
Session: Are You Hospitable?

Description

Hospitality is an important aspect of life in community. The Benedictines welcome any wanderers who need shelter or peace. There is a sense of community in the monastery, not only between the monks themselves, but also with the travelers that come to stay with them. The monks do this as part of their faith tradition - to demonstrate Jesus' love to many. They welcome strangers who are hungry, or tired, or need a place to lay their heads which means that they are welcoming in people from all walks of life. The Benedictines feel that it is important to include people in our communities who are different from ourselves.

Hospitality should be born out of love. Each person we encounter in the world has a story. Their story may be different than yours, but we are all connected in our humanity and I believe that God loves each of us equally. If we are willing to open our hearts and minds, we may find that we are more alike than different.

Hospitality involves four things:

- First, a willingness to enter a relationship with people who may be different from us. To acknowledge that every person has inherent value and worth. We don't sort people by our differences, we look for our commonalities.
- Second, whether we are aware or not, there are power dynamics at play in our culture. Sometimes, people have been oppressed or negatively impacted by these dynamics. True hospitality asks, "Does this action benefit only those in power, or does it benefit those whom we are seeking to be hospitable to?" What are our motives?
- Third, it involves creating spaces where people are free (and safe) to be themselves. We welcome them in not to change them but to be in relationship with them based on who they are, not who we wish they would be.
- Last but definitely not least hospitality involves grace. Just as God has given us grace without proving to be worthy of it, we forgive and give others grace in the same way.

In this session we will explore hospitality through the Envelope Activity. This activity will help you think through some of the key components of hospitality including brainstorming what you are comfortable with, what you are not comfortable with, and how you can do better. It will also help you translate abstract ideas about hospitality into realized behaviors.

Materials Needed

One envelope for each member of the family, a stack of any sized index cards, a writing utensil for each member of the family and a timer.

Handouts

None

How hospitable are you?

Read aloud the quote or scripture

“Hospitality exists when you believe the other person is on your side.”
Anonymous

Questions for discussion (10 minutes)

1. Name a person, or type of person who you think is completely different than you. Can you think of some things you might have in common with them? How do you think that person was shaped by their history or experiences?
2. What does hospitality mean to you? Have you ever been uncomfortable being hospitable? (Example: having to invite someone to a party that you really didn't want to invite.) What was that like? Has anyone ever made you feel unwelcome? Explain.
3. Do you think it's good to practice hospitality? If so why? If not, why not? Do you think God wants us to be hospitable? Explain.
4. Do you think people deserve to be forgiven if they haven't asked for forgiveness? Explain. Have you ever mis-judged someone and later found out you were wrong about them?
5. What are some good things that can happen when we are hospitable to people who are different from us? Are there bad things that can happen when we are hospitable to people who are different from us? Could there be misunderstandings? Explain.

Rule of life activity

1. Get four blank envelopes and a pen.
2. **Write one of the four Hospitality Principles on the outside of each of the four envelopes.** (One principle per envelope). 1. Relationships with People who are different 2. Power Dynamics 3. Creating Safe Spaces 4. Giving Grace. If you have littles in your house you can keep it simple and write: Be Kind, Sharing, Don't Judge, Be a Friend. If they aren't yet writing, you can use a poster board and write things down for them. Adapt according to your needs.
3. Divide the four envelopes as evenly as possible among your family members. You might need to buddy up or each person takes two envelopes etc. Or put a little with an older child.
4. Next give four blank index cards and a writing utensil to each person or team.
5. Review / discuss Hospitality Principles A through D:
 - a. A willingness to be in relationship with people who are different than you.

- b. Power dynamics at play - Are there situations where we are judging the person without taking into account their culture, socioeconomics, history, upbringing etc.
 - c. Creating spaces where people are free to be themselves. Relationships based on who they are. Not trying to change them.
 - d. Giving others grace the way we want to receive grace.
6. Now explain that you are going to translate these concepts into real-life hospitality actions that you can take as individuals, or as a family.
7. Each person or team is going to spend three minutes writing down (on one of their four blank index cards) ideas on how they can apply that principle in a real-life way.
8. At the end of three minutes each person or team puts that index card inside the envelope and passes it to the right. The next person may NOT look inside the envelope.
9. Now do the same thing for principle number two. On a fresh index card write ideas to practice the hospitality practice that's on your new envelope (the one you just received). Set the timer for three minutes. When three minutes is up, put that card inside that envelope and pass to the right.
10. Continue until everyone has inserted ideas for each of the four envelopes.
11. Next, different people (or one person) pull out all four index cards from each envelope and read the ideas aloud.
12. After all four index cards from each envelope have been read aloud, discuss as a family which of the ideas you might like to try. Do any of the ideas seem particularly challenging? Were there any repeats?
13. Lastly, make a plan to try the idea(s) out and to later discuss how it went, maybe over dinner the following week.

Examen

How did it go? Debrief highs and lows

1. Each person shares their favorite part of the conversation / activity and why.
 2. Each person shares their least favorite part and why.
 3. Did you do a Serving/Giving activity last week? How did it go?
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Serving /giving ideas for any time this week: Choose one or create your own. These can be done individually or as a group. You will be sharing your serving experience in the next session.

- Invite someone new to your home, to join you for lunch or for coffee.
- Bake some treats and take them to a neighbor.
- Purchase a meal for a First Responder. (Give extra money to the server and tell them it's to cover the meal of the next First Responder who comes in. Tell them to please thank them for their service.)
- Write a kind message on someone's Facebook or Instagram page.
- Fill a cooler full of cold pop cans on a hot day or hot cocoa on a cold day, and hand them out to neighbors for free.