Hospitality is not what you think it is.

Derek Mutungu

* Zambia – came to study at university in Bath, England.
* 1st week – Xn students – invited to church – went along, hoping to find friendship
* Family welcomed him into their home – blown away.
* Over weeks – gospel – responded to Christ. Quickly grew.
* Back to Zambia – so impressed with CU’s in UK – start in Zambia. Uni Lusaka - 1st.
* Grew rapidly – 10% of students in the country: Xn
* Such upheaval: President Kenneth Kuanda – invited Derek Mutungu - presidential palace.
* “What is this message you are preaching that is turning the universities upside down?”
* Told him – cross – Jesus – moved to tears.
* “This is the message our culture needs to hear” – invited him back with other CU leaders to preach Christ to the whole Zambian cabinet. Zambia changed forever.
* One family in Bath – invited a lonely international student into their home.

Hands – born in UK. Hope you’ve felt welcomed.

* Some rooted here. Others: business leaders – people of influence.
* Wonderful opportunities - but hospitality is much more than that.

Hospitality. Greek compound word: Philoxenos (fil-ox-ey-nos)

* Philos (filos): Friend.
  + Parable of lost coin[[1]](#endnote-1) – finds coin – calls to her friends – rejoice with me. Philos.
* Xenos (ksay-nos): stranger – foreigner.
  + Acts 17[[2]](#endnote-2) – Apostle Paul is in Athens – debating with the philosophers who spent all their time talking about and listening to the latest ideas. Athenians were there – and foreigners – xenos.
  + Eph 2[[3]](#endnote-3) – Christians used to be strangers – foreigners to the gospel and to Christ. Didn’t know it, understand it – didn’t know him.
* Put it back together. Hospitality is Philoxenos – friendly to strangers.

August

* consider how we can be more stranger-friendly. Church, home, heart. Start with foundations today.
* Practical
* Topical: strangers coming into this building every week- Sept: Students.

What it’s not:

* Something involving cooking
  + Asked me 12mo ago – cooking meals for people.
  + Rota @ old church – students – cooking rota
  + Great news for those who can’t cook. You can be extremely stranger-friendly – hospitable – /can’t boil egg.
  + /giving our recipe ideas.
  + Food is a great way of being hospitable – not the only way, or even one of the main ways.
* Not having friends over
  + If they are friends, they are not strangers, and it isn’t hospitality. Only hospitality if you don’t know them well already.
  + You can invite M&D over every Sunday for a year and you’ve not been Biblically hospitable once.
  + Depends on them being “strangers” to you in some sense.
    - /complete stranger. /find person never set eyes on
    - Want to get to know better – for their benefit – make them feel part – welcome.
    - Fun – relax: probably not hospitality. Ministry

Laying foundations. First example of hospitality in the Bible – loads – one of best. Abraham[[4]](#endnote-4).

* Jews / Muslims – father of hospitality. Why? This.

Imagine:

The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby.

* Abraham: discouraged, childless old man - sitting at the entrance to his tent – Judean desert[[5]](#endnote-5) - blazing sunshine overhead. Lawrence of Arabia – Omah Sherif[[6]](#endnote-6).
* Sees 3 strangers some way off. Doesn’t know at this point who they are.

**7 ways we can learn from Abe – how to be friendly to strangers**

**1 Notice them (v1,2)**

“Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby”

How differently things would have gone if he hadn’t looked up from what he was doing.

Encourage you to look up.

* Church – all busy – responsibilities, duties, kids, friends.
* Do you notice strangers? Size – can’t know everyone - /30, 50. Know your peer group.
  + Mum with kids – make it your aim – strangers here like me?
  + Ethnic group
  + Age group
  + As a minimum – homeless - ethnic
* Older people special ministry here – blessed to have some very good
  + Younger – chatting up?
* Look up – every Sunday – who is new – esp like me.

**2 Make the first move (v2)**

**v2** When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them

* Could have sat in the shade of his tent – waited for them to arrive.
  + But perhaps they wouldn’t have felt comfortable about approaching.
    - Visitor – need to be pretty confident to make 1st move. Not their resp.
    - /Xn – like you going into betting shop – where to go – nervous – door wrong way – everyone looking – feels like they are all different.
* Wants to make them welcome. Show he’s friendly towards them. Why he’s F of hosp.

**3 Hurry to meet them (v2)**

“hurried” Heb: ran. Leaves shade of his tent – ventures out into the blazing desert heat. Average daytime temp in summer – 40degC.

Holiday: Slovenia: 38degC – sand burns feet – oven.

* Runs to meet them. Ever tried running in 40deg heat?
* How about you? Not suggesting we all run to the visitors – scary! /mob!
* Heart: willing – really willing. Do you ignore the discomfort of the hot sand and the blazing sun to go and make visitors welcome?
  + Abe leaves his tent - hurries to meet them.
  + Do have to hurry sometimes.

**4 Greet them (end v2)**

and bowed low to the ground.

Now, cultural thing here. To show respect in his culture – that’s what you did. How in ours?

* Shake hands – eye contact – welcome.
* Like you mean it.
* Dangerous qn: 1st time?
  + “Don’t think we’ve met – I’m Jon”
  + “Do you go to church normally”?

**5 Ask them to stay (v3)**

3He said, ‘If I have found favour in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by.

* Made them feel really welcome – please, don’t leave. I really want you to stay. Don’t pass me by – don’t keep walking – stay.
* If you’re not a visitor this morning, you are a host[[7]](#endnote-7). Welcoming people into your spiritual home.
* Really trying hard to make them feel welcome. Do you do that? This is not half-hearted “awlrite” – seen you but don’t want to interact.
  + Phew – spoke to one of them!
* Encouragement – please stay.

**6 Make the effort (v4)**

4Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree.

* When you’re living in a desert, water is your most precious asset. Bring some water.
  + Abe – sacrifice – every bit of water he pours on their feet, he’s got to draw up from a well somewhere.
  + Hassle. Easier to sit in the tent and let them go past.

5Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way – now that you have come to your servant.’

* Food – turns out they haven’t arrived at a mealtime, but Abe is prepared to change his plans – to be friendly to strangers.
* Are we prepared to go out of our way to welcome visitors?
  + Maybe rather speak to your mate
  + Confidence? Hard - shy person.
    - All kinds of other ways – next week.
    - Don’t use it as an excuse. Work in a shop – greet ppl all day – don’t make out you’re too shy to talk to guests at church.
  + Makes a huge difference to someone

**7 Share the best we have (v5-7)**

‘Very well,’ they answered, ‘do as you say.’

6So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. ‘Quick,’ he said, ‘get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.’

7Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.

* Takes the best flour to make bread. Best calf – slaughter – BBQ.
  + Not everyday stuff – best.
  + /dodgy bag of cheese & onion crisps no-one likes that’s been in the cupboard for ages.
  + Cooks a meal, from scratch. The best – better than he would normally have for himself.
* Hospitality – welcoming visitor – maybe the best thing you can do today.
  + /lunch – 1st time – scary.

8He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

Cultural – ME – lets them eat alone –respect. Invited to home of ME family – good chance that’s what will happen.

Abe: father of hospitality. Frankly this is second nature to a lot of cultures, but we are rubbish at it.

* USA – Africa – Asia – church & business
* /church – culture – church has a lot to learn. Spelled it out!
* Somehow in our self-absorbed culture we’ve missed this clear Biblical command to welcome the stranger.

A few others:

* **Romans 16:23** Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy
* Respectable women – receive help from the church: **1Tim 5:10** and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality
* **Titus 1:8** – elders – “must be hospitable”
* **Matthew 10** – Jesus sends out 12 – heal sick – demons – kingdom of heaven is here. Reply on the hospitality of people – don’t take your own stuff. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.
* **Hebrews 13:2** Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.
* **Matthew 25** I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was ill and in prison and you did not look after me.” 44‘They also will answer, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or ill or in prison, and did not help you?” 45‘He will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

Next 3 weeks: dozens of examples of hospitality – welcome to strangers. But aside from all the examples of hospitality from the OT & NT.

* One very good reason. We were strangers to God once. And he loved us.

Eph 2 – very briefly – 2 verses.

**v12** you were separate from Christ ... excluded ... foreigners ... without hope and without God

foreigner – xenos (ksay-nos):

* /church – but from Christ – from God.
  + Natural state of human beings – separated. Why?
    - Sin – do – say – even think – separate us – God is holy – perfect – we are not. Cannot abide sin.
  + Without hope: separated from God – this life & eternity. Incredibly serious.
  + Maybe you today?

**v19** you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people

Ppl in E – not that any more – no longer strangers to God – joined to God’s ppl – fellow citizens of heaven.

What happened? Cross.

Repentance & faith

*Last song: chorus*

*Here is Love*

*Discussion questions*

These questions are deliberately very practical because it’s a very practical subject. It’s one that’s rarely tackled head-on, so let’s not try to get too much theology in this one – keep it practical.

Icebreaker: What’s the most generous expression of hospitality you have ever experienced?

1. If someone had said “hospitality” to you before this Sunday, what would you have thought of? How has your understanding changed? Reiterate what the word “hospitality” actually means.
2. Jon said that our culture was not as hospitable as many others. Do you agree? Or do we just show it in different ways?
3. Read Genesis 18:1-8 and work through the 7 points. You might want to keep the notes open to familiarise yourself with them). Which are hardest/easiest to do?
4. Do you tend to notice strangers in the congregation? What goes through your mind when you see someone you don’t know?
5. Let’s get really practical. List 20 ways that the church can be more welcoming to strangers. Email your lists to me afterwards!
6. What is the greatest motivation for us to be welcoming to strangers? Which of the 7 points directly remind us of how God treats us? Spend some time in prayerful thanks for God’s welcome to us, and for help for our church to do likewise.
7. What is the most helpful or challenging thing you have learned on this subject? Think of 1 thing you will try to do differently as a result of this teaching.

1. Luke 15:8-10 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Acts 17:21 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Ephesians 2:12,19 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Some of these ideas are from Jamie Buckingham’s’ book, *A Way Through The Wilderness* [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. According to online sources, Mamre was located approximately where modern-day Hebron is. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ud1zpHW3ito> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <http://blog.chron.com/thepeacepastor/2013/08/20-ways-how-to-make-someone-feel-welcome-in-church/> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)