with another person and go to their place if it's bigger.

We used to do this with the Pritchett's, actually, because they were like, hey, we're not really great at inviting other people over. But you guys really you enjoy that inviting people over. So they said, what if we use our our place and you plan the parties?

So we just had this hopeful kind of like partnership. They provided the space. We provided the invitations and we did some planning together and voila. So work together with other people. That's fine. If you don't have all the resources and assets. Well, that's what a family is for. We work together. Another idea. Squeeze people in. You'd be amazed.

It's more impactful for people to just spend time with you than to be impressed with how much space you have. Like that. That's the more important variable. If we're going to have to pick between like houses and messy or it's small.

[34 : 42] I'd rather have a few dishes stacked up and invite them into a small place than try to have everything pristine before inviting people over relationally. Because that's that's what connects with people.

That's what's going to help them. So, yeah, that might be something to consider. We also just went outside a lot. We considered regional park. As our yard for a number of years, like we didn't have space where we were.

So we just say, hey, we had the Olsens over to our house one time. That was fun, like in the apartment. So we just went over to like this little community pool area and that was great. And then sometimes we just go over to regional park and throw Frisbee or something like that.

So you don't have to just be limited to your space finances. What if I just don't have money and this is expensive and I don't have stuff for this?

I mean, one idea is to try to carve this out as a normal part of your budget. It doesn't have to be big. It doesn't have to be fancy. It could be just coffee or tea. And you have people over and say, hey, why don't you bring the dessert?

[35 : 44] You bring the cookies. We'll make the coffee. And that's a wonderful way to limit the expense but still reap the benefits of conversation. Or you can go in together with a friend that's like, hey, I'll pay for it.

You just come with us. That's a good friend to have. Talking points. Sometimes it's just scary because you don't know what to talk about, how to start a conversation or to keep a conversation going.

I run into this all the time. There's a few little tricks that I use that maybe they could serve you. One is just like, hey, what's your story? How did you get here? That's a great one for church people that come in.

It is fascinating. Of all the churches they could go to, they've come to a gymnasium on Sunday. So that really should be a great starting point question. Like, hey, with all the options, why this one? And you'll find out some people just have a relationship that helps them get here. And then you have a point of connection potentially. Or it could be like, hey, I'll look this up. I typed in reformed church or whatever, whatever thing.

[36 : 49] A lot of times they just type something in very specifically. And it gives you an inroad to talk. Oh, that's interesting. What made you type that? So that's a great kickoff line just to get things rolling.

You can ask people what their spiritual background is. You don't just assume they're Christians. Hey, so what's your spiritual background? You're here at church. But I just don't want to assume everybody's a Christian just because they show up.

You can find out a lot about people just by that one question. I'm going to share one other little acronym that's helpful. My dad taught me this one. It's called FIGHT, F-I-G-H-T.

Each one of those stands for something. So F stands for family. Ask about their family. Do you have any family in the area? It's a good question to ask people. A lot of transplants here.

Interest is the I. What are they interested in? G is goals. What are you up to? What are you trying to do? What are you trying to do here? Hobbies is another one.

[37 : 47] And then T is testimony. Testimony. So you're like, hey, how did you come to the Lord? How did you meet the Lord? How did you end up going to church? You know, those types of things.

So FIGHT is a good acronym. If you're wanting something that you can get stuck in your head, you can revisit on the fly. FIGHT. Another opportunity is to invite conversationalists with you into the battle.

So if you're like, I just don't feel very competent and I need help. Grab Jana. Take the Kaisers with you. Introduce them to someone that they have a gift and be able to carry on conversation and ask questions.

So you don't have to be alone. You don't have to just delegate it to someone else. Bring them along with you and you can enjoy the conversation party as well. So those are talking points. Lastly is relational capacity.

I hear this sometimes and I think about this too, but what if I don't have space for another relationship in my life? And you just feel maxed out relationally. So I just, I'd like to encourage you with this too, to not think about, again, like an either or paradigm of just like, I either bring someone new into my life or I hang out with my old friends.

[39:00] Like those aren't, that's not the only option. It's to think in the either or category. Think of it more like concentric circles. Like a target. You might have a few very core friends.

All of us need a few very core friends that are drawing from the same well, theologically, doctrinally. That would be a life source and encouragement to us. Those are the people that you want to spend time with and be encouraged by.

But then there's kind of concentric circles of people that you spend relational capacity and time with. All right. So, you know, it goes outward. There might be some more people in the church you're not as close with.

You can't be friends with everyone at the same level. Okay. So that's just a reality of life. It's part of being limited. Some of you might have more capacity than others, but that's dependent on the people.

So there's not a one size fits all in this. So I think it's more helpful to think in concentric circles that, hey, my neighbors, I can spend this much time with, but I can still be intentional with them in that much time.

[40:06] All right. And I want to draw them in. I want to draw them in closer. And sometimes it's pairing up with others to draw them in together, kind of like we were talking about a second ago of, yeah, bringing other people with you.

So any questions about those barriers or comments? Okay.

We're going to boogie through this part. Ways forward. The bridges. Guys out. Yeah. Go to work.

Thank you. Some ways forward. First, I'd encourage you to pray.

Just pray for the Lord to help you do this. Help you look for opportunities. You will have this prayer answered. Trust me. God loves to answer this prayer.

Even today, he will answer this prayer. If you ask, Lord, would you just open up opportunity for me to talk to someone that I have never met before? He will answer that prayer. He will give you opportunity.

[41:04] If you want to start to cultivate this as a lifestyle, I'd say pick a day. Pick a day. Say, hey, let's just think. Sunday's the day.

Taco Bell day. We're going to make this a part of our normal rhythm. Pick a day. For us, Thursday can be lighter as far as evening things. And so what's a day that can be somewhat consistent where you can think in these terms of how can I just start to build consistency in this area?

Yeah. It's based on the season of life you're in. Things will change. You go from single to married potentially. And then kids come. Things get a little bit different. Or you go into retirement phase.

Things get different. It's not like it was. You're in a new phase now. So you're always reassessing this and changing it based on the season that you're in. But we still want to, just like tithing, we want this to be a part of our lifestyle, our normal rhythm, regardless of the season we're in.

Next is to look for opportunities. And I listed out a few people that you should keep an eye out for. One is new people. New to the neighborhood.

[42:13] New to the church. This is a wonderful opportunity to step in. Look for those people. New people. Lonely people. Who's isolated? Who doesn't have a friend circle? Who doesn't have family here?

People that are lonely. It's a great opportunity. Low-hanging fruit, in a sense, relationally. People that are in crisis. Crisis. Yeah, there's hard things going on in people's life.

Is there a way you can step into that and minister to that person? Pray for them? Encourage them?

So people that are in crisis. Fourth is people that are sick. Sometimes it's ongoing sickness. Other times it's occasional.

I remember when we were living at the apartments, we had an upstairs neighbor that was really sick. Didn't have much family in the area. We ended up, Elizabeth, being the kind-natured person she is, put together a little soup basket, gift basket.

So they took it up to him. And this neighbor became like family to us and started going to community group with us. And then after that, started reading the Bible for the first time, really, in earnest.

[43:12] And then he was baptized. And then his sister started coming. And then his neighbors started coming. Her neighbors started coming. So it was just a wonderful snowball of relationship in a good way.

You just don't know. It started with a gift basket. And take a note, this guy is sick. So those are opportunities. Next is simplify the details.

It doesn't have to be an elaborate feast. Like we mentioned, it could be coffee or tea. A lot of times we used to make a bunch of spaghetti sauce and just freeze it into bags. And we'd have like a ready-made meal, like a fancy meal.

We'd get a bag of salad and a bag of spaghetti sauce, thaw it out, and we'd be ready to rock for whoever came over. And you can kind of just thaw them based on who's coming. Frozen pizzas. Hot and ready. Get them and go. There's so many different ways that you can do this. So simplify the details. Don't make it overwhelming to yourself. This probably is one of the most important.

[44:09] It's to cross-pollinate relationships. You see bees and butterflies and how they go from flower to flower. And they work together and they bring life because they're all going different ways and zigging and zagging.

That's how we need to think as a church body. Cross-pollinating relationships actually makes them stronger. It makes our whole church stronger. Instead of bearing the weight individually for the relationship and building a person just directly into you, look for ways to build them into other people as well.

Like connect your unbelieving friends with your church friends. Look for ways where those worlds can overlap. We see this in wonderful ways like Matt Roberts with his skating friends.

He's always looking for opportunity to bring them and let them hang out with his new church friends, you know, which is really cool. And then look for ways to connect your new friends with your old friends.

So it's not the either/or. Say, hey, I'd love to introduce you to the Kaisers. Come over here. I want you guys would have so much in common. And help cultivate a relationship. And you'll be amazed.

[45:13] People get knit into the fabric of a community that way. So look for ways to cross-pollinate relationships. Finally, I'd say make a list.

Make a list. And I'd encourage you to do this today, if you can, of the places you'll be and the people that you'll see.

And I listed out just a few of these opportunities. Family in the area. Neighbors that kind of live around you. Coworkers that you interact with. Clubs, organizations, stores that you frequent. Church being a huge opportunity. Who are the people that you'll see in each one of these areas? These are the people that God has uniquely placed you into relationship with.

And so we want to turn our attention towards the opportunities that God, by his providence, has placed us in. He's knitted you specifically into this network of relationships. I can't reach all the people that are on your list.

[46:18] You can't reach all the people that are on my list just by default in the way God's designed it. But we can work together. We can work together. And by God's grace, we're going to extend relationship to different people and bring them closer.

And you'll see that strangers will become neighbors and neighbors will become family, beloved family in Jesus Christ. So we have an opportunity here at church.

And I think this is probably the most important thing I want to turn our attention to. It's not just about out there. It's also in here. There's unbelievers. There's people that are lonely, people that are in crisis right here.

So as we go out from this place, this is a wonderful starting block to be able to practice what we've been preaching. How can we start to build connections with others and knit them into this family more intentionally?

So biblical hospitality, intentionally using our God-given resources to extend the welcome of Jesus Christ for the spiritual and physical good of others so that strangers become neighbors.

[47:19] Neighbors become beloved family in Jesus Christ. So if you want to know the simplest way to change the world, we're going to practice biblical hospitality.

Let's pray. Oh, Lord, we do ask that you help us by your grace to cultivate this in our own lives and as a church. So we entrust these things to you and ask that you help them take root and blossom into fruitfulness in our lives.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Thank you, guys. Amen.