

## *Hospitality*

Welcome back to “Walking with Christ”. You know, I’ve been thinking...and I think there are two types of people in the world: those that like to be hosts, and those that would prefer to be guests. So here is our question for today...which one are you?

Do you want to make the phone calls or receive them? Do you like to step out and lead others or relax and be led? Do you introduce yourself, or would you rather that others introduce you?

It’s important to know what comes most naturally to you. Spend a few minutes discussing it.



## *Fellowship*

1. Do you prefer to be a host/hostess or a guest? Tell us why.



## *Discipleship*

Years ago, a young man developed an interest in Christianity while attending a university in London. By the time he graduated, he was almost convinced—but not 100%. He was still seeking proof that this was the one true God.

He got a job offer in East Africa and for 7 months had the opportunity to live with a Christian family. When he realized they were Christians, he knew this experience would give him a chance to solidify his convictions.

Unfortunately, as the months passed, he didn’t see anything that attracted him. The Christian family didn’t really reach out to him or others; they were apathetic about their faith and casual about their commitments. And if they had to make a sacrifice for someone else—then you really heard them complain.

And of course, as a result, his interest in Christ died away. In fact his disappointment was so profound that he left Africa and moved back to India. Later he led a revolution. The name of our young guest was Mahatma Gandhi.

That family in Africa didn't know who it was that God had entrusted to them. They missed their opportunity to influence Gandhi because they were poor hosts; and he turned out to be one of the most influential people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

When we hear the word “hospitality”, we usually think of serving a meal or coffee...or maybe having someone stay at our house overnight. But, I think it can be so much more. I have a friend who has an incredible gift of making you feel comfortable when you're with him. He hosts you verbally and relationally. In fact, I've noticed that in most conversations and relationships, there is someone playing the role of host, and another the guest. You have already played a role today before and during this group meeting. Which role did you play?

Some people here have been outgoing; you greeted the others with enthusiasm, you asked about their week and work and life. Some of you waited to be asked. You are naturally a little shyer. You like people to come to you, more than you like going to them.

The truth of it is that most of us will naturally view ourselves as guests in life, but as believers, we are really hosts— always representing the King of Kings. The Christian knows that God wants us to focus on others, not just ourselves. At parties, at work, with our neighbors, in every relationship and even every conversation, we are playing the role of host.

We want to initiate meaningful conversation and be praying for God to guide us to know what he wants us to say to each person we meet. Greet them warmly, make them feel loved, and then we need to connect. We want to move beyond the expected “hellos” and let them know they mean something to us by connecting on a deeper level.

Maybe they aren't your favorite person, or you don't have much in common, but as one of my favorite authors—John Maxwell says—find the one percent that you have in common and focus on that.

And then lastly, a good host would always provide for their guests. Maybe it would be food and something to drink the minute they walk in the door—maybe directions, so they can find the door.

In the same way, we believers want to be providing for peoples needs as we represent God and host those that he sends our way. God will send us people with whom we can initiate a relationship, we will try to connect, and then, when we know who that person really is, we can ask a very important question to find out what their dreams are: “If failure was impossible, what would you like to accomplish?” After this probing question, you see what you can do as their host, as God's representative, to help them accomplish that dream.

That my friends, is what I believe God wants of a true host; someone who will host the person with their needs, hungers, thirsts and heart-felt desires. Someone whose goal is larger than just throwing a good dinner party, but whose goal is to host people right into the kingdom of heaven.

2. Read I Peter 4:9. What do you think God meant when he told us to be hospitable?
3. We don't preach a lot about "hospitality", but in Romans 12:9-18, we find it listed with a lot of other "religious" sounding commands. Do you think we give it the importance and honor that God gives it?
4. Read Luke 14:12-14. What do you think is supposed to be the real motivation behind our hospitality?



## *Ministry*

5. Every six weeks, we want to have a celebration week, where we don't use the DVD, we just let you enjoy each other and rejoice in what God is doing. Take a few minutes and plan your next celebration. Organize who might bring food and be in charge of anything else your group would like to do.



## *Evangelism*

6. Share some ways that "hospitality" has or maybe could help you reach a friend for Christ.



## *Worship*

7. Isn't it amazing that we have a God that takes time out to encourage us to make each other feel special? He doesn't just tell us to honor only him, but tells us to honor **each other** as well, and that makes me want to love Him even more. Take a few minutes to tell God how you feel about Him.