

## Weekly Newsletter: 2 September 2025

### Reflection: The Neglected Virtue of Hospitality

By Joe Barnard

Hospitality is not a forgotten art; it's a neglected virtue. We often justify the dilapidated state of hospitality in our culture by saying that the practice is not as important today as it used to be. In the ancient world, a traveller's safety, even life, depended upon a gracious welcome. This is no longer the case – at least we tell ourselves. For us, care for a visitor need go no further than a cup of tea and a stale biscuit.

Although it is true that safety today seldom depends on hospitality, the goodness, even godliness, of the virtue is undiminished by modern civilisation. In one sense, hospitality is just as pressing today as it has ever been. If safety is less important, friendship is not. There has never been a culture as lonely as spiritually emaciated as is ours. If the body logged social interaction like it registers nutrition, most of us would look gaunt and near-starved. We would be walking around as if we had been scraping by in the midst of a spiritual famine.

Yet, it's not just the cultural need that makes hospitality so important today; it's also the imperatives we find strung through the Scriptures. In I Timothy, hospitality is one of the hallmarks of a "true widow". In Titus 1:8, it's a qualification of elders. Peter exhorts us to show hospitality without grumbling. And the writer of Hebrews suggests that we ought always to treat our guests as if one of them might be an angel in disguise. From the example of Jesus to the ethical instruction of Paul, from the Levitical laws to the prophetic forecast of the kingdom of God, hospitality is both as aspect of the love we are meant to show one another and an aspect of the witness we are meant to have before the world. Said differently, hospitality is both holiness and mission at the same time. And for this reason, hospitality is a virtue of too much greatness to neglect due to the egotistical demands of career, self-care, or family.

But how do we practice hospitality? Some of us are elderly and do not have the capacity we once had. Others are young and do not yet have much space or leeway in income. And still others have young children who make having a conversation a near impossibility at any time of day.

For those stymied by such questions, here are some ideas.

#### 1 – Buy a Friend a Coffee

Starbucks famously invented the concept of "third-space". The idea is that there could be an affordable (and available) space that is not the office and not the home.

Christians should use coffee shops to our advantage. Are you unable to invite someone for a meal at your home? Don't sweat it. Have a coffee instead.

## **2 – Go for a Walk in the Botanics**

Remember, people today are in need of the opportunity to talk. They have thoughts and feelings that are compressed and, in many cases, have no release valve. There are few better ways to give people the time and space needed to open up than taking a walk together. The benefit of walking is that there can be silence without awkwardness. And it's often only in the void of such silence that a heart breathes freely before pouring itself out.

## **3 – Have Someone for a Meal**

Some people in churches have black-belts in hospitality. You can tell by the ease of inviting, hosting, and feeding, that they are masters in the art. But how did they reach this stage? The answer is in the same way that all black-belts are earned. No one steps into a karate class and graduates the same day a black-belt. Instead, a new student has to work through a series of colours in order to achieve mastery.

The same is true for hospitality. The only way to grow is by doing. One meal can lead to two; one guest to another; and over time any one of us can develop in confidence and competence.

## **4 – Sit Next to a Visitor at Church**

Self-centredness creeps into our lives a lot of different ways. One of them is always sitting in the same place at church. In one sense, there is nothing wrong with this. All of us are creatures of habit. *All of us.*

Yet, each Sunday morning is an opportunity to show hospitality. Whereas we walk into a church and see a group of familiar faces, each Sunday there is someone that comes in and sees a crowd of strangers. For him, or her, church is an intimidating place.

From where I stand in the front, there are few things more beautiful than watching a long-time member of the church quietly welcome a new visitor and make her feel at home. It doesn't take much. Sitting beside her; asking her name; telling her it's good to have her with us. Such graces are not trivial. They are the fragrance of heaven.

For more on the theme of hospitality, listen to last Sunday morning's sermon on YouTube [here](#) or Spotify.

## **Missionary Update – this Saturday!**

This Saturday we're looking forward to having a missionary update with our three Holyrood missionaries (Lorna, James and the Sorsamos). Join us online from 9-10am and Zoom codes will be sent out on Friday. Contact [Liz@holyroodevangelical.org](mailto:Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) if you don't normally get the Zoom codes and would like them.

## **Lorna Ferguson's Prayer Letter**

Lorna is now back in Japan and every month she writes a prayer letter to help us pray for her. If you don't already receive it and would like to, please contact Lorna ([lorna.ferguson@omfmail.com](mailto:lorna.ferguson@omfmail.com)) and she can add you to her mailing list. Thank you!

## Prayer Meetings and Meals – Autumn Term

We've now resumed our rhythm of meeting to pray on 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> (if there is one) Wednesdays of the month from 7-8pm in the church. A Zoom option will also be available for those who can't make it in person but this won't be linked to the main meeting. Here's the plan for the autumn term, please save the dates –

### September:

- this Wednesday (3<sup>rd</sup>) - Prayer Meeting with Tim Hayward (Open Doors). Refreshments served beforehand, come from 6.45pm
- Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> - Church family meal after the morning service

### October:

- Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> - Prayer Meeting with Fiona Christie (Edinburgh City Mission). Meal beforehand.
- Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> – Prayer Meeting with Hayley Macaskill (Mercy Ships). Refreshments beforehand.

### November:

- Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> - Prayer Meeting with Joanna Manners (Friends International). Meal beforehand.

## Women's Bible Studies are back!

We're meeting this Thursday from 10.30 – 11.30am in the church building and will be continuing our studies in Acts. No prereading is required, just come as you are!

We'll meet every Thursday morning for the next six weeks (finishing on Thursday 9 October). Contact [Liz@holyroodevangelical.org](mailto:Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) if you have any questions.

## Gospel Partnership with UCCF

Esther Dickson (UCCF Team Leader in Scotland) has invited us to join them as a team, as well as other friends from across the wider fellowship as they host an evening for those who partner with them in the work in Scotland. Come along at **7.30pm on Thursday 9 October to Chalmers Church, Edinburgh** where we'll be giving thanks together and praying for the next season of CU mission. If you'd like to come along, please do book a space using this link: <https://scotlandpartnerevent.eventbrite.co.uk>

## East of Scotland Gospel Partnership – Sunday 26 October

Save the date! As a church we are part of the East of Scotland Gospel Partnership and one of the aims of the partnership is to express unity by coming together for a yearly Gospel Partnership evening service. This will take place on **Sunday 26 October at 7pm at Charlotte Chapel**. There will be no evening service at Holyrood and we look forward to attending the joint service instead.

## Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting with Tim Hayward (Open Doors) 7pm in person. Refreshments from 6.45pm and Zoom option available.
- Thursday:
  - Women's Bible Studies from 10.30 – 11.30am in the church
  - Session Meeting at 7pm
- Missionary Update at 9am on Zoom
- Sunday:
  - Communion service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
  - Evening service at 6pm – Jon Gemmell preaching (live streamed)
- Baby and Toddler Group: 10am – 11.30am



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