

Living Radical Hospitality

Presented to

The St. Luke “Community” United Methodist Church



By

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St. Luke "Community" United Methodist Church
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May 7, 2013

To: St. Luke Church Family
From: Lay Leader and Associate Lay Leaders
Subject: Book Review: Radical Hospitality by Lonni Collins Pratt

As we approach the midway point in our operating year in 2013, our Lay Leader team wants to contribute to the efficacy with which we progress to transforming our church toward and through the healing and restoration process we started just about a year ago. The theology, "Radical Hospitality" was introduced to our church leadership by our Sr. Pastor, Dr. Henry L. Masters. The Lay Leader team wants to encourage the leaders of each Ministry Tower – **Nurture, Outreach, Witness**, and our Children's Ministry, our Youth Ministry, and our Administrative Ministry to engage in a study of the behavioral requirements necessary for living out "Radical Hospitality" as the theology and the core value for our church as we interact with and engage with each other.

The two very prominent goals in the current St. Luke Strategic Plan are to increase church attendance and membership and to increase giving. These are inescapable goals for which we should all be directed to support and achieve. Coupled with our Radical Hospitality theology, the two foundational plan goals should drive all we do.

Our team, Lay Leader and Associate Lay Leaders, has prepared a "book review" and we have purchased and are presenting copies of the book, Radical Hospitality by Lonni Collins Pratt, to each of the Ministry Tower leaders. We ask them to have routine discussion of the concept of Radical Hospitality. With this discussion, we want them to encourage the type of personal and organizational transformation this book discusses in order for us to **do** "what we say we stand for" as a church.

The book review is presented to the church with notes that can serve as a reference guide for *living* Radical Hospitality. This reference guide will help us live out the concept we believe to be central to the true essence of our Christian journey as a church. Our book review covers all twelve chapters, and it represents an effort by the five members of our team, to help us as a church tie these teachings to our strategic plan implementation. The book review will be made available to all of St. Luke.

We pray your careful study and commitment to personal transformation will be instrumental to our church practicing the true essence of Radical Hospitality – inside and outside our walls as we reach out to those who may visit and join us.

Please read the book, enjoy our book review, and let's all commit to the business of relating to each other as we would see Christ in each other. Let this book be a guide for how we behave and perform Christ's work through our church.

Respectfully,

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Laura Farnum Greene, Associate Lay Leader

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DISCLAIMER

This Book Review was prepared and presented by the St. Luke “Community” United Methodist Church’s Lay Leader Team comprised of the Lay Leader and the four Associate Lay Leaders. This document is intended to support the study and reference for “living out” Radical Hospitality as a part of the theological base for the ministry of the St. Luke Church. We recommend using this Book Review, in conjunction with the book, Radical Hospitality, by Lonni Collins Pratt.

The Lay Leader Team purchased copies of the book, with personal funds, and gifted those purchased copies to the appointed leaders of the Ministry Towers (Nurture, Outreach and Witness) and their respective Ministry Leaders.

The book review document is a product of our efforts, and it is presented as a gift to the church from the Lay Leader Team, and it is not to be sold for any purposes by the St. Luke Church or any group representing or comprising the ministries of this church.

We strongly recommend the purchase of the Radical Hospitality book as a part of advancing further study and discussion of the concept, Radical Hospitality. We offer the book review piece to you, the leaders and members of the St. Luke Church as a roadmap for living out God’s Word, and aligning these teachings to our disciplined study of the Bible, and the implementation of our church’s strategic plan document. It is our belief that reading the Radical Hospitality book, and using our book review will offer us the script by which we can translate and live out the “on earth as it is in heaven” part of Matthew 6:9-15.

Troy Coleman
Lay Leader

Book Review and Discussion
"Radical Hospitality"
By
Lonni Collins Pratt

Scripture:

All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ for He Himself will say: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me". Matthew 25:35

Chapter One: To Make a Beginning

Key Points:

- ❖ We are created to serve God by loving and serving one another.
- ❖ Real hospitality is not about what we do – it is about who we are.
- ❖ We should always see hospitality as a welcoming of Christ among us.
- ❖ Your rule of life is nothing more than what you have determined is most important to seeking and maintaining a meaningful existence. Your rule is what makes your life worthwhile. Your rule is the glue that holds your life together.
- ❖ Listen carefully, my child, to the instructions of the spiritual master, and attend to them with the ear of your heart. This is the advice from a father who loves you; welcome it, and faithfully put it into practice.
- ❖ Hospitality is not about social graces, but about mutual reverence.
- ❖ Hospitality does not focus on the goal of being hospitable. Rather, it focuses singularly on the object of hospitality – the stranger, the guest, the delightful other.
- ❖ Hospitality requires that our focus is on the other rather than attainment of a concept.
- ❖ As we experience confusion and fear, it is easy to blame that feeling on the other – but it is truly our response to the fear that shapes who we are becoming. We are created by our choices, and we create our "community" by our choices.
- ❖ Hospitality is the answer to hostility. Jesus said to love your neighbor – hospitality is how.
- ❖ We are called to be the kind stranger.
- ❖ Acceptance – not tolerance.

- ❖ When we accept a human being, foster the kind of hospitality that will change everything. When we build a life of acceptance, we build a new kind of kingdom among us.
- ❖ Never give a hollow greeting of peace, or turn away when someone needs your love.
- ❖ Without a point of reference we keep stumbling in circles with little awareness of where we've been or how to reach where we are going.

NOTES

Scripture:

“We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth.” – 3 John 1:8

Chapter Two: The Taming of Hospitality

Key Points:

- ❖ When we speak of hospitality we are always addressing issues of inclusion and exclusion.
- ❖ Hospitality has an inescapable moral dimension to it. It is not a mere social grace; it is a spiritual and ethical issue. All our talk about hospitable openness doesn't mean anything as long as some people continue to be tossed aside.
- ❖ Hospitality is not optional to a well-balanced and healthy life.
- ❖ Love comes only through effort and practice.
- ❖ Hospitality acknowledges the vulnerability of being human – my humanity and that of the stranger.
- ❖ Spirituality insists that if you want to be whole, you have to let the other in.
- ❖ The biggest obstacle to hospitality is the state of our minds and hearts.
- ❖ Hospitality comes easily from those who have known mostly acceptance and love.
- ❖ Hospitality is the overflowing of a heart that has to share what it has received.
- ❖ To pursue hospitality – look inside and see if you can let someone in.
- ❖ Do not harden your heart against suffering.
- ❖ Prejudice and racism are counter to hospitality – It is the root of hospitality.
- ❖ Hospitality is the way we learn to really love.
- ❖ Hospitality feels risky.
- ❖ It is not a comforting thing for the future or our race that we discuss simple human relations as if we are doing quantum physics.

Scripture:

“Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” – 1 Peter 4:9

Chapter Three: Hospitality Begins Inside

Key Points:

- ❖ A spiritual practice is a thing we do that opens a door.
- ❖ The spiritual practice puts us into a receiving place where we are open to the something more than we call God.
- ❖ Hospitality requires that we take a chance and we change. It requires us to grow.
- ❖ What we want in spirituality today is comfort.
- ❖ Genuine spirituality is not cozy and seldom makes us comfortable. It challenges, disturbs, unsettles, and leaves you feeling like someone is at the center of your existence on a major remodeling mission.
- ❖ Hospitality is not about what you do – it is about what you are becoming. It’s an internal thing, and not just the show of friendliness.
- ❖ Our becoming tends to be subtle rather than startling.
- ❖ Make room in your heart with no strings attached.
- ❖ Extending hospitality to the people we know means that we allow them freedom to make mistakes. It means we give them room to be who they are, rather than who we want them to be.
- ❖ Choosing against hospitality means you will eventually lock your heart away from others and grow cold and hard inside. You cannot take seriously the spiritual practice of hospitality and remain as you are. If you are serious about it, nothing will ever be the same again.
- ❖ Hospitality, rather than being something you achieve, is something you enter. It is a state of being.
- ❖ We can’t know how our behavior changes everything, but it does. We call that faith. It was not Washington’s homeless those good Christian men walked past, but Jesus.
- ❖ Putting coins in the cup of a begging man or woman, or put a blanket around the shoulders of a cold person. These are but little acts that may push at the great big darkness that can cause one to feel helpless.

- ❖ Practicing Radical Hospitality means that you make room in your heart, room in your life, room in the moment for one person, with no strings attached.
- ❖ Hospitality allows us to grow into the human family and share space, materials, resources, and ourselves.
- ❖ The work of opening up to others can be challenging. For most, there are more than a few personal barriers to overcome. We fear bonding and we fear detachment, and we seldom know how to strike a healthy balance between them.
- ❖ Part of the internal work hospitality requires is setting boundaries. You do no one a favor if you allow people to involve you in destructive behaviors. You have to figure out for yourself when this is happening.
- ❖ The paradox of relationship is that we will never achieve any better relationship with anyone else that we have achieved with ourselves. **You will be forced to look deeper into yourself.**
- ❖ The essence of hospitality is receiving the stranger while letting them remain a stranger. By letting the stranger into our “dwelling”, we let them into our emotional and spiritual space.
- ❖ Extending hospitality to the people we know means that we allow them freedom to make mistakes. It means we give them room to be who they are, rather than who we want them to be.
- ❖ In our relationships with others what matters is that we keep trying. There is a place inside that you bust first open, before you open your door.

Scripture:

***“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.” –
Leviticus 19:33***

Chapter Four: Welcoming the Other

Key Points:

- ❖ Mystery surrounds all human relationships, but especially a relationship with a stranger;
- ❖ We welcome strangers in the little ways we open ourselves up to them;
- ❖ God honors us with every gift of every child;
- ❖ Our closest relationships are built on what we share and have in common;
- ❖ Hospitality means we don't tell people how to feel. We listen to them. We let them tell us how they feel;
- ❖ Hospitality treats people respectfully, as if they are sacred, because they are;
- ❖ By opening ourselves up to new people, we gain new ideas;
- ❖ “Sin is whatever you do that pushes away others and God (if you believe in God); if you don't believe in God, you're likely to consider something a “sin” if it harms others or alienates us from the world, culture, or nature”;
- ❖ When we create a life surrounded by people just like ourselves, it is a very narrow life;
- ❖ When we hold tightly to a world-view in which our own experience is at the center, we live small lives;
- ❖ Suspicion is one of the enemies of hospitality. Fear is at the core of suspicion. We are all starved for love, yet we are mostly unwilling to trust others to give us what we need;
- ❖ Another enemy of hospitality is narcissism;
- ❖ We make commodities of people, consuming them for our personal enrichment and happiness.
- ❖ Hospitality makes room even for the one who is frighteningly different – the dragon you might say;
- ❖ Hospitality treats people respectfully, as if they are sacred, because they are.

Scripture:

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” – John 13:34-35

Chapter Five: Cloister, Community, and Hospitality

Key Points:

- ❖ Hospitality starts at home...;
- ❖ *Cloister* refers to the time...you are alone. It is the apartness of solitude and silence;
- ❖ *Community* refers to your closest relationships, the people with whom you share your life;
- ❖ *Hospitality* refers to your interactions in all other relationships;
- ❖ We need time alone (cloister), we need time with those closest to us (community), and we need to open ourselves to those who are not one of us (hospitality);
- ❖ Silence is related to solitude;
- ❖ Solitude is frightening for some and simply baffling for others;
- ❖ ...we so easily begin to understand ourselves, and others, in the context of what we do rather than who we are;
- ❖ With an inner solitude in place, you do not mind being alone, because you know you are never alone;
- ❖ Solitude...propels us outward and opens us up;
- ❖ We cannot practice genuine Benedictine hospitality unless we have come to it through solitude;
- ❖ Look for solitude in the snatches of time that hurry past unnoticed;
- ❖ Solitude creates a place that is wide enough to make room for others;
- ❖ Companions give us the support we need to go on. They provide the tenderness of friendship and are a source of stability, wisdom and growth;
- ❖ If, by some set of circumstances, we do not have a family, we tend to create one for ourselves;
- ❖ Our families seem to be rather happenstance. We don't get to pick them, and they almost always come with a lot of weirdness that leaves us toting around a heavy weight for most of our lives;

- ❖ ...if by some awful circumstance you do get rid of one for good, it will break your heart forever;
- ❖ That is what your sister (or brother) gives you – a stubborn, everlasting kind of relationship that will make you weep and make you lose your temper;
- ❖ We do what we consider the right thing, and that’s a lot like a vow, so you keep to it in the good and the bad. None of us ever keep our vows perfectly, but vows are still worth making and working very hard to keep – especially when it isn’t easy;
- ❖ There is room in this “family” for those on the edge and those who put you on the edge;
- ❖ Family is good place to start practicing hospitality;
- ❖ We must not expect solitude to give us what only intimate relationships are capable of giving us, and we must not expect that every relationship can bear the full weight of intimacy;
- ❖ We need simpler, uncomplicated relationships with others;
- ❖ ...we want *Jesus* to be among us. We want him to listen; we want him to touch us; we want him to laugh and tell us a story;
- ❖ It is human touch that makes us feel most human;
- ❖ Balance gives us freedom, eases anxieties, and makes room in our lives. Cloister, community and hospitality – they represent this balance;
- ❖ By gently and gradually gathering up the strands of your fragmented life into one whole, you will become the one in skin that can distribute yourself to others and still have something left to take into the great solitude of your vast soul to rest in God.

Scripture:

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” – Hebrews 13:2

Chapter Six: Preparing a Table

Key Points:

- ❖ The table is the place where you connect and belong;
- ❖ The table is the place where the past remains alive and in the memory of the very old, and the future sparkles with possibilities;
- ❖ Meals are powerful symbols in our memory – but someone has to prepare the meal;
- ❖ Setting a table and making ready for a meal prepares preliminary thought and consideration for others;
- ❖ In genuine hospitality we work to make our entire existence a welcoming table;
- ❖ A welcoming table is a place prepared for others to be at ease, to receive from us comfort and strength;
- ❖ Hospitality becomes a way of life as we become more open;
- ❖ Hospitality cannot happen without preparation and only if you intend for it to happen;
- ❖ Hospitality is an intentional act;
- ❖ The Hospitality ‘table’ represents the unknown of every human heart for communion with ‘*something more*’ that infuses all that exists;
- ❖ Some little part of us waits eagerly for the moment bread is broken, a hand is given, a laugh fills the air, and then by grace a connection to someone happens and magically opens up;
- ❖ Food is basic to human existence but it is more than it appears to be ---it represents the *More*;
- ❖ In the Christian tradition, bread and wine are sacramental, carrying us to the presence of God;
- ❖ In every family meal, in every dinner between friends, a sacramental mystery is present;
- ❖ There is magic in these connections that does something to us way down deep and the lesson is that we must take seriously our receiving of others;
- ❖ In all our preparations (preparing a meal; mowing the lawn, painting a wall) we are preparing for the Sacred to come to us;

- ❖ All our undertakings need to be prepared as though we are preparing the Sacramental table;
- ❖ The deep meaning of hospitality involves our entrance into the mess of things; it means we run right into the chaos if that is what it takes;
- ❖ The purposes of hospitality are not as simple as providing comfort for a short while; it best kind of hospitality seeps into your soul and shapes your identity;
- ❖ We can give this kind of 'sheltering' hospitality only if we take the time to prepare sheltering places around us and inside us;
- ❖ When you invite someone to your table, you include them, you make them part of 'us';
- ❖ In Latin the work companion literally means 'to break bread' together;
- ❖ The Eucharist has such power because it is founded in our food experience;
- ❖ Food is powerful, it says you belong here;
- ❖ It is not just food we pass out that nourishes or impoverishes the human heart – the table is also our place of work as one creates a space others because work is always for the service of others;
- ❖ In the ancient world (the one Jesus was born into), people saw the sharing of meals as having eternal consequences (eating with the 'right' or 'wrong' kind of people had specific good or bad consequences);
- ❖ In the gospel story of the feeding of the multitude, Jesus wanted to make the point that we are to eat together – eating together was transforming;
- ❖ When we take on the stance of doing for others in all that we do, the work of our hands takes on a transforming power;
- ❖ Our preparations for others remind us that we are not alone in the world;
- ❖ We need to take care to create spaces where the soul can unfurl its wings;
- ❖ This kind of care is in the details – it is revealed in our passion to prepare a place for someone;
- ❖ Ultimately, hospitality is about preparing the holiest of holies. It is about the heart you make ready. Yours!

Scripture:

“Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” – Romans 12:13

Chapter Seven: Companionship and Intimacy Begins Inside

Key Points:

- ❖ If we are going to love others, we need to understand that the nature of love is not static, fixed and predictable;
- ❖ Intimacy is the goal of hospitality;
- ❖ Intimacy is a close, familiar relationship with another person or group;
- ❖ Companionable relationships involve listening to the other, show caring, and are “there” and present for the other person. It requires that we listen when the other person speaks – however that may be;
- ❖ Companionable relationships require that we are always real;
- ❖ Our display of Radical Hospitality requires that we create a protective and safe shelter that allows us to manage life giving relationships that are welcoming to others;
- ❖ To fully practice the intimacy involved with Radical Hospitality, I must love and respect me first;
- ❖ Intimacy does not mean sex;
- ❖ Intimacy is the deep experience of knowing another human heart;
- ❖ Intimacy is the experience of sharing life together;
- ❖ Genuine joy doesn’t happen until we have been to the depths of despair;
- ❖ Radical hospitality can be equated to the belief or notion that “we are all family now”;
- ❖ **Intimacy will only happen when we set aside our prejudices and fears;**
- ❖ Intimacy makes strangers into brothers and sisters;
- ❖ Intimacy, which equates to the epitome of Radical Hospitality, offers us an emotional rush of acceptance and belonging, and being known, or it can make you laugh all the way to your toes;
- ❖ To say “I love” is an affirmation of life; We must strive to make other people feel like they matter;
- ❖ **To truly practice Radical Hospitality, we must “keep the door open and greet the stranger as if you were greeting God”;**

- ❖ We must open ourselves up and we love – we must love every single gorgeous second we get a chance at it;
- ❖ Practicing Radical Hospitality, we must allow ourselves to open up to allow us to love others as we would love God – We must allow the most genuine of our emotional sharing ourselves with others.

NOTES

Scripture:

“From there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul.” – Deuteronomy 4:29

Chapter Eight: The Making of a Heart – It’s Not Easy To Love

Key Points:

- ❖ It isn’t easy to love – people disappoint us when are doing the best they can;
- ❖ None of us starts out life mature, and none of us is automatically good at love – we need other people to help us grow;
- ❖ Sometimes it is the one who is most difficult to be around that we need the most; and sometimes we are most difficult to be around and we need grace and acceptance;
- ❖ An inescapable reality is that our relationships are the soil from which we grow a heart capable of caring;
- ❖ When we remember the times we most need grace and forgiveness, it can be a part of the making of our hearts for others;
- ❖ Amazing that one single soul can house huge contradictions – all of us are hard to like and even to love sometimes – capable of great loyalty and great betrayal;
- ❖ Every day we make choices that take us toward the making of a certain kind of heart;
- ❖ Hospitality is a way to help others discover their true selves;
- ❖ People need to see their precious self-reflected in your eyes sometimes before they can believe it for themselves;
- ❖ Our ability to accept others begins with whether or not we are in touch with our dark side;
- ❖ A realistic understanding of the self allows us to better accept others;
- ❖ Gratitude is at the center of a hospitable heart – it keeps everything in perspective;
- ❖ Courage is the secret of people who seem always to feel grateful without being prompted;
- ❖ Courage is the power of the heart, and it resides not in the emotion, but in the will and the power to choose;
- ❖ The centrality of love insists that we give the hard-to-like a chance; we need to time and practice to grow in accepting difficult people;
- ❖ Hidden at the heart of all Creation is an original goodness; if we live in the presence of the Divine through prayer and gratitude, if we live courageously, this goodness will reveal itself;
- ❖ Our ability to care is more than we know; prayer will expand it; courage will expand it; risk will expand it; caring will expand it as we give more chances to say yes;
- ❖ Jesus always calls us to be more and to more.

Scripture:

***“Do not look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others too.” –
Philippians 2:4***

Chapter Nine: Making Room for Yourself

Key Points:

- ❖ It is impossible to address the topic of hospitality without considering an individual’s boundaries;
- ❖ Boundaries are the space that we cannot allow others to invade or disrespect;
- ❖ Maintaining boundaries is how we remain hospitable and accepting of ourselves;
- ❖ One way to nurture a healthy sense of the self is to keep strong boundaries;
- ❖ People who like themselves tend to maintain boundaries quite naturally;
- ❖ Boundaries keep us from feeling used or manipulated;
- ❖ When we set perimeters and refuse to allow ourselves or others to be violated, we become free to enjoy giving;
- ❖ At times, it may be important to put up “high gates” as a solution to protecting one’s self from destructive access or interaction;
- ❖ To be fully present for guests, it is important to protect the distinctions of one’s self;
- ❖ You dishonor yourself, and the people you love and who love you, if you fail to keep your commitments while chasing after a spiritual ideal such as hospitality;
- ❖ The key to being a hospitable person rests with keeping a personal balance;
- ❖ You must insist on your right to be yourself;
- ❖ We build up the humanity of others when we pay attention to them;
- ❖ The neediest of our guests are the ones who push against our boundaries. They may not have boundaries of their own;
- ❖ We can give simple kindness without losing ourselves.

Scripture:

“And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us everyone because of the present rain, and because of the cold.” – Acts 28:2

Chapter Ten: Being a Companion Through the Hurt

Key Points:

- ❖ To be available for someone going through hurt or pain, the beginning of some radical hospitality;
- ❖ An inner drive of wanting to help, reaching out to that painful or hurtful one;
- ❖ Realizing that pain or hurt comes in all fashions;
- ❖ In becoming available we pay a price emotionally and spiritually; our faith in Christ grows;
- ❖ Becoming the presence of God, a beauty emerges during awful times. Freedom, good things will happen;
- ❖ Knowing that God is watching the beauty of healing;
- ❖ In taking on pain we are changed by the healing can be exhausting;
- ❖ Limited Options;
- ❖ Hospitality is not planned only where your stance in life. What we do in the direction of healing, change happens and is never constant. We are being freed. Tidy up loose ends, keep a simple life, unload clutter, things that aren't used are used are tools to keep us free and available. Be honest to what matters most;
- ❖ What have been some experiences of hurt or pain?;
- ❖ Were you changed by the experience?;
- ❖ Expounding God's word did it help you or the other individual?

Scripture:

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe" John 20:28

Chapter Eleven: Calling a Truce – Hospitality Toward God

Key Points:

- ❖ Doubt is an integral part of faith, not something to be avoided or denied ...but a thing to be explored and embraced;
- ❖ There is a type of doubt that is unique to believers ...this type of doubt does the work of keeping faith awake and moving;
- ❖ Some of our doubts have emerged from faith and not disbelief;
- ❖ Since God made people to think, we have to conclude that we are intended to ask questions. Why does the person who voices doubt receive rebuke?;
- ❖ God is not offended by our doubt;
- ❖ Doubt can drive a wedge in your relationship with God. The thing we fear the most is that doubt will turn people away from God;
- ❖ The difference between doubting when your heart believes and doubt for the experience of doubt itself is that a believer's doubt does not lead to despair; it leads us back to God;
- ❖ Hope is what is gained by doubting. Hope is a choice to believe, despite evidence to the contrary, that God is going to make sense of all this insanity someday;
- ❖ Welcoming God into our life is a daily exercise in faith and hope. When we extend hospitality to God we open ourselves to love the unlovable;
- ❖ We cannot extend hospitality to others without first making peace with God and extending hospitality to the Divine.

Scripture:

“Moreover there were at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that are about us.” – Nehemiah 5:17

Chapter Twelve: Listening – the Deep Truth of Hospitality

Key Points:

- ❖ Listening is a special kind of deep attentiveness to all of life;
- ❖ We are called to sharpen the ears of the heart;
- ❖ We become less human when we decide to do nothing once we’ve heard the screams and shouts of the others;
- ❖ **Listening is the core meaning of hospitality;**
- ❖ When the other knows someone listened – The other feels real;
- ❖ Hospitality is a way to counter the thousands of times another human being has felt less than human because others didn’t listen;
- ❖ Be nice and accept each other;
- ❖ **Accept each other and your group will inherently become more accepting of others;**
- ❖ There is nothing more human than our desire to be heard. Listening is the most hospitable thing we can do;
- ❖ When we train ourselves to listen to others, we will have taken great steps in hospitality;
- ❖ We must be ever so mindful of each encounter. We have with those with which we come in contact. (The clerk at the checkout counter at the grocery store; the person taking your deposit at the bank; teaching an incorrigible student to pronounce a difficult word; the son or daughter asking for a bigger allowance);
- ❖ When we listen to others, we assume the other benefits, but the reality is we may tend to benefit from the encounter as well;
- ❖ Listening is a choice to be receptive, to stop speaking and take an open stance;
- ❖ Patiently waiting for the real self to be revealed;
- ❖ Listening is the only way to see through the eyes of the other;
- ❖ By our best and worst attempts at hospitality we say to ourselves and to the whole world:

- Everything matters
 - You are not alone
 - You are more than you know
 - The awful thing is not the final word
 - Today is all we have and today is enough
 - We need each other
- ❖ To care for each other, to open the door to the stranger, to open your heart to the stranger, lifts you up into the great dance of life;
 - ❖ God is among us – It is not important that we recognize God in the stranger; god is there whether we notice or not. We can just assume the fact and do the next thing – accept the stranger;
 - ❖ What matters is we open our hearts – stretch and draw near to each other;
 - ❖ You can take all the steps toward hospitality, but if your heart isn't changed, nothing else will really change either. Becoming more welcoming of others must be viewed as a process rather than an objective with a deadline;
 - ❖ Recognize we are aimed toward a conversion event;
 - ❖ Unless we open ourselves to others, we will grow even more isolated and frightened;
 - ❖ Suspicion is one of the enemies of hospitality. Fear is at the core of suspicion. We are all starved for love, yet we are mostly unwilling to trust others to give us what we need.

Book Review Summary:

To truly practice Radical Hospitality, it is most important that we take a critical look at ourselves and how we love and respect self and all others. Our approach to Radical Hospitality needs to be focused on how we engage with the other and provide a welcoming safe-haven for the other and not focus on satisfying our own egos. The truest notion of Radical Hospitality is akin to the concept of “Servant Leadership” – placing ourselves in second place in honor of reaching out to and serving the other.

It is vital that we take a critical look at ourselves, mend fractured relationships, and practice Radical Hospitality among ourselves as a source of practice for how we will extend Radical Hospitality to our guests. We must make our place welcoming and nurturing for the other. We must pay careful attention to the other to empathically hear the needs of the other, and respond to the other as they may need our attention. Make it easier for the other to express their needs allowing them to feel safe and cared for.

We are in need of setting clear goals for creating and maintaining an environment that challenges all our members and leaders to internalize a central focus on how we individually and collectively interpret Radical Hospitality as the foundation for living out the church’s mission and vision. We need to offer and present clear models and samples of what we must do to exemplify Radical Hospitality.

These points require that we see Jesus in the other, and our practice must focus our attention and our attentiveness to the treatment of the other person, those in our family and those who may be our visitors, as we would treat Jesus. It is important for each of us to believe that each contact with others is most crucial to the embodiment for proving our “spoken” faith. This calls for sincerity and honesty in our interactions. We must truly care for each other as we would care for Jesus. This takes us from a conceptual, spiritual discussion to directed behavior which ultimately transforms how we think and feel about each other, and ultimately how we treat each other.

The author starts chapter 11 with exploring the issue of doubt in the context of our faith journey. Doubt is a part of the gift of faith and actually broadens and deepens our belief in God.

Pratt contends that as a result of struggling with her doubts she has gained hope which has paved the way to a truce with God. It is hard to be accepting of God and God’s way because we cannot truly explain and understand God (especially as it pertains to some of the horrific things that occur in our lives).

She has learned to hope in God’s love and goodness as well as to accept God as is. Acceptance is a core principle of radical hospitality. Accepting God as is encompasses all of the beauty and wonders of the world along with a view of the tortured, the lost and the evil that exists. God is completely other, unlike anything or anyone else and beyond our comprehension.

When we extend hospitality to God it will allow us to open up to love the unlovable. Hospitality to others is a pretense until we make peace with God and extend hospitality to the Divine.

NOTES

Discussion Questions

The following questions are presented as a means of facilitating your discussion of Radical Hospitality. In your interaction, other questions may arise that you will also want to explore. Please feel free to share your questions with the body of the church to further advance learning and practicing Radical Hospitality as you think appropriate.

1. Discuss how the following scriptures support the author's point of view regarding doubt and faith?
 - Matthew 14:31
 - Luke 24:38
 - John 20:27
 - Jude 1:22
2. How do the chapters in the book help you understand the concept of radical hospitality?
3. Radical hospitality focuses on spiritual growth and transformation. How has this book helped you in this endeavor?
4. How can these principles be applied to your ministry work and to the church as a whole?
5. What do you believe to be the key "take aways" from your reading of the chapters?
6. What are the implications of the chapters of the book as you work with your ministry towers?
7. What should be key points of focus as you engage with your ministry?
8. How can Radical Hospitality help us overcome some of the more obvious challenges our church is currently facing?
9. What action should we take to more fully incorporate Radical Hospitality through the life of the church through the activities of the ministry towers?
10. How do you interpret instructions that suggest that we must build our capacity for receiving strangers after we build meaningful and caring relationships in our house first?

Book Review Take Aways

- ❖ “Hospitality is a lively, courageous, and convivial way of living that challenges our compulsion either to turn inward, or disconnect ourselves from others”.
- ❖ The “spiritual practice of hospitality” is now more important than ever. It is an antidote to paranoia.
- ❖ “If we have accepted the ‘other’ within ourselves, it is a lot easier to accept that which is alien in strangers.
- ❖ “Boundaries allow us to give more to others, not less”.
- ❖ Boundaries do not exclude the other, in fact, if you become a person with actual boundaries, you are better able to give to other people because you do not feel diminished by them”.
- ❖ To be proficient practitioners of Radical Hospitality, we must consistently observe behavioral guidelines, and undergirding “rules of engagement”.
- ❖ Our Rules must offer for us a recipe governing the micro and macro interactions we have with each ‘other’ at every contact, just as we would interact with Jesus.
- ❖ Our disciplined behavior leads to our practical discipleship.
- ❖ The example of my commitment to Radical Hospitality is evidenced by the faithfulness of my conduct.
- ❖ Our theology must be demonstrated, not only by our words but, more importantly by our actions.
- ❖ Practicing Radical Hospitality means we must cure the fears and challenges each of us faces in order to open ourselves up to accept others who we may not yet know.
- ❖ Think realistically about yourself and your situation while making a conscious effort to focus on hopes, not fears.
- ❖ Pursuing my Christian discipleship, I must be faithful in my conduct.