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BETHEL UNIVERSITY
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VIDEO CHURCH: THE EFFECTS OF THE VIDEO CHURCH MODEL
ON CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY

A THESIS PROJECT REPORT
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

ASSAD SAIF
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
MAY 2020

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ABSTRACT

Hospitality is fundamental to human spiritual growth. Jesus knew this. Therefore, Jesus spent much time seeking to encounter people in the spaces they naturally congregated in. God sent Jesus to come from heaven to earth to show people the incarnate God and his desire to welcome them into his family. More specifically, God sent Jesus to a specific culture in the world where he believed the message of God's love could be viewed through the lens of hospitality.

By using a grounded theory approach, the researcher set out to discover the methods by which hospitality is impacted within the video church model of Sunday morning church worship services. The researcher identified 12 key hospitable qualities necessary for the development of a culture of hospitality in church services. The researcher identified seven principles of healthy hospitality and seven considerations toward sustaining healthy hospitality within the video venue church. The researcher identified how human spirituality benefits from acts of hospitality by specifically studying the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 and the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10.

The researcher identified and analyzed data gathered from interviews with Senior church leaders, volunteers in video churches and small group leaders who attend video church services. This data was collected in order to help the researcher discover the effect of hospitality and how the lack thereof affects spiritual growth in the video church model.

The researcher identified both the key qualities of hospitality which contribute toward healthy spiritual growth in video church services and the types of video church services that help to produce these qualities in Christ followers.

CHAPTER ONE: CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY IN THE CHURCH

The Problem

The world is filled with people who desire to connect with one another in meaningful ways. Meaningful connections between people have traditionally occurred in face-to-face encounters. This has been especially true in churches where people experience hospitality, teaching, and prayer. For the purpose of this project the researcher defined the Church as the body of Christ made up of the followers of Christ. These followers are connected by their common worship of Jesus as God. The Church meets regularly, though the specific day of the week is not as important as the gathering itself. The innovation of social media platforms and advancements in modern technology have created new opportunities for people to make meaningful connections in a virtual environment.

Churches today are using virtual environments to create what is called a “video venue.” A video venue is church location where the teaching pastor is projected on a screen while the main campus has the teaching pastor in a live environment. The onsite ministry of the video venue is organized and orchestrated by a campus pastor. In these video venues, teaching pastors are projected on screens and campus pastors act as hosts for the video venue campuses. Church campuses are offsite gatherings of the main campus churches. These sites are equipped with the necessary equipment, staff and budgeting resources to produce church programs. The teacher is streamed via video on a screen.

The problem this project addressed was the lack of hospitality that occurs in video venue church campuses/congregations and how this lack contributes toward a lack of spiritual growth among Christians. The specific definition of hospitality in this project refers to the gathering of people in a meaningful way to eat, pray, share each other's burdens and do life together.

In response to this problem the researcher (a) explored biblical examples of innovative approaches to hospitality and its effects on Christian maturity and healthy church engagement, (b) reviewed relevant literature dealing with the presence of hospitable engagement in multiple contexts, (c) studied examples of video churches who are and are not hospitable and the themes regarding Christian maturity, and (d) identified transferable principles that may help churches affect missional change toward creating the best cultures for healthy maturity and engagement.

Obstacles to Consider

The first obstacle found during this research was related to exploring biblical examples of innovative approaches to hospitality and its effects on Christian maturity and healthy church engagement. Mature Christians are those who are growing in their faith. They are both learning the principles of the Bible and applying them in their life context. Immature Christians lack knowledge of the Bible and therefore struggle to live out their faith. This would include those who attend church for reasons unrelated to religion; instead, they seek out the community for other reasons. Immature Christians fail to see the greater purpose of the church. Innovative approaches to hospitality involve both

creative expressions of a methodology others may not see and executing this methodology for the benefit of the whole.

Hospitality is a central part of the Middle Eastern context Jesus was born into. Jesus, Emmanuel (God with us), came to be with humanity, to be among it as a vehicle for engaging people while being accessible for humanity to experience God. This all happens through the framework of innovative teaching and hospitality. Jesus repeatedly teaches in innovative ways, challenging people to see God in their midst while using imagery and phrases that were historical, modern and futuristic. The purpose of this style of teaching was to jog the listener into a position of hearing and learning with new ears. Jesus' presence in his teaching was paramount. His presence led to his proclamation. The culture of ancient Israel needed a tangible expression of God for them to be able to see God as accessible and hospitable toward them. A common theme of hospitality is evidenced throughout the Gospels. For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on the book of Luke. The parables of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 and the Lost Son in Luke 15 evidence of how the theme of hospitality intersects with Christian maturity. In the Bible, spiritual maturity occurs in the context of a hospitable environment.

The second obstacle encountered during this research project was to review relevant literature dealing with the presence of hospitality in video venue expression of church services. There is much research on the effects of hospitality within the community of God and communities outside the community of God. There is not much literature specific to video venue churches and how hospitality within them affects, positively or negatively, the specific video venue church community.

The third obstacle faced by this research project was to study examples of video venue churches who are and are not hospitable and the themes regarding Christian maturity. As of 2019, several churches around the United States and the world are using video teaching as a means of providing worship services in different venues and/or at different church campuses. This is all done with the intention of making church more accessible to a larger group of people. The researcher spent time specifically looking at three different churches in San Diego County, California. These churches will be referred to as Emmanuel Faith Community Church (EFCC), North Coast Church (NCC) and The Rock Church.

Each of these churches has had video church services either on or off their campuses for at least ten years. Like many churches around the country, the three churches that are part of this study have heavily relied on the video venue model of church for teaching and building community. Studying these three churches provided the researcher with specific data about the issues specific to hospitality in video venue churches in San Diego County. It was the aim of the researcher to seek out themes that may or may not exist among those video venue churches who have (1) healthy, hospitable communities or (2) unhealthy, hospitable communities.

The fourth obstacle encountered during this research project was how to identify transferable principles that will help churches affect missional change toward creating the best cultures for healthy maturity and engagement. The researcher used the word “missional” to identify the movement of people toward mobilizing the church.

The goal of this entire project was to examine where the contemporary Christian culture is on the issue of how it is best able to build the type of community the Bible

identifies as healthy. Valuable insight was gained through a variety of personal interviews with church leaders of different size churches, their constituents and their staff.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher examined several scriptural passages before selecting Luke 10 and Luke 15 as the primary texts which inform the biblical importance of fellowship or hospitality among believers. Luke 10 and Luke 15 are two parables of Jesus that uniquely deal with the heart of God toward humanity and Jesus' desire for humanity to share God's heart toward others.

The researcher studied three different churches in San Diego County, California; two in North County San Diego and one in South County. EFCC is located in the city of Escondido, NCC in the city of Vista, and The Rock in the city of Point Loma. These are local churches within a 30-minute drive of the researcher. This provided the researcher with relevant and local access to nearby pastors. NCC is part of the Evangelical Free Church of America denomination. EFCC and The Rock have no denominational affiliation. The Rock is loosely affiliated with the Calvary Chapel churches in San Diego County. EFCC associates with partner churches but has no formal affiliation with any specific church or denomination.

The researcher examined some literature specific to video teaching. The video teaching in the literature is characterized by video venue church services, grade school teaching and academic teaching. The literature also references the advancements of social interaction over the Internet. The literature aided in the identification of themes of

hospitality and Christian maturity. The focus of this research was not to explicitly study how general video teaching affects human behavior. Therefore, the study of specific literature regarding video teaching was limited to helping the researcher understand certain aspects of video teaching.

The researcher focused on studying how the video venue church model intersects with and affects Christian maturity and hospitality. The researcher did not focus on styles of teaching by each preacher nor did the researcher provide analysis or feedback on the programmatic functions that happen throughout the week and or on Sunday morning services.

The researcher did not examine the correlation between church size and how the video teaching affected Christian hospitality and maturity. The focus of this study was to determine themes of hospitality or the lack thereof in video venue church services.

Three Considerations

The first consideration of this research project was that God loves humanity so much that he sent his son to be the God in the flesh for all to see. This issue highlights the accessible and hospitable nature of God. When Jesus was born, he was prophesied to be “Emmanuel,” meaning “God with us.” This narrative account, found within the Gospels, highlights the importance placed on Christ being the “accessible and hospitable God” to us.

The second consideration of this research project was that Jesus taught innovatively using hospitality as a means of showing God’s love to people. In his time on

earth, Jesus was a masterful teacher and was able to be both simple and innovative in his approach to enlightening everyday people to the deep spiritual and eternal truths in their midst.

The third consideration of this research project was that Jesus' ministry as revealed in Scripture is focused on the salvation of souls and the transformation of individuals and communities. The focus of Jesus' ministry was not solving seating or parking problems. Jesus challenged people seeking to follow him many times. He did this as a way of pushing them toward healthy spiritual growth. Those that clung tightly to Jesus were able to experience a new and unique relationship with him that bore much fruit.

Initially, the researcher held the opinion that the video church model had many positive aspects. Throughout this project the researcher observed several aspects of the video church that were in fact great additions and innovations to the American church culture. However, the researcher found that the video venue model of church services lacked the intentional development of a community of God. The video venue model of church service tended to lean more toward the systematic movement of people over cultivating disciples of Christ that organically welcomed people into their homes. While it was true that the churches in this study developed amazing strategic processes for people retention and used their live and video teaching to encourage spiritual development, it was also true that the development of hospitality as a character trait of the Christian was a secondary or tertiary priority.

Setting of the Project

EFCC was established in October 1939. It was launched by Earl Morgan, a Dallas Theological Seminary graduate who felt called to preach. God confirmed his call by bringing 200 men, women, and children to the very first meeting at Central Elementary School in Escondido. Their focus was the preaching of God's word, missions and children. The 2017 census found that Escondido has a population of roughly 150,000. The median age in Escondido is 33. Fifty-one percent are Hispanic or Latino and the average household income is \$58,834. EFCC has been a long-standing institution in Escondido.¹

Since its beginning, EFCC has had consistent growth. In 1944, Coy Maret was called to be the Senior Pastor. Pastor Maret shepherded the church until he passed away in 1971, at which point EFCC called Richard Strauss to be Senior Pastor; he served until 1993. At that point, Dennis Keating was called as Senior Pastor and he faithfully served EFCC for 26 years until 2019, when EFCC called Pastor A to be Senior Pastor.

Church B, NCC, is located in Vista, California. It was founded in 1950. It was pastored by different pastors over the years; none are listed on their website nor are identifiable via an Internet search. NCC has had a variety of meeting spaces and locations since its inception. NCC was also one of the first churches in the United States to move to a fully video church model where the teaching in the different church venues was delivered via video.

¹“Quick Facts Escondido City”, US Department of Commerce, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/escondidocitycalifornia>.

At the time of this research project, NCC offered fifty-six worship options on six campuses, each with a different worship style and ambiance. They utilize a preaching team to teach through the year and send the video feed to different church locations. NCC emphasizes that a person can find almost any kind of style of worship and children services at one of their fifty-six service offerings. In 2019, the city of Vista, California, where NCC is based, had a population of 99,496 with a median age of 32.8. The average household income is \$59,833. Just over 49 percent of the population is Latino, 40 percent is White.²

Church C, The Rock Church, was founded in 2000 by Senior Pastor C, a former NFL player who has served as the senior pastor of The Rock since 2000. At the time of this research project, The Rock had five campuses throughout the county of San Diego. The main campus is located in Point Loma. The Rock is one of the largest churches in San Diego County with more than 19,000 people either attending or watching via video from home or one of their campuses. The 2010 Census Bureau shows that Point Loma, California has a population of 47,98 which is made up of zip codes 92107³ and 92106.⁴ The average age of in the city is 33 and the average household has ten people. The average household income for this area is over \$100,000.

² “Demographics”, City of Vista, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://www.cityofvista.com/residents/about-vista/demographics>.

³ “Zip Code 92107”, Zip-Codes.com, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://www.zip-codes.com/zip-code/92107/zip-code-92107-2010-census.asp>.

⁴ “Zip Code 92106”, Zip-Codes.com, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://www.zip-codes.com/zip-code/92106/zip-code-92106-2010-census.asp>.

There has been no other Senior Pastor at Church C. The main campus is located on a highly sought-after piece of property in Point Loma. Part of Church C's strategy to grow its ministry reach was to invest in what is now known as "The Rock Academy," which is a private Christian school. The school has the capacity for 400 students.

Project Relevance

The Relevance of the Project to the Researcher

This project helped the researcher grow in his understanding of how to help churches grow past issues of resistance to technological change. The ability to effectively research topics like this allowed the researcher to continue to grow in an area of knowledge that helps to influence in the church community. This ultimately added value to the researcher's home church in the effort of cultivating a healthy hospitable church community.

The researcher found that churches are growing and expanding using the video venue model. This model allows church leaders to plant churches within 15-20 minutes driving distance from their main campus and multi-site campuses. Understanding how to cultivate a theme of hospitality in these churches, where the teaching pastor is appearing on video, was critical for both church leaders currently operating in these models.

The researcher has been serving in pastoral ministry since 1999 and has observed the changing landscape of the church in southern California. The researcher found that the changing landscape of the American church has led to several questions as to how best to effectively share the gospel for the purpose of discipleship. The findings of this research project have informed the researcher as to how best to operate in the

contemporary American evangelical church, specifically on the issues of video church and the need for the cultivation of an environment of hospitality. This study informed the researcher on how to harness the strengths and gifts of church staff and volunteers for impact on the researcher's home church, Orchard Community Church.

The Relevance of the Project to the Immediate Ministry Context

This researcher serves the Orchard Community Church, which is a church plant of EFCC. The Orchard was launched and began weekly services in 2014. Since its beginning Orchard has grown from 85 people to 250 people. The current leadership is now faced with the decision of whether to stay in the current building or move. Knowing how a video venue church model may or may not build a healthy hospitable church community has substantially influenced how the Orchard will move into the future.

The Orchard Church leadership chose a parish style model of church, which is unique due to the consideration of its proximity to and specific constituency. This model largely depends on the presence of church leadership within the locale of the church's primary constituency. The parish style model of church also requires that the parish, or in this case the location of services, are within walking or driving distance of its constituency. Parish style ministry is an excellent vehicle for church engagement and emphasizes the theme of hospitality. However, the researcher learned how to cultivate hospitality in the video church model with a positive effect on the life of Orchard.

The researcher learned that while the parish model has been a traditionally accepted as the standard model, more and more churches are experimenting with the church planting model and the multisite model. The multisite model is a church

methodology in which churches are planted by a sending church. In this model the planted churches are still governed and led by the sending church. Understanding how to cultivate hospitality in the varying models of church style has allowed the Orchard Community Church to begin considering future church models such as the video church model.

The Relevance of the Project to the Church at Large

Historically, the North American church has typically operated in three models. They are the parish model, the multisite, and the church plant. The parish model of church is a church in a town or city designed to reach the people who live there.⁵ The multisite model of church is designed to multiply the efforts of a church by sharing resources between multiple sites. These resources include teaching pastors, volunteers and financial support. The third style of American church is the church plant. A church plant is the effort of one church to reach a specific group of people by sending some of their own people to begin a work in the determined locale. The parish model of church has been the dominant method preferred by churches for many years.

The findings of this project have provided guidance as to how churches in and around San Diego should invest in video technology. The implications of the project are very beneficial for smaller churches looking to increase their visibility via the Internet or offer services to people in their churches who cannot make it to church Sunday mornings. The findings also show how smaller churches can engage their community through the

⁵ Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 7.

use of video technology without losing constituents to another community who offers video venue church services.

Since the time of Moses and the Tabernacle, the people of God have been regularly gathering, as seen in Exodus 33:7-10. One can trace the tradition of churches meeting together from the tabernacle to the temple to the synagogue to the parish church. This research evaluated the methodologies of gathering as a church while promoting a healthy environment for hospitality that leads to spiritual growth. Churches small and large can benefit from the results of this study.

The Relevance of the Project to the Academic Community

One of the areas in which the researcher has added value to the academic community is in the qualitative research of this project. The researcher used the grounded theory method of gathering information. This required the researcher to interview several groups at each church. Each group was unique and through the interviews overarching themes emerged.

There were significant characteristics from within the general theme of hospitality that emerged from this study. The theme of hospitality is seemingly simple; hospitality is the act of welcoming another. The importance of the act of hospitality can easily be overlooked. Though seemingly simple, there are multiple thoughts and actions within the act of welcoming another. Examples of this include the shaking of one's hand, the embrace of a hug and a general sense of welcoming someone into a community. In this study the researcher has endeavored to shine as much light on the different characteristics of the general theme of hospitality that emerge within a video venue church context. A

few studies on hospitality within a church context have been done, but there are not many studies on the effect of the video venue church model on genuine hospitality within the church. This researcher has aimed to contribute to this collection of data for the overall academic community.

Data Collection and Methodology

Research Methods

This project was qualitative in nature, using field research comprised of case studies and grounded theory research. The primary tools in the project were the interviews of contemporary churches using a video church model as well as the literature dealing with the historical, biblical and contemporary methods of video teaching and its effects on human development. Human development is the process by which human beings grow and learn about life. This includes how they form constructs for understanding the physical and metaphysical world.

Project Overview

The first step in the research process was to study the Scripture passages and literature related to authentic hospitality and how it leads to spiritual growth. The Bible passages focused on the parable of the Good Samaritan, found in Luke 10, and the parable of the Lost Son, found in Luke 15. These two passages of Scripture highlight how the practice of hospitality is integral to a person's spiritual maturity.

The second step in the research process was to work with either the senior leadership of the three churches that were selected or their staff to put together questions

and gather data. From there, the researcher attended the worship services and some of the off-site video church campuses to begin collecting data. In addition to church visitations, the researcher worked with the church leadership to identify small groups in the church from which to collect data.

The third step in the research process was to study the literature surrounding the topic of hospitality and how it relates to spiritual maturity. This included a study in human development. The research has yielded applicable findings necessary for data synthesis.

The fourth step in the research process was to use the grounded theory method with the data points collected from the site visits and interviews to collate and organize material. The material was coded, separated by emerging concepts, and then categorized.

The fifth step in the research process was to interview the pastors of the churches. These specific interviews sought to explore the motive, vision and values for practicing the method of video church for each institution. A goal for the researcher was to meaningfully contribute to the ministry of the pastors submitted to the process.

Using a modified grounded theory, the sixth step in the research process was to analyze the collected data points. These data points have produced concepts and categories which were associated to the pertinent data points. The data was then synthesized to formulate a theory proposing how to incorporate hospitality that leads to spiritual growth.

Proposed Solutions

Solution One

The first obstacle encountered during this research was to explore biblical examples of innovative approaches to hospitality and teaching, its effects on Christian maturity and healthy church engagement among each other. The researcher attended services at each of the churches and their venues. This allowed the researcher to see what innovative approaches are being taken in the realm of teaching. Attendance at these churches has allowed the researcher to explore the atmosphere for hospitality. In addition to attendance, the researcher needed to develop a set of data points for observation. This predetermined list of questions was initially subject to change. The list acted as a reference point, a platform from which the researcher could begin discussions with staff and volunteers at these churches.

Solution Two

The second obstacle faced during this research project was to review relevant literature dealing with the results of video teaching and its effects on human development and engagement in multiple contexts. The researcher identified books, journal articles, web articles and video interviews for the purpose of evaluating the current research and social commentary surrounding video teaching and its impact on human development. Much of the research on this topic has been done in the arena of academic or educational institutions; therefore, the researcher considered where the data points from this research can or will relate or corroborate the data throughout the project.

Solution Three

The third obstacle seen while this research project was undertaken was the need to study example churches who use and rely on video teaching as an integral part of their worship services. To study these churches from a position that will be most suited for data collection, the researcher reached out to the church pastors or staff. The researcher sought to make a connection or contact with Emmanuel Faith Community Church in Escondido, North Coast Church in Vista and The Rock Church in Point Loma, San Diego. From there the researcher spent time with the pastor or pastoral staff person to put together a list of people who may be willing to participate in a survey oriented around garnering data on the subject matter.

Solution Four

The fourth obstacle seen during this research project was how to identify transferable principles that will help churches affect missional change toward creating the best cultures for healthy maturity and engagement. The goal of this research project was to find data points that would lead to clear issues, either positive or negative, and present solutions which can treat the problems. This researcher believed the solutions could be developed using good leadership and human development principles. Throughout this project, the researcher looked for leadership and human development principles that would be both learning points and problems that will lead to solutions. In the event no solution was possible, the researcher clearly stated it as part of the conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL BASIS FOR HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is a theme throughout the Bible and an intrinsic part of modern and historic Middle Eastern life, as seen in Genesis 18 when Abraham greets three Angels offering to wash their feet and in John 13 when Jesus washes his disciples' feet. This theme is also seen in all four biblical gospels. The parable of the prodigal or lost son emphasizes the need for community, family and celebration as the father in the story welcomes home the prodigal (Luke 15:11-32). The focus of this chapter is the observation of how the biblical theme of hospitality emerges from two parables. The first parable is the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, which will be the focus of this section. The second parable this study will briefly treat the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

The Hospitable Father: Luke 15:11-32

The parable of the prodigal son occurs only in the Gospel of Luke. It has literary features clearly distinguishing it as a parable.⁶ The literary style and historical setting enable this parable to also be known as the parable of “the forgiving father.” This feature allows the emphasis of the story to be placed both on the lost son and the father. In this parable, the younger son walked away from his father (becoming lost), recognized the error of his ways, and returned in humility. The father allows the son to leave freely and

⁶ Darrel L. Bock, *Luke*. Vol. 2: Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 1306-1307.

freely welcomes the son home. This parable takes great care in presenting the reader and first-century listener with a picture of the heart of God toward those who have walked away or have been outside the community of God. It does so by displaying a loving father receiving a lost son with open arms and generous hospitality.

The theme of hospitality is most pronounced in Luke 15:22. Here the father welcomes home the lost son and proceeds to “throw a party”. In doing so the researcher observed hospitality used as a form of welcoming the lost home. The practical principle would be for first century listeners and modern-day readers to welcome those outside the community of God who are desiring to be in the community of God. Jesus and his disciples used hospitality as a vehicle to reach new communities with the gospel. The gospel being that God offers salvation by welcoming the lost who are seeking to be with God. Hospitable acts were used by Jesus and his disciples to connect relationally within communities and practice table fellowship.⁷ Table fellowship is the act of sharing and welcoming others over a meal. This act of welcoming and sharing food literally and figuratively cultivates intimacy in those seeking to be in the family of God.

Table fellowship allows for a wide variety of acceptance of people and their beliefs. It is the product of the development of a culture a character of hospitality formed in person in the community of God. In contrast to the theme of hospitality, Jesus describes the character of the elder brother, who to all outward appearances is a righteous man. As the parable unfolds Jesus draws out the reality of the effects of pride and

⁷ George G. Hunter III, *Radical Outreach: The Recovery of Apostolic Ministry and Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 176.

vainglory on the elder brother.⁸ Upon the audience hearing this, there is a challenge for them. The challenge is to consider how to respond to the mission and method of Jesus. The audience must reconcile the model of hospitality presented in the parable and their own views on what it means to welcome those outside of their community as well as considering their own need to be welcomed by God. This confrontation comes on the heels of Luke 15:1-2 where the Pharisees and teachers of the law disapprove of Jesus' hospitality to sinners.

Luke 15 begins with a redemption theme. Three parables of something lost and then found are told one after another. The first is that of the lost sheep: a shepherd leaves 99 sheep to find the lost one (Luke 15:1-7). The second parable is that of the lost coin: a woman has ten silver coins, loses one and then finds it (Luke 15:8-10). The third is the parable of the lost son. This parable can be broken into seven parts, the first of which is Luke 15:11-12. Part I acts as an introduction to the story and immediately begins with conflict.

Part I: Foolish Younger Brother (Luke 15:11-12)

Part I acts as a brief introduction to the story. It describes only the three characters as a father and two sons. Immediately following the introduction in verse 11, in verse 12 the younger son asks for his inheritance from the father. The younger son in the parable is described to have used his inheritance foolishly. Joel Green suggests this depiction of a “younger brother” to be historically consistent with a typical description of a Middle

⁸ James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful Life: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 141.

Eastern younger brother.⁹ An interesting feature emerging from verse 12 surrounds the practice of land ownership and how an inheritance would be split up among two brothers. The Old Testament law entitled the older son to a double share of the inheritance in this situation.¹⁰ This means the younger brother in this story would have received one-third of the land.

The implication of the text is that the father would have had to offer up his controlling power of the land. This passage may imply the portion of land the younger brother inherited was sold to the elder son, however this is unclear in the parable. The selling of the land would have allowed the younger brother to walk away with his inheritance as cash in hand. This passage also implies the younger son was asking for his father's death. The request for an inheritance in first century culture and in modern culture is a powerful request, it breaks from the culture of the ancient Middle East and from most modern cultures as well. Fathers were held in high regard in first century Israel. In asking for his inheritance, the younger son is making a break from the family. He is essentially saying "you are dead to me and/or I am dead to you."¹¹ This request marks the beginning of the journey of the younger son from part of the family to "lost son."

⁹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 580.

¹⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 607.

¹¹ Marshall, 607.

Part II: Younger Brother Becomes Lost Son (Luke 15:13-16)

The younger brother departs to a distant country. Here the younger brother truly becomes the lost son. Verses 13-14 reveal a life lived recklessly. Amid reckless living, the lost son is confronted by two major tragedies,¹² the first being the loss of his earthly wealth spent on nothing lasting, and the second being a famine. Verse 15 illustrates the response of the younger brother to his difficult circumstance.

To a first century Jewish audience, moving from having served as a son of a landowner to becoming a hired hand, sent out to feed pigs would have been detestable.¹³ Hunger drove the lost son to eat the pods used to feed the pigs. These pods would have been unsuitable for human consumption and therefore further emphasize the depths to which this lost son had fallen.¹⁴

Part III: Conversion and Return (Luke 15:17 -21)

Finding himself at the end of his rope, the younger son understands he has sinned. The fall of the lost son is very clear in the use of the Greek phrase εἰς ἑαυτὸν δὲ ἔλθων in verse 17, which can be translated “and coming to himself.”¹⁵ This phrase is equivalent to the English idiom “coming to one’s senses.” Verse 18 reveals the lost son recognizing his sin. This recognition interestingly identifies the offense as against the father and against

¹² Leon Morris, *Luke: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 258.

¹³ Morris, 258.

¹⁴ J. C. Ryle, *Luke: The Crossway Classic Commentaries* (Nottingham, England: Crossway, 1997), 207.

¹⁵ Bock, 1312.

heaven. J. C. Ryle identifies this use of the word “heaven” as the place where God resides, and therefore God himself.¹⁶ Here the younger son has recognized his actions in taking his inheritance and walking away from his father to be offensive in every way. Upon recognizing his lowly state, the lost son comes to his senses. He repents and believes in the love and provision of his father. This marks a transition in the heart and mind of the lost son, and a decision to seek out the love of his father. The motivational shift in the heart of the lost son reveals a heart of repentance. This act of repentance is followed by a plan of action to return home humbly.¹⁷

Part IV: Forgiveness and Salvation (Luke 15:22-24)

The theme of hospitality emerges in strong fashion in verse 22. It is visible in the form of a celebration that takes place; specifically, the father running to meet him, placing a robe on him, a ring on his finger and a meal with the lost son. This act of embracing the son and eating with him reveals the welcoming nature of God. It also justifies Jesus’ actions of eating with tax collectors.¹⁸ Jesus, like the father, welcomes the lost seekers of God to a table of fellowship as the father in the parable welcomes the lost son. Jesus’ heart for hospitality is woven within the DNA of his mission. This is exemplified by his willingness to eat with sinners seeking redemption. This hospitality is

¹⁶ Ryle, 207.

¹⁷ Bock, 1312.

¹⁸ Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 128.

both a continuation of and departure from the normative patterns of hospitality in Israel's history.

The commanding of the servants in verse 22 is interesting in that it reveals the father has certain authority of the land even though it technically belongs to the older brother.¹⁹ Upon giving the younger son his inheritance, the father gave over land rights to the elder son, though he also commands use of the servants and provisions. This behavior is coupled with the father's desire to welcome the lost son with a robe, ring and sandals. These items would have been reserved for highly honored guests; in this case these items represented a restoration of the younger son to his place in the family.

Part V: Transition to Elder Brother (Luke 15:25-27)

While the hospitable festivities were happening to welcome the lost brother, the elder brother was in the field working. The text is clear here, the older brother heard and noticed something happening at the home. The elder brother may have been at odds with the father and therefore not notified or working hard and long hours. This also may have been his custom.²⁰ Upon welcoming a guest, the practice in ancient Israel would have been to inform the head of the household. This would be especially true if a member of the family had returned. A theme of hostility emerges in verse 25, which is in opposition to the theme of hospitality shown by the father.

¹⁹ Robert H. Stein, *Luke: The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishing Group, 2009), 406.

²⁰ Marshall, 611.

To the listening first-century Jew, the actions of the elder brother are justified. The desire of the elder brother is justice. However, Jesus wants his listeners to witness the extravagant love of God. In Luke 15:1-2, the audiences were Pharisees and teachers of the law who believed Jesus' eating with the sinners and tax collectors was reprehensible. The point of the parable is for the audience to see the hospitality of God toward sinners.

Part VI: Protest of the Elder Brother (15:28-30)

The elder son protests following the revelation of the return of the lost son. Jesus describes both the compassion of the father and the anger of the elder brother. By contrasting the family dynamics in the story, Jesus draws out the point for the need for grace and humility. Though the elder brother is angry, it is important he understand that humility and forgiveness act as hospitable characteristics toward the building of a healthy community.²¹ It also important to note the father is helping the elder son recognize that the family is a place where hospitality is practice internally toward one another and externally to repentant lost people.

Part VII: Pleading Father (Luke 15:30-32)

Verse 30 depicts the father pleading with the elder son to join the celebration of the salvation of the lost son. This appeal is central to the theme of hospitality emerging from this text. Here Jesus is appeals to the Pharisees to celebrate with the lost children of

²¹ Green, 584.

God who would become found.²² Additionally, the father leaves the banquet, which he is hosting, to go to the elder son. This once again shows within the triplet of parables in Luke 15 the heart of the hospitable father who seeks to welcome back those outside the fold. This includes the elder son.

This portrayal of love by the father is echoed by Jesus' telling of the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37. Jesus describes the scenario of a man being injured on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. A priest and a Levite pass him by without helping. The help the good Samaritan offers reflects the heart of God toward humanity. The gracious act of undeserving love shown by the Samaritan, like the father in the parable of the lost son, is extravagant and lavish.²³ This then, is how the people of God should welcome the lost.

Theological Application: (Luke 15:11-32)

To welcome someone is to invite them into something. For soldiers who were away at war, to be welcomed home is to be invited back into the context of home life. The same is true with human spirituality. To wander far from the community of God is to be lost in spiritual darkness. Jesus' mission in Luke 4:18-19 illustrates his intention to preach the gospel to the poor, physically and spiritually, which can be seen as acts of hospitality.²⁴ In addition, verse Luke 4:18 reiterates Jesus' mission to bring sight to the

²² Stein, 407.

²³ Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 102.

²⁴ Joshua Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017), 21.

blind. This is a reference to physical and spiritual blindness. Someone who has experienced the feeling of being lost and wandering in the wilderness of spirituality becomes weary. Welcoming this person into the “home” that God the Father provides is an invitation to be at peace.²⁵

The theme of table fellowship is powerful because it challenges the listening audience, then and now, to accept the lost son. This acceptance is shown in the sharing of a meal. The first church was made up of households who shared all they had with each other. This included food, finances and undoubtedly forgiveness. These early church homes were working toward creating a universal church home with all the believers in their vicinity.²⁶ Hospitality became a key characteristic marking the early church. Today, human beings all over the world seek to find a place where they belong, a home. The church then, like the father of the prodigal son, has an opportunity to welcome home the weary sinner.

Welcoming the stranger is a strange behavior because it goes against the natural instinct to protect oneself. Welcoming home a loved one who has caused much pain is equally difficult as it causes one to lay down the offense and pick up forgiveness. Offering forgiveness to the sinner is something that remains countercultural.²⁷ The extravagant love of the father, to both the lost son and the elder son is a supernatural behavior. When the Church behaves in a way that exhibits this love, it engages in a

²⁵ Amy G. Oden, *God's Welcome: Hospitality for A Gospel-Hungry World* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 31.

²⁶ Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 42.

²⁷ Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 177.

hospitality that is peculiar. When this kind of hospitality is practiced regularly, it has the potential to become normative in the life of the Church. Perhaps this is what Jesus intended, that his followers be those who are marked by a peculiar, welcoming hospitality.

The sharing of meals over breakfast, lunch or dinner celebrated in the homes of those who follow Christ have the potential to become an exercise in the Kingdom activity of being the Church.²⁸ Though not synonymous with food, hospitality is interpreted by cultures all over the world as the sharing of a meal together. The difference between sharing a meal together and the sharing of hospitality is marked by the intention behind the act. In his homily on Romans, John Chrysostom alludes to the importance of the motive²⁹ which reveals a particular alignment with the heart of God. This is what is observed in both the parables.

A great challenge before the Church is to assess whether it sees those outside of the family of Christ as strangers. The church must be able to welcome outsiders or lost members of the family of God.³⁰ The family dynamics Jesus describes in Luke 15:11-32 are not limited to a fictional father, elder and younger brother or lost son. The parable confronted the Pharisees, or today the Christ follower, church leader, or pastor. With precision, Jesus teases out the issues of unforgiveness and resistance toward welcoming

²⁸ Doug Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 141.

²⁹ Amy G. Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 91.

³⁰ Arthur Sutherland, *As a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 28.

strangers into the house of God. These issues can be resolved through acts demonstrated by the father. These acts are characterized by grace, humility and hospitality.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son reveals distinctive identities, attributes, practices and vehicles regarding the heart and hospitality of God toward the wayward sinner. The researcher found keywords repeated five or more times and has listed the categories here in Table 1. The numbers beside each word in this table and the following subsequent tables represent the number of times the word was repeated.

Table 1. Keywords Associated with the Parable of the Prodigal Son

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
Son - 60	Lost - 42	With - 22	Hospitality - 23
Father - 36	Welcoming - 18	Love - 7	Jesus - 19
Brother - 23	Heart - 10	Sharing - 5	God - 14
Younger - 22	Hospitable - 6	Forgiveness - 5	Home - 13
Elder - 21	Humility - 5	Fellowship - 4	Church - 11
Prodigal - 6		Celebration - 4	Family - 9
Sinners - 4			Inheritance - 7
Pharisee - 4			Table - 4
Human - 4			

Principles to Consider from Luke 15:11-32

There are several principles that emerge within the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Table 2 is a list of the principles found in Luke 15:11-32.

Table 2. Principles to Consider from Luke 15:11-32

The seeking sinner is welcome to the table of the Lord.
Hospitality begins in the heart.
Hospitality requires humility.
Hospitality takes initiative.
Inhospitality just as powerful as hospitality.
Hospitality flows from love.

One of the overarching principles throughout the parable is the seeking sinner is welcome to the table of the Lord. This principle is exemplified throughout the parable but especially toward the end when the father welcomes the prodigal to a dinner table with a feast. In the first section of the parable the researcher observed the principle of hospitality beginning in the heart. This is seen when the younger brother rejects his father, he is revealing the condition of his own heart. The rejection of from the younger son to the father reveals an extreme level of inhospitality toward the father.

As the parable continues the younger brother comes to his senses. This suggests hospitality requires humility. When the younger son comes to his senses, he finds himself in a humbled state. The ability for the younger son to experience the hospitality of the father is dependent on the condition of his heart. With his heart and pride humbled he is able to see more clearly the love of the father. When the younger brother returns home, he is greeted by his father. From this the researcher observed hospitality takes initiative. The father has a constant eye toward the return of his son and when he sees him, he runs toward the him.

When the elder brother is introduced in the story the researcher observed inhospitality is just as powerful as hospitality. The older brother's heart and attitude are palpable to any reader. Inhospitality speaks just as powerfully as hospitality speaks. Finally, the father explains his heart toward the younger and elder brother to the elder brother revealing hospitality is flows from love. The father had love in his heart and desired to show that love. It is from this place of love hospitality permeated the home.

The Hospitable Stranger: Luke 10:25-37

The act of hospitality is characteristic of Middle Eastern culture. In light of the hospitality in the observed in Middle Eastern culture, the parable of the Good Samaritan can become clearer. In scenarios where conflict is present, hospitality is subdued or not present at all. The Jewish people, in many ways, had experienced conflict with its bordering nations for centuries. This geopolitical history has informed individuals on many issues of their everyday lives, including their spirituality. In Luke 10:25-37 the attitude of the Jew toward the non-Jew is clearly revealed. The setting of this passage describes Jesus traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem. A Jewish lawyer tries to trap Jesus in a question regarding salvation. However, Jesus answers an entirely different question. Jesus answers the question about salvation by challenging the Jewish attitudes of salvation toward non-Jews. In this parable Jesus makes clear the heart of God to welcome all who seek him.

Part I: The Question (Luke 10:25)

The setting of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 begins with Jesus on his way to Jerusalem ((Luke 9:51). On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus encountered an expert in the law. This expert asks Jesus a question regarding the requirements for attaining eternal life. The manner in which the man asks the question suggests a potential conflict, as the Bible says the expert in the law “stood up” in Luke 10:25. The question itself is of great importance. Implicit within the questions is the desire for eternal life and the ability of Jesus to answer such questions. This question was designed to test Jesus’ ability to

answer the fundamental question “How can I be sure I’ll be saved in the final resurrection?”³¹

Part II: The Legal Answer (Luke 10:26-29)

Answering the lawyer, Jesus offers a counter question directing him to the law of Moses. This rightly addresses the issues in the fundamental question regarding how one in the Jewish tradition could find salvation in the final resurrection. Jesus response “What is written?” and “How do you read it?” in Luke 10:26 reveals his interest in argumentation by using the written law and not the oral tradition.³² Jesus forces the conversation toward the law, which the lawyer revered. In this Jesus emphasizes the need to know and use the written word as a medium for communicating truth.

The first part of the response from the lawyer is to recite the *shema*. This is the Hebrew prayer found in Deuteronomy 6:5 which states “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all of your soul and will all your strength.” The second part of statement from the lawyer is “and love your neighbor as yourself.” Which is a direct quote from Leviticus 19:18 stating “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

The question then becomes “who is my neighbor.” For Jews, a neighbor would be one worthy of such hospitality suggested by the Scripture and confirmed by Jesus in Luke 10:28.³³ The lawyer, wanting to justify himself, replies “And who is my neighbor?” in

³¹ Bock, 1023.

³² Marshall, 443.

³³ Stein, 316.

Luke 10:29. This reveals the heart of the lawyer toward Jesus again. The follow-up question from the lawyer reveals his own inhospitality.

Part III: Jesus' Story (Luke 10:30-36)

Following the lawyer's qualification question on what constituted a neighbor, Jesus begins to explain his parable. Jesus presents the story featuring "a man" who is not named as a Jew nor Gentile. The unnamed and injured man becomes a neutral person to Leviticus 19:18 can be applied.³⁴ Jesus continues by describing how a priest and a Levite passed the injured man, not offering hospitality to the man in his time of need. This describes a time when both the priest and Levite would have been traveling home from having worshipped at the temple and had retained their ceremonial cleanliness.³⁵ In this example, the legalism of ceremonial cleanliness is taking priority over the hospitality shown to a stranger in need.

Jesus then introduces the character of the Samaritan in this story. The Samaritan would have been a societal and religious outcast. The Samaritan would have been unable to worship at the Temple. The Jews listening would have negatively responded to the introduction as the Samaritan as one modeling Leviticus 19:18. In fact, their response to the Samaritan highlights a contrast between the Jews and Samaritans and the hostility between the two. The Samaritan in this situation was willing to help the stranger was seemingly a Jew.³⁶

³⁴ Green, 429.

³⁵ Green, 431.

³⁶ Green, 431.

The hospitality of the Samaritan toward the injured man and the follow up with the innkeeper is a picture of the kind of hospitality commanded by God in Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18. Jesus presents this to those listening.

Part IV: The Situation (Luke 10:30)

In Luke 10:30, Jesus presents a situation that includes an unnamed man traveling on the road to Jerusalem. The road to Jerusalem is a common path. A traveler from eastern, northeastern or southeastern Israel, would have taken this path. The road to Jerusalem travels through what is known in Israel as a *wadi*. Wadis are canyons created by flash floods on the desert floor. With Jerusalem sitting at 2500 feet in elevation, the path from Jerusalem east, or up to Jerusalem, from the west would have been through this wadi.³⁷ The situation Jesus presents is a scenario the listeners would have understood. The unnamed injured man was in need of help and the kind of hospitality only a stranger passing by could provide.

Part V: The Priest (Luke 10:31-32)

The introduction of the priest presents some interesting features. A priest traveling from the temple on the road to Jerusalem suggests the priest would have been participating in the worship activities at the temple. This would make him ceremonially clean. The priest passes by on the opposite side of the road and does not offer help. It is likely the priest would have not tried to help the injured man for fear of defiling himself.³⁸ The issue Jesus is addressing is the command in the Shema (Deut. 6:4) to love God with all your heart. The priest in this story is heartless.

³⁷ Green, 430.

³⁸ Marshall, 448.

Jesus' introduction of the Levite reveals a similar scenario to the priest. A Levite would be a member of the tribe of Levi but not of the family of Aaron.³⁹ This means the Levite would act as an assistant to a priest in temple worship. Jesus portrays the Levite as one who passed on the other side of the road. The Levite specifically did this so that he would not encounter the injured man, the motive of his avoidance being that of being made ceremonially unclean.⁴⁰

Part VII: The Samaritan (Luke 10:33-35)

The introduction of the Samaritan complicates the situation even more. A Samaritan would have been among those who were not respected according to the Jews.⁴¹ Samaritans were considered unclean by Jews and not to be associated with. The lawyer and other Jews listening would have not expected the Samaritan to be a figure portrayed as the one to correctly worship God.

What is significant in Luke 10:33-35 is the emphasis on the activities of the Samaritan as a neighbor and not whether his actions give him eternal life.⁴² Jesus goes on to list six distinct acts of compassion by the Samaritan. He (1) comes to him, (2) binds his wounds, (3) anoints him with oil, (4) loads the man on his own donkey (5) takes him to an inn, and (6) engages the innkeeper to provide care and comfort.

³⁹ Bock, 1031.

⁴⁰ Morris, 208.

⁴¹ Bock, 1031.

⁴² Bock, 1032.

Part VIII: Fulfillment of the Law (Luke 10:36-37)

Jesus then asks which one of the three characters was a neighbor to the injured man. This forms a counter-question that challenges the lawyer's priority of "to who" one should be a neighbor to and elevates the priority of "being a good neighbor."⁴³ Jesus makes it clear to the lawyer and the other Jews listening that the shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 and the linked command in Leviticus 19:18 require a will of the heart to be congruent with God.

The lawyer answers, "The one who had mercy." The act of mercy was delivered through the acts of hospitality by the Samaritan. Jesus clearly illustrates the need for those who seek the Kingdom of God to do so both in word and in deed.⁴⁴ Generosity extended from one to another in acts of love and good deeds is what Jesus desires for genuine followers of Christ.

Theological Application

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a challenge for all who seek salvation. The challenge here is specifically to identify and love one's neighbor. Two acts of hospitality are present in Jesus' response to the lawyer. They are serving your neighbor and communing with God. These two acts together reveal the importance of hospitality placed on humanity. This also highlights how hospitality contributes toward spiritual growth.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan reveals distinctive identities, attributes, practices and vehicles regarding the heart and hospitality of God toward the wayward sinner. The

⁴³ Stein, 318.

⁴⁴ Ryle, 147.

researcher found keywords repeated five or more times and listed the categories here in Table 3.

Table 3. Keywords Associated with the Parable of the Good Samaritan

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
Samaritan - 17	Heart - 5	Question - 16	Jesus - 33
Lawyer - 15	Good - 5	With - 11	Hospitality - 13
Neighbor - 12	Reveal - 4	Love - 6	Salvation - 5
Priest - 11		Worship - 5	Law - 5
God - 9		Seek - 4	
Levite - 7		Respond - 4	
		Listening - 4	
		Act - 4	

The keywords identified in both the parable of the Prodigal Son and the parable of the Good Samaritan revealed distinctive identities, attributes, practices and vehicles regarding the heart and hospitality of God toward the wayward sinner. The total list of all identifiable keywords listed five or more times are listed here in Table 4.

Table 4. Total Biblical Identities, Attributes, Practices and Vehicles

Identities	Attributes	Practices	Vehicles
Son - 60	Lost - 42	With - 34	Jesus - 54
Father - 37	Heart - 15	Question - 18	Hospitality - 37
Samaritan - 24	Good - 10	Welcome - 16	God - 23
Brother - 23	Reveal - 9	Love - 13	Home - 15
Younger Brother - 23	Hospitable - 7	Find/Found - 9	Church - 11
Elder Brother - 23	Spiritual - 7	Seek - 8	Action - 11
Neighbor - 13	Sinners - 4	Listening - 7	Family - 10
Human - 4		Eat - 6	Salvation - 7
Pharisee - 4		Forgiveness - 5	Inheritance - 7
		Humility - 5	Provision - 5
		Sharing - 5	
		Worship - 5	

The total keyword count helps to understand where each of the keywords fall into distinctive categories. Table 5 reveals the top keywords repeated across all three tables.

Table 5. Cumulative Distinctives From Tables 1-3

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
Father - 97	Lost - 84	With - 67	Jesus - 106
Son - 120	Heart - 30	Question - 34	Hospitality - 73
Samaritan - 24	Good - 15	Love - 13	God - 37

These specific categories show the need for identity, attributes, practices and vehicles in the practice of hospitality found in the parable of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. In reviewing the Scriptures, God demonstrated His heart of hospitality to those outside of His family in order that they might become the family of God. He does this specifically by revealing the identity of the Father, the Son and the Stranger/Samaritan. The specific attributes for a biblical hospitality must then include reaching the lost with a heart that is good. This can only happen through aligning with the heart of God. Practices such as love, questioning and being “with” others suggest an intentionality to go with people, accompanying them on their journey. These practices are the application of the heart of God toward others. The vehicles for these attributes and practices are Jesus, God and hospitality. The heart of God displayed to the world and the expansion of His Kingdom depend on the hospitality of God.

Principles to Consider from Luke 10:25-37

There are several principles which can be identified in the parable of the Good Samaritan. When looking at this piece of scripture from beginning to end, the researcher identified several key themes which were then stated as principles to be considered. Table 6 is a list of six principles found in Luke 10:25-37.

Table 6. Principles to Consider from Luke 10:25-37

Questions are welcome in God's economy.
Love is the central to Jesus' answers.
Hospitality is not ethnocentric.
Opportunities for hospitality abound.
Legalism is a barrier toward hospitality.
Love expresses itself through hospitality.

The first surround the initial question formed by the Lawyer in the story. Jesus allows the Lawyer to ask questions which initiate Jesus' story sequences. This reveals that questions are welcome in God's economy. Even in allowing the Lawyer to question him, Jesus practices of hospitality. He does so by listening to the Lawyer and allowing for a discussion to be possible.

Jesus answers to the Lawyer center on the issue of love and what it means to love one's neighbor. In this, the researcher discovered that love is the central to Jesus' answers.

Jesus uses this opportunity the Lawyer initiated to explore the condition of the human heart. It becomes clearer throughout the parable that love is the issue facing the Lawyer in ancient times, and likewise for people today when considering how to interact with those that are the "other" in our world.

Through using the Priest, the Levite and the Samaritan, Jesus reveals the principle that hospitality is not ethnocentric. A person who shows love to another in the way of serving them in their time of need is not marked by their ethnicity. Rather, they must have a heart which reflects the character of God. This is revealed by actions of the Samaritan which the Jews would have seen outside of their own ethnic boundaries. What is more is that the Samaritan, in the story, crossed the ethnic boundary in reaching out and helping the injured man who was assumed to be Jewish.

The parable of the Good Samaritan shows a theme of many opportunities to be present in the regular days and lives of the Jewish people. Contextually, the road to Jerusalem would have been known and regularly traveled. The event of someone being injured on the road to Jerusalem would have been an acceptable scenario within the range of regular happenings. Therefore, the researcher identified the principle that opportunities for hospitality abound. Jesus was making the point that regular opportunities to love one's neighbor would be presented to people in their daily lives.

What is ironic is the way Jesus challenges the legalism of the Lawyer. The parable Jesus presents reveals the distance between what a religious person believes about himself or herself and how they practice the very thing they believe. The Jews listening to this story would have easily identified with the Priest and the Levite per their understanding and commitment to the Law. Jesus makes the principle clear that legalism is a barrier toward hospitality. This barrier is one that must be crossed by Jews who believe in the command found in Leviticus 19:18, the command to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus' point is that loving your neighbor may express itself in making one ceremonially unclean. To achieve the kind of love one must show to their neighbor, one must be willing to literally get their hands dirty.

The final principle the researcher identified was exemplified in the actions of the Good Samaritan when he cared for the stranger. The principle is: love expresses itself through hospitality. It was in the caring for the stranger by the stranger love was exemplified. This caring is clearly an act of hospitality motivated by a love for one's neighbor which flows from one's heart being aligned with the heart of God.

CHAPTER THREE: HOSPITALITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The Ancient Future of Hospitality

Ancient hospitality in Middle Eastern countries has influenced Christianity in substantial ways. Middle Eastern hospitality has had so much influence over Christianity that interpreting scripture can be difficult without some knowledge of it. Passages such as the Good Samaritan and the parable of the Lost Son show us the importance of food, touch, and visible and physical displays of love and affection, though, hospitality is not limited to the ancient Middle East.⁴⁵

The hospitality of the indigenous people of North America set a precedent of hospitality that continues to show even today.⁴⁶ Additionally the Yi people, an ethnic group seventh largest among 55 ethnic groups recognized by the People's Republic of China, have a propensity toward hospitality. Wherever the Yi-Christian people go they take with them a culture of embracing the stranger while retaining their commitment to their faith.⁴⁷

In today's culture of fast paced living and Internet-driven social media connections, it can be difficult to develop the kind of social community found in the

⁴⁵ Peter S. Perry, *Insights from Performance Criticism*. Reading the Bible in the Twenty-First Century (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 92.

⁴⁶ Robert P. Hoch, *By the Rivers of Babylon: Blueprint for a Church in Exile* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 131.

⁴⁷ Rachel Sing-Kiat Ting and Louise Sundararajan, *Culture, Cognition, and Emotion in China's Religious Ethnic Minorities: Voices of Suffering among the Yi* (New York, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 270.

ancient Middle East. To the ancient Middle Eastern person, a slow-paced life was of high value. They did not live in a way that was hurried. This is not the case in western civilized countries. Families are moving fast through life. Young children and adults find themselves watching television and looking for other connection points from their community online as well. Social media sites use complex algorithms to target audiences which can be accessed by churches and use toward creating more connections with their parishioners seven days a week.

The desire for to be connected in a spiritual community during a fast-paced life, in part, has led to the creation of the video church venue. The video venue churches make it possible for more people to have access to higher caliber teachers. Technological advancements allow for regular attendees and strangers to the church to view and participate in the church service virtually. These video venues give access to people by way of multi-site campuses being launched in new and varying types of neighborhoods, some within 20 minutes of the church, some as far as one hour and even across state lines.

The researcher had an opportunity to speak to the leadership at North Coast Church and hear stories of a church who had a declining membership and wanted help. The church decided to give their property to North Coast Church to be used as a multi-site campus. This particular church, which turned itself over to North Coast Church is almost over is in a rural area and just over one hour driving distance from North Coast's main campus. Technological advancements have allowed for these types of rural churches to begin to consider how they can use their facilities toward reaching people in their area with more experienced preaching pastors.

In some contexts, technological advancements in communication over internet streaming applications have affected church culture by creating more critical consumers. However, technological advancements have been proven to be helpful toward producing a culture of sharing among those in virtual spaces. When people know they are connected to one another and a larger community they develop a stronger a desire to be more part of the community. In their work *Knowledge Management in the Sharing Economy*, Elena Vătămănescu and Florina Pînzaru state:

The sharing economy represents an opportunity for everyone. On the one hand, it is one of the most important responses to the current economic crisis; on the other hand, it has the potential to lead to paradigmatic social change. In the sharing economy, it's not the idea of sharing that is new but the introduction of technology into the concept. The sharing economy is facilitated by the growth of digital platforms and the willingness of consumers to use mobile apps that facilitate peer-to-peer business models, shared entrepreneurial enterprises, and more.⁴⁸

When people have the opportunity to be part of a larger community, they have greater access to resources. The digital age has ushered in a new way to facilitate the sharing of these resources. The sharing economy highlights an important function and benefit of the digital age. Making a meaningful connection in the Internet space is not only possible but valuable toward creating a culture of engagement. This is true in the business world and in the social and spiritual worlds as well. Today large communities are gathering all over the world in purely virtual expressions of church in a hybrid

⁴⁸ Elena-Mădălina Vătămănescu, Florina Magdalena Pinzaru, eds., *Knowledge Management in the Sharing Economy: Cross-sectoral Insights into the Future of Competitive Advantage*, (New York, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 76.

traditional/Internet streaming model of church. Technological advancement by churches around the world has allowed for new access to teaching and community.⁴⁹

The video church venue is becoming normalized throughout church cultures and traditions in western civilized countries. This has contributed to the growth of some already large churches and the growth of some smaller churches into midsized churches. The growth speed of the video venue style of church has surpassed that of studies on how this affects culture. There are clear sociological and spiritual wins and losses. This research project examined the intersection of hospitality and Christian spiritual maturity.

Biblical Hospitality

Throughout the Bible, hospitality is defined by the welcoming of people into homes and communities. The people near you, your neighbors, are the ones that are to receive your interactions and gifts of hospitality.⁵⁰ This is shown to be true by Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke chapter 10. The major concept presented in Luke chapter 10 is of the willingness of a person to recognize someone different from them as a neighbor and serve them. This kind of interaction necessitates interactions with each other.

These aspects illustrate, from the vantage point of Jesus, the priorities of God to extend hospitality to those who are different from us and those who have walked away from us. Both examples are extremely powerful displays of the love of God shown through hospitable acts and service.

⁴⁹ Nancy J. Duff, "Praising God Online," *Theology Today* 70, no. 1, (2013): 22–29. doi:10.1177/0040573612472898.

⁵⁰ Bock, 1312.

Additionally, biblical hospitality emphasized the need for presence. The means by which Jesus shared the gospel always required someone to be present among those listening. The culture of biblical hospitality was shared amongst those outside of the Middle East as well. The Greek culture shared in their desire to both know and welcome people, listening to people with the intention of pursuing more knowledge. The biblical hospitality shown by God and manifest in Christ is highlighted by Greek scholars. In fact, Charlie Gere shares it this way in the book *Community without Community in Digital Culture*:

Aristotle's appeal for Christian theology is connected to the fact that Christ is God incarnated, in the form of a feeling, sensing human body. As perhaps befits a religion centered on incarnation and embodiment, touch is central to the Christian Gospels. Christ was brought up as the son of a carpenter, someone who works with his hands, a handyman.⁵¹

Face to face communication and physical touch and presence exemplify biblical hospitality. The biblical example of hospitality reveals an emphasis on physical presence. Jesus came down from heaven to reveal God to the world in human form. This was the greatest act of hospitality in human history because it emphasizes the importance of presence. The incarnation of Christ is indicative of the human need for presence as a means toward influence. The presence of Jesus teaches all who are students of the Bible the values of humility, embracing others and walking with people through life.

⁵¹ Charlie Gere, *Community without Community in Digital Culture* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers, 2012), 21.

Hospitality in the Church

The idea of hospitality within the contemporary model of the western church has been reduced to handshakes, doughnuts and coffee. However, most churches and ministers are aware hospitality goes beyond coffee and doughnuts. It is the act of seeking to know people. It is the pursuit of engaging others to the point where they can experience God in a profound way. This pursuit becomes a lifestyle in which people in the church who know Jesus desire to help others experience the hospitality of God. This hospitality part of what allows people to know God in a way that is transforming, to them and others.

This act is both one that builds and strengthens the local body of believers and adds value to a strategy to reach out to those who are not part of the church. Meaning, hospitality may, in some ways, help expose new people to the church. Embracing people new to church requires an attitude that seeks to move closer to their world.⁵² In fact, when a believer sees the heart of God from the perspective for the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, the need for the lost to be found is understood. This is when the act of hospitality has great potential to move beyond coffee, doughnuts and a handshake to an atmosphere or culture that contributes toward the presentation of the good news.⁵³

The church is the community of God. Hospitality in the church is intended to reveal the heart of God toward others who share some interest or affinity. Video church

⁵² Jessica Krey Duckworth, *Wide Welcome: How the Unsettling Presence of Newcomers Can Save the Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), chap. 5, Kindle.

⁵³ Dwight J Friesen, *Thy Kingdom Connected: What the Church Can Learn from Facebook, the Internet, and Other Networks* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 143.

communities are communities seeking to pursue worship with one another.⁵⁴ These communities gather regularly and are part of a church. The church, in this instance, acts as a network for people where they can collect and share life. Within this network, hospitality is shared, and people can experience the presence of God at work.

Internet chatrooms and websites which promote socialization allow for communities to form. Communities form around specific people, social interactions and value. From within the communities a network form. The difference between a network and a community online is the commitment to the network tends to be higher.⁵⁵ Where there is a network, there is a strong base of connected people. The networks add social infrastructure to the community. This is also true within the western civilized church today. Churches offer communities and, within them, networks. These networks in most cases are labeled “small groups.” Small groups are the networks others collect around. These networks within the church strengthen in.

Additionally, one of the major issues facing hospitality in the church is the changing nature of its constituency. The American church is continually changing because people are changing. The priority of Sunday morning church attendance has changed in much of western civilized societies.⁵⁶ The societal shift has begun to show up in churches. People are less connected to the church and therefore develop habits lending

⁵⁴ Tim Hutchings, “Contemporary Religious Community and the Online Church,” *Information, Communication and Society* 14, no. 8 (2011): 1118–35. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2011.591410.

⁵⁵ Timothy Hutchings, “The Internet and the Church: An Introduction,” *Expository Times* 122, no. 1 (2010): 11–19, doi:10.1177/0014524610377955.

⁵⁶ Julie Anne Lytle, “Virtual Incarnations: An Exploration of Internet-Mediated Interaction as Manifestation of the Divine,” *Religious Education* 105, no. 4 (2010): 395–412, doi:10.1080/00344087.2010.493384.

themselves toward a disconnection from the local church. Julie Amie Lytle writes in an article titled *Virtual Incarnations: An Exploration of Internet Mediated Interaction as Manifestation of the Divine*:

Adults and youth alike experience the tension of conflicting expectations and values as the workweek extends late into the evening and weekend, and school sports are often scheduled on Sunday mornings. Challenged to find one hour to attend Sunday worship, it is unlikely they will participate in activities interspersed through the week.⁵⁷

This literature suggests hospitality in the church is affected by various contributing factors affecting the attendance and participation in the church at large. The gathered group of believers who make up the community which is the church are the ones who offer hospitality toward those inside and outside the community. Hospitality only impacts people when the church is present and practicing it. This researcher has personally seen the shift of sports programs scheduled on Sunday mornings take priority of over church attendance in the lives of families with young children. The types of sports programs include high school band practices, soccer games and practices, year-round baseball practices, football clinics and training, competitive and traveling cheer programs and dance tournaments. A google search of “kids are busy Sunday morning with sports activities” will show the emerging pattern of children’s activities on Sunday mornings beginning from 1997.

Internet Learning Community

The world continues to change. At the time of this research project, new media of interaction online and in other places will have been researched and perhaps

⁵⁷ Lytle, “Virtual Incarnations: An Exploration of Internet-Mediated Interaction as Manifestation of the Divine,” 396.

implemented. In the mid-1990s the Internet became the new frontier and with it the concept of Internet community.⁵⁸ With the ability to broaden communication and expand the human need to connect, the Internet offers the capability of video conferencing as a means to develop Internet community. This methodology of communication is a great way to reach across barriers, such as interacting with people who live out of town or out of state.

The ability to build community in a virtual space offers community to individuals who may have experienced some form of isolation. This is not without challenges. Where the Internet community has been able to see breakthroughs through the development of social media, people still experience a sense of isolation. Author Michael Gurian writes about it this way in his book *A Fine Young Man*:

Males (and of course females) flourish when loving clans, mentors, and friends help them along. The less clan the child has, the more isolated she/he feels. Despite the stereotype of the “loner: male, in fact it is a rare adolescent male who doesn’t naturally and instinctually seek a trustworthy clan in which to be loved. If the boy has a clan in place before he enters adolescence, he’ll maneuver adolescence much more easily, suffer less emotional disadvantage, and, most likely, become a man on schedule-i.e., by the time he’s in his early twenties.⁵⁹

Human beings need communities, they need to know they connected to a social group larger than themselves. People of all ages relate to one another differently. The virtual community allows people more access to more people like them. This connection allows for the development of a social support system. In certain learning communities the Internet has offered much help. In the book *Interreligious Learning and Teaching a*

⁵⁸ Alicia Corts, “Religious Practice in Virtual Worlds,” *Ecumenica* 6, no. 1 (2013): 63–66, www.psupress.org/Journals/jnls_ECU.html.

⁵⁹ Michael Gurian, *A Fine Young Man* (New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, 1998), 71.

Christian Rationale for a Transformative Praxis, Kristin Largen, Mary Hess and Christy

Sapp say:

Much of what is being learned by researchers who are studying the impact of digital technology on learning points to the importance of “inquiry-driven” and “project-based” learning. I have already mentioned the destructive formation of learning that is occurring in some schooling contexts, but here I can point to the constructive formation of learning that is taking place in a variety of digital contexts.⁶⁰

Though it takes much effort, if done well, a controlled classroom can have a significant learning experience if they are being monitored by and engaged with a teacher.⁶¹ This information emphasizes the need for relationship amidst technology. The relationship between the student and teacher is still an important one as it contributes toward the effectiveness of the Internet learning community.

This requires on the part of the instructor a keen awareness of the student’s engagement. Additionally, students participating in an Internet learning community must be engaged with the subject matter, their peers and their instructor. When the students and the instructors are regularly engaged, a learning community is possible. If this same effect could be achieved in a video church setting, the teaching portion of the worship service could easily be achieved. This does not address the issue of cultivating hospitable people. It does, however, address the issue of how to do teaching online well.

⁶⁰ Kristin Johnston Largen, Mary E Hess and Christy Lohr Sapp, *Interreligious Learning and Teaching a Christian Rationale for a Transformative Praxis* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 103.

⁶¹ Nathan Loewen, *Effective Social Learning a Collaborative, Globally-Networked Pedagogy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), chap. 5, Kindle.

When considering video teaching, there is an interesting distinction between the video and the message.⁶² The message is presented both in audio form and in video form. One can listen and one can watch and listen. With modern technology the hearing impaired can both watch and read if the manuscript is available in the video. This again identifies the value of a video teaching capability within a church context. Across all age groups the hearing impaired represent 38 percent of people in the United States. Video church has the potential to help meet the needs of people with hearing impairment.⁶³ This use of technology offers hospitality to those with hearing impairment.

Church in the Digital Age

All around the world the Internet is impacting how people interact. This is especially true in the church world. The Internet is having a significant impact on the church. Church in the digital age is attached to religion in the digital age. Religion in the digital age has been challenged with the emergence of relativism as a normalized philosophy. The emergence of relativism has challenged religion in its current form. In the book *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, Lorne Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan write:

The obviously constructed and pluralistic character of religious expressions online tends to have a relativizing effect on the truth claims of any one religion or its authorities. Rather than appearing unreal, with enough exposure to the Internet

⁶² Diane Railton and Paul Watson, *Music Video and the Politics of Representation, Music and the Moving Image* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 45.

⁶³ Jeremy Weber, "Do You Hear What I Hear?: The Deaf Are Virtually an 'Unreached People Group' but an Illinois Ministry Is Remediating That One Video at a Time," *Christianity Today* 54, no. 3 (2010): 46–48, doi.org/10.31274/rtd-180813-16020.

religious people may come to doubt the absolute claims of sacredness and permanence that a religious site can make in the real world.⁶⁴

Technology coupled with modern relativism is changing the way Christians view the church today. The technological world has moved beyond computers into smartphones which act as both telephones and handheld computers. Where online communities offer variety and accessibility, the practice of hospitality is more difficult to express. In the place of hospitality, we can see a value-based system emerge. Values such as being tolerant, and the practice of listening skills are prioritized. In many schools across the country, when students are dismissed from classes immediately plug into their electronic device.⁶⁵ The nature of being connected online causes people to suffer the potential face-to-face connections in their present context.

Handheld technology has become ubiquitous among in nations all over the world. These devices in the palms of the hands of millions of people give them access to various religions, teachers and preachers all over the world. This is a great thing, regarding accessibility, for people in hospital beds to hotels.⁶⁶

However, there is still sufficient evidence that suggests that phones and other handheld electric devices have an addictive effect on people. This addictive affects among gamers who are religions has shown a decline in their desire to participate in

⁶⁴ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* (New York, NY: Routledge Press, 2004), 2.

⁶⁵ Brandon Vogt, *The Church and New Media: Blogging Converts, Online Activists, and Bishops Who Tweet* (Huntington, IN.: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 2011), 57.

⁶⁶ Sally A. Brown and Luke A. Powery, *Ways of the Word Learning to Preach for Your Time and Place* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), chap. 9, Kindle.

church-related events.⁶⁷ Reality for some people is becoming more and more virtual. This presents a challenge. The challenge is spiritual growth is connected to learning in community. Education alone is good, however education in community allows people to develop a spiritual sensitivity that lends itself to the discovery of wisdom more readily.⁶⁸

One argument suggests that teaching and learning are enhanced online. Teachers who can communicate over recorded video have had great impact on learners around the world. These videos can be watched, re-watched, stopped and discussed. What matters in this scenario is the teacher's ability to communicate.⁶⁹ When the teacher can communicate via video and impact the intended audience, the mode of teaching no longer remains a hurdle.

Something to consider regarding church in the digital age is the convergence of several outside factors. Convergence in this context helps us understand how human life, relationships in different networks and communities can manifest in variety of ways.⁷⁰ Churches that gather Christians do so at the benefit of growing the Christian community. This community then becomes strong as it practices its central values. People part of

⁶⁷ Birgit Braun, Kornberg Johannes, and Lenz Bernd, "Gaming and Religion: The Impact of Spirituality and Denomination," *Journal of Religion and Health* 55, no. 4 (2016): 1464–71, doi:10.1007/s10943-015-0152-0.

⁶⁸ Walter Brueggemann and Amy Erickson, *The Creative Word Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*. 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), chap. 4, Kindle.

⁶⁹ Theodora Koumoutsakis et al., "Gesture in Instruction: Evidence from Live and Video Lessons," *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 40, no. 4 (2016): 301–15, doi:10.1007/s10919-016-0234-z.

⁷⁰ Philip R. Meadows, "Mission and Discipleship in a Digital Culture," *Mission Studies* 29, no. 2 (2012): 163–82, doi:10.1163/15733831-12341235.

these types of communities become more committed to it than their national or even ethnic identification.⁷¹

Key values of the church such as fellowship, discipleship, spiritual growth, serving, evangelism and worship have not stopped being practiced. They have been redefined. Fellowship in the digital age can happen via in person, face-to-face connection or online. Discipleship can happen via video meeting programs or other avenues. Evangelism is practiced in a variety of ways in person and online, for service and spiritual growth. There has been a redefinition of these key functions of the church.

What is more, technological advancement will only continue. There will always be new ways of achieving goals, connecting with others, engaging in relationship. In 2016 the Nintendo company released a downloadable mobile application game called *Pokémon Go*. In the book *Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality*, Timothy Jung and M. Claudia tom Dieck write:

The arrival of *Pokémon Go* in July 2016 was a ‘wakeup call’ for anyone engaged in academic research into augmented reality, in fact, it was a wakeup call for anyone in the AR industry. Its immediate popularity overcame all expectations and whilst the hype died down surprisingly quickly, putting one in mind of Gartner’s “hype cycle.”⁷² The sudden spike in interest did, however, give Nintendo a much-needed opportunity to reawaken its sales in merchandising.⁷³

The conversation surrounding the distinction between augmented reality and virtual reality reveal the constant progress of technological advancements. Church in the

⁷¹ Timothy C. Morgan and David Neff, “The Church Vulnerable: Chinese Christians Knew Relative Peace--until the Government Saw a Video Documenting Their Stunning Growth,” *Christianity Today* 48, no. 4 (2004): 87–89, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/archives/.

⁷² Kasey Panetta, “Are Blockchain, Smart Machines, IoT and Other Emerging Technologies on Their Way Up or Down the Hype Cycle?,” accessed on October 30, 2019.

⁷³ Timothy Jung and M. Claudia tom Dieck, *Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality* (New York, NY: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 260.

digital age will continue to be faced with human engagement with each other and with technology. The challenge will be how to maintain the characteristics of the church which make it unique.

Hospitality and Spiritual Growth

American culture has been moving more and more away from traditional church attendance. There different factors influencing this such as the “nones”, technological advancements and innovations regarding the internet church and traveling sports club culture. The “nones” are young adults born between 1980 and 1995 who have expressed no religious affiliation. These adults see spirituality as something worth grasping at but are timid at best about joining a faith community. For these “nones” spirituality without community is an appealing solution to the skepticism of traditional style church.⁷⁴ A question that continues to remain is “how can one spiritual grow outside of a spiritual community?”

In an article regarding the online church movement, Pastor Jay Kranda observed that the online church has helped to draw people to church, not the lead people away from the church. Kranda is a Small Groups Pastor for Saddleback Community Church in Irvine and helps develop the online community. He is responsible for 900 online groups and 1300 home groups. The technological advancements with internet streaming and

⁷⁴ Charles W. Colson and Timothy George, “Churchless Jesus: A Viral Video Is a Symptom of Our Spiritual Malaise, but Not the Cure,” *Christianity Today* 56, no. 6, (2012): 64, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/archives/.

video quality coupled with pastors who know how to engage with the online community has the potential to see more people come to church.⁷⁵

The traveling sports club culture has significantly grown in the past 20 years. Children, teens and young adults have found value in investing in themselves toward becoming eligible for scholarships and potential professional sports opportunities. In their book *Overplayed*, authors David King, and Margot Starbuck say:

There are tens of thousands of travel teams in Georgia and Florida alone, according to an estimate from the Atlanta-based Youth Amateur Travel Sports Association (YATSA). In 2000, a dozen teams participated in the first All-American Wood Bat Classic tournament in Atlanta; in 2014, nearly one hundred squads from half a dozen states participated. As YATSA executive director Rebecca Davis points out, “The fast growth absolutely blindsided us. Those days of rec ball and local Little League, or just going to the park and playing ball—those days are nonexistent. They’re gone. Now it’s all about travel.” While strong relationships can be built on travel teams, the setting doesn’t afford the same kinds of opportunities to develop and deepen friendship as sharing life “on the ground” might.⁷⁶

Travel sports clubs are not new, they have been around since the 1980s but have significantly grown. This growth in club sports has impacted many people who have experienced a traditional church model with Sunday morning attendance being the primary point of contact. When sports teams travel over several weekends a year, the family becomes more detached from their local church. In this way the advent of video streaming churches online has helped to address the changing nature of churchgoers. However, like sports, the characteristic of hospitality within the church and family culture

⁷⁵ Sheryl Lynn, “Online churches don’t hurt local church growth: study,” *The Christian Post*, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/state-of-the-online-church-study-reveals-positive-impact-of-digital>.

⁷⁶ David King, *Overplayed: A Parent's Guide to Sanity in the World of Youth Sports* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2016), 130.

necessitates the practicing of hospitality. The lack of interaction within the local church among those who no longer attend has impacted how they experience hospitality and how they practice it.

The literature on the issue suggests looking at the patterns for human development most likely to engage these individuals and others not like them with different vehicles for learning. One such approach is the concept of Teacher-Centered Learning and Student-Centered Learning. Teacher-Centered Learning is the learning that happens when an expert in a subject matter conveys learning points to a recipient, the student. Student-Centered Learning happens when a teacher and student are surrounded by discussion, experiences, knowledge and beliefs. This approach allows for a different way of communicating learning points.⁷⁷

Culture changes over time and the change can be seen in a variety of ways including politics. The political culture within American evangelicalism has recently shifted. Opposing political views and the rise of “single issue politics” has caused much division with American evangelicalism. This division has caused for some church constituents to seek to separate themselves from their churches. This disunity has occurred in some churches due to the rise of political alignment among certain evangelicals in the local church.⁷⁸ Certain churches have leadership which fails to see how aligning themselves with a political position affects their hospitality to the watching world. Whether they do this knowingly or unknowingly, the fact remains that people

⁷⁷ Cari Crumly and Pamela Dietz, *Pedagogies for Student-centered Learning Online and On-ground* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 6.

⁷⁸ Omri Elisha, *Moral Ambition Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 121.

know what they experience. Omri Elisha speaks to this issue in his book *Moral Ambition Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches*:

Not unlike the Protestant communities that Max Weber observed when he visited the United States in 1946, contemporary evangelicals regard entrepreneurial vitality and economic success as signs of moral fortitude and divine favor. But they remain troubled by their complicity in modern versions of the American Dream that seem far removed from the inner worldly asceticism of ages past.⁷⁹

Such issues have been eroding trust in the church for a long period of time. The erosion of trust leads to a lack of willingness to experience the hospitality offered in the church. In fact, the church becomes an inhospitable place (to some) when it has aligned itself politically. The lack of hospitality in scenarios such as these provide congregants looking for churches opportunities to try models such as the video venue.

Genuine Online Community?

This leads to another question regarding the mode of learning for spiritual communities: “Do spiritual growth and academic growth occur in the same way”? Online communities are fostering methods for learning that can work for large portions of the population around the world. For some, the online community may be the only place to trade comments, encouragements and rebukes in a way that allows them to fully express themselves. The type of learning, in this case, may help those who suffer from anxiety or have different obstacles that preclude them from face-to-face interactions with people reach out to others. In this case learners have been able to find community for the first time in a long time.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Elisha, *Moral Ambition Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches*, 122.

⁸⁰ Pauline Hope Cheong, Jessie P. H. Poon, Shirlena Huang, and Irene Casas, “The Internet Highway and Religious Communities: Mapping and Contesting Spaces in Religion-Online,” *Information Society* 25, no. 5 (2009): 291–302. doi:10.1080/01972240903212466.

Ethnically diverse learning communities are difficult to develop in and of themselves. Homogeneity is an innate tendency which causes people of like-mindedness to collect together. Homogeneity can naturally be broken down by the church in its local contexts. This requires church leaders to see the need for diverse hospitable space and culture. Therefore, the church must seek to express the values of Christian of hospitality. The physically gathered church has traditionally been one of the ways of helping people break down barriers of wealth and ethnic tension.

Sermons online offer teaching through the medium of video broadcast over the Internet. Online sermons are becoming more standard in church plant models and traditional mainstream models of church. These sermons have the potential of reaching a community different from the community attending in the live audience with the live pastor. A major benefit of this methodology of teaching is the uniqueness of the audience it reaches. The online audience can interact with the preacher in a unique way from a unique locale.⁸¹ Additionally, the online sermon acts as a vehicle to reach those who have found themselves alienated from a church community. In this unique way, the idea of “welcome” or “presence” is presented to the person feeling excluded from the broader church community.

It is also worthwhile to consider the importance of the gathered church. This study does not seek to deconstruct nor to dive deeply into this subject. However, it is important to note that Sunday morning church models where people regularly gather must be able to answer clearly why they meet. Gathering as church and learning from a video teacher

⁸¹ Tripp Hudgins, “Preaching Online,” *Anglican Theological Review* 101, no. 1 (2019): 79–88, www.anglicantheologicalreview.org/.

has shown to be effective. In higher level education courses for divinity students, a recent study shows students learning content well. In the article “Spiritual Formation in Online Higher Education Communities: Nurturing Spirituality in Christian Higher Education Online Degree Programs,” Mark Maddix and James Estep write:

The research testifies that effective learning in online courses shows no significant difference between computer-mediated distance course and face-to-face instruction. In other words, effective learning can take place in online courses. The question at hand is whether spiritual formation can take place through computer-mediated courses can provide a virtual presence that is commensurate of bodily presence?⁸²

Training people online offers the benefits of a decentralized faith with the cost of losing the face-to-face connection that happens when people are physically gathered.⁸³ Christian spirituality and formation go hand in hand with the hospitality exemplified by Jesus in Luke 10 (Good Samaritan) and Luke 15 (Prodigal Son). It is in the presence of others and in the community of God, with God, that the Christian grows spiritually.

This literature review reveals distinctive identities, attributes, practices and vehicles regarding how hospitality plays an important role in the developmental process of the Christ follower. The researcher found keywords repeated five or more times and listed the categories here in Table 7.

⁸² Mark A Maddix and James Riley Estep Jr., “Spiritual Formation in Online Higher Education Communities: Nurturing Spirituality in Christian Higher Education Online Degree Programs,” *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (2010): 423–34, doi.org/10.1177/073989131000700212.

⁸³ Thomas Esselman, “The Pedagogy of the Online Wisdom Community: Forming Church Ministers in a Digital Age,” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 7, no. 3 (2004): 159–70. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9647.2004.00206.x.

Table 7. Cumulative Distinctives from Literature Review

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
People - 39	Spiritual - 16	Learning - 29	Church - 67
Student - 16	Digital - 12	With - 29	Community - 52
Human - 16	Technology - 12	Teaching - 10	Hospitality - 41
World - 15	Values - 12	Sharing - 7	Online - 23
Christian - 11	Culture - 9	Develop - 5	Internet - 19
Others - 11	Experience - 8	Education - 5	Video - 16
Son - 11	Social - 8	Formation - 5	God - 16
Teacher - 8	Virtual - 8		Networks - 12
	Connected - 8		Jesus - 6
	Different - 7		
	Presence - 7		
	Good - 7		
	Religion - 6		
	Western - 6		
	Heart - 5		
	Growth - 5		

A list of the top three keywords repeated five or more times are listed in categories here in Table 8.

Table 8. Top three Keywords from Literature Review

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
People - 39	Spiritual - 16	Learning - 29	Church - 67
Student - 16	Digital - 12	With - 29	Community - 52
Human - 16	Technology - 12	Teaching - 10	Hospitality - 41

This literature review specifically examined Internet/online models of church and education and the expression of hospitality over the Internet or online. These specific categories show the need for identity, attributes, practices and vehicles in the practice of hospitality found in the review of academic literature focused on hospitality and the video model of teaching.

The specific attributes for hospitality in video expressions of teaching require a spiritual element through the use of digital technology. As in most educational models,

learning occurs through intentional teaching. What is interesting is the need for learning to occur with others in community. Communal learning is central to the spiritual development of individuals in video or live teaching models. Additionally, the church is still a central vehicle in how hospitality is practiced in the Christian community.

Considerations from the Literature Review of Hospitality

The literature review of hospitality has within it several themes which emerge as principles of hospitality which can be practiced. Table 9 is a list of the principles found in the literature review.

Table 9. Principles from the Literature Review of Hospitality

Biblical hospitality must be seen through a Middle Eastern context.
The use of video technology has given birth to new communities.
Hospitality is shown by welcoming insiders and outsiders.
Welcoming people home is part of their spiritual journey.
Physical presence is an intrinsic part of hospitality.
Hospitality requires initiative.
Hospitality must meet people as the church changes.
Hospitality is an answer to isolation.
As religious practices change, biblical hospitality must remain consistent.
Hospitality is especially necessary in video churches.
People still need interaction with people.
Hospitality can be a vehicle for cultivating ethnic diversity.

There were several principles found in the literature review portion of this study. The researcher discovered the principle that biblical hospitality must be seen through a Middle Eastern context. There in how different cultures practice the characteristic or hospitality. Middle Eastern hospitality is unique in that it easily welcomes strangers. It is from this lens the hospitality seen in the Bible must be interpreted.

The use of video technology has given birth to new communities. This is a principle which cannot be ignored. As these new and emerging communities form, they are in need of hospitality and those who can either train people in these communities to lead or have experience themselves and be present in them.

Hospitality is shown by welcoming insiders and outsiders. This principle challenges the status quo of people of all nations who may treat insiders differently than they treat outsiders. The issue being revealed is one of a culture within a community or organization that can become desensitized to the need to welcome both the insider and outsider.

Welcoming people home is part of their spiritual journey. This is an interesting principle in that, the way a believer comes to faith and grows requires a spiritual community to welcome them. Spiritual growth is dependent on how a person feels safe and in the presence of God. The practice of hospitality is central to achieving a sense of safety and security.

Physical presence is an intrinsic part of hospitality. The biblical and literature review revealed that though people are able to communicate via online, Internet or video venues, a physical presence is still necessary to a person feeling welcomed. The parable of the Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son reveal the importance and priority of the practice of hospitality toward welcoming the stranger. Both the two parables and the literature support the need for physical presence as a method of inclusion or helping people feel welcomed.

Hospitality requires initiative. Someone has to make the first move. Someone must identify someone else in need of hospitality and take action. The action of

hospitality motivated by a desire to welcome someone into a community or organization is what creates a sense of welcome.

Hospitality must meet people as the church changes. The expression of church has been changing for centuries. From small gatherings in rooms in the homes of the first disciples to the churches across the world today, the church has changed, and continues to change. As the church changes so the expression of hospitality must continue to change while maintaining its core components.

Hospitality is an answer to isolation. The advent of social media has created an entire generation of people who feel more isolated than ever before in human history. This is largely due to the lack of real interaction with others. Where people can type nice words and speak nice things using a variety of technological interfaces, there is still a great need for a sense of welcome. This sense of being welcomed has the potential to answer the extreme isolation experienced by so many people.

As religious practices change, biblical hospitality must remain consistent. Religious practices have changed over the years. The way people do church is different from what the bible presents as church. As the definition of “church” itself changes, biblical hospitality must remain consistent in order to continue to foster an environment for spiritual community.

Hospitality is especially necessary in video churches. The video church depends on the practice of hospitality. Without the practice of hospitality in video churches, these churches become educational intuitions instead churches. The welcoming of individuals into the church is what makes a church uniquely a spiritual community.

People still need interaction with people. As old as the world is, human interaction defines the human experience. As people become more dependent on technological advancements, and as churches utilize technology for their programming needs, human interaction must remain at the forefront in order to maintain a sense of welcoming others into their communities.

Hospitality can be a vehicle for cultivating ethnic diversity. As the world becomes more diverse, the need for people from different ethnic backgrounds becomes more important. The practice of welcoming others into organizations and faith communities can act as a bridge toward bringing people of different backgrounds together.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

A Review of the Project Research

In an effort to discover the skills necessary for churches to create and sustain a culture of hospitality amongst their various constituencies, the researcher used a modified grounded theory approach. The modified grounded theory approach was also used during field research which included interviews of contemporary church ministry leaders and attendees. Through the use of the modified grounded theory approach, the researcher determined the codes in the literature and in the interviews.

Explaining Modified Grounded Theory

The modified grounded theory used by the researcher is a type of qualitative research. “Qualitative research is research that involves analyzing and interpreting texts and interviews in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of a particular phenomenon.”⁸⁴ The modified grounded theory begins with a question. In this study the question has been “What are the effects of the video venue church model on Christian hospitality?” This question is answered by beginning with a proposed problem. Next, the researcher begins to collect data. In this study, the researcher began with a biblical study on the parable of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 and the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. A brief synopsis of these two parables can be found below. Following the biblical study, the researcher conducted a literature review of related topics

⁸⁴ Carl F. Auerbach and Louise B. Silverstein, *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 3.

in Academic Journals and articles. As repeating ideas began to emerge, themes could be identified and then categorized. These themes were grouped into theoretical constructs which allowed the researcher to create categories and then develop a theory. The researcher used a biographical version of grounded theory as well as using the grounded theory after conducting interviews.

Throughout the process of this project, the researcher developed a theory as to how the quality of hospitality was practiced in video churches part of this study. The theory was developed through a few different methods. First, the researcher reviewed the literature pertaining to the biblical, historical and contemporary methods and observations surrounding the development of a culture of hospitality. Second, the researcher reviewed the contemporary church models and other literature dealing with hospitality. Third, the researcher interviewed contemporary church leaders and attendees who operated in the context of the video venue model.

The researcher chose two New Testament passages emphasizing the nature of biblical hospitality. Both passages can be found in the gospel Luke. The gospel of Luke emphasizes the message of Jesus going to all the nations. This view of going to all nations, carries with it an implicit characteristic of hospitality. The Lukan text is a hospitable text. It welcomes the lost into the community of God. The researcher believes this lens is best observed in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10).

The researcher first studied the parable of the Prodigal Son. In this parable there are three central characters, the father, the younger brother and the older brother. The parable reveals the hospitality of the father toward the wayward son which exemplifies

the heart of God toward the wayward world. The way the father welcomes home the son is a picture of how historical modern Christ followers can welcome people into the community of God.

The father places a ring on the younger son's finger and a robe on him. The father then orders the servants to kill a fatted calf. The older brother is working in the field at this time and is alerted the younger brother is home. The older brother protests demanding the father recognize the treatment of the younger son as unjust. The father challenges the older brother to welcome his prodigal brother home.

There is a uniqueness in the way the father is trying to lead the older brother. The older brother misses the opportunity to show love to the younger brother and therefore reveals what it looks like to be inhospitable. This is contrast to the love of the father and exemplified by his actions of loving welcome of the younger son.

The second focus of biblical study was the parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable of the Good Samaritan is shared by Jesus in a response to a question by an expert in the law. Seeking to trap Jesus, the expert asks a question about salvation. Jesus answers by quoting the law regarding how a to love one's neighbor. The expert in law replies "who is my neighbor?" which becomes the impetus to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan, which was described earlier.

What is significant to this study about the parable of the Good Samaritan is the nature by which the hospitality of God is exemplified. Jesus is trying to teach those who questioned him how God views them and the rest of the world. The observation highlighted here is the need for those who are in deep need to receive love from those who are able. This is the kind of hospitality God shows the sinner in need of salvation.

For the third part of the project, the researcher reviewed the relevant literature in the field of academic hospitality with creating a culture of hospitality in general. In addition, the researcher chose to focus on EFCC, NCC and The Rock, as these three churches represent churches in San Diego County using the video venue church model. The first, EFCC, is an 80-year-old church which has met at three different physical locations from 1939-2019. The video church model in EFCC was introduced in 2006 in order to introduce new styles of Christian worship music. It is a church that prides itself in biblical teaching, missions and ministry to children.

The second, NCC, began in 1976 on the coast of San Diego and has been innovating ministry methodology for several years. NCC has been using the video venue as a means of reaching more people in various locations since 1998. It was the first church to pioneer the video venue model of church. It used videos in different worship music venues to show the teaching pastor. NCC began in the late 1990s and started using video venue model church in the early 2010s. NCC has had much success with video church models in a variety of spaces and sizes of constituents. NCC prides itself in its biblical teaching and innovative approaches toward community outreach.

The third, The Rock Church, has been using video venues as a means to reach people since 2009. The Rock sought to reach people in various venues in San Diego County and as well as a traditional video venue, pioneered what is known as the micro-site venue. The micro-site venue is one where a small group of people from three to five people gather in various location such as coffee shops and beach surf areas in order to watch a video of the sermon and participate in worship.

Following the biblical review, the researcher began reviewing literature, including a review of contemporary methods of creating a culture of hospitality via the Internet and other online social spaces. Several authors, including Amy Oden, Joshua Jipp, and Christine Pohl have written much on the topic of Christian hospitality and its effect on spiritual growth. In addition, *Christianity Today* has published articles dealing with the hospitality in the church and how Internet or virtual cultures are being developed and pioneered. It was of great importance to study academic journals and editorials on this topic. The topic of hospitality in the western American context is different than that of the Middle East. These articles in the study helped the researcher to understand these differences and form principles which contributed to an overall theory.

The final portion of the research included interviews with several people who attend video venue churches. Specifically, it consisted of conversations with contemporary video church leaders, volunteer leaders and church constituents. The church leader, volunteer leader and church constituent interviews were conducted with EFCC, NCC and The Rock. All interviews with the church and volunteer leaders were done by audio digitally recording, then transcribing the audio, then identifying the keywords, themes and categories. Excerpts from the interviews can be found in the Appendix section of this paper.

Description of Field Research

The research included interviewing contemporary Christian church leaders, volunteers and their constituents. The researchers specifically identified church leaders with experience in creating and sustaining video church models as part of their normal expression of the Sunday church service. These leaders are known for their ability to

effectively gather their constituent's week to week and adequately address their needs for community and teaching. The researcher has been connected in many different networks amongst pastors and churches in North County San Diego from 2006 through 2019. These networks and various personal relationships allowed the researcher to obtain access to select paid and non-paid ministry leaders and the attending congregational members of EFCC, NCC and The Rock.

Interviews and the Development of Questions

The researcher was able to access five different attendees from EFCC, NCC and The Rock. Through a long series of email, phone calls, text messaging and recruiting through friends of friends the researcher was able to set up various appointments with people to record their answer to seven different questions. The researcher identified seven questions to help determine the subject's experience with hospitality in their unique contexts. The questions can be seen below in Table 10.

Table 10. Questions asked during scheduled interviews

1. Why did you chose a video venue church to attend verses a live service to attend if both were available?
2. What does hospitality mean to you? How have you seen hospitality practiced in your church?
3. What are some of the ways you see this practiced?
4. When is the last time you invited someone to your house from your church?
5. How do you think hospitality is practiced by people in your church?
6. How do you think people grow in their faith because of hospitality in your church?
7. How have you seen hospitality play a role in the healthy engagement of your church?

The researcher began by interviewing subjects from EFCC. EFCC had a campus pastor from one of their video venues available for this research project. In the meeting the researcher learned that the Campus Pastor for EFCC had been on staff for a total of six years and had attended the church for 15 years prior to becoming a staff member at the church. The researcher also obtained access to another Pastor on the staff of EFCC and setup a time for this Pastor, his wife and two other constituents, a total of four people, to gather and respond to the seven different questions. The staff Pastor for EFCC had been on staff for 11 years prior to this interview. Additionally, the constituents from EFCC at this second meeting had attended this video venue for six years each.

The subjects for interviews from NCC were easier to obtain. NCC provided access to a staff pastor who offered oversight of one of their offsite venues. This Pastor provided the names and contact information for four different subjects which were not on staff and had participated in a small group with this Pastor. The researcher contacted each of the people and invited them to meet at a neutral location away from their church. The constituents of the video venue at NCC had all come from smaller church backgrounds (churches with a weekly attendance of 500 people per week or lower). Another subject from NCC was able to meet in their place of work. The researcher travelled to the subject's place of work and conducted a recorded interview.

Subjects from The Rock were particularly difficult to interview. The researcher had access to the executive pastor at the church who tried to help facilitate some interviews at The Rock's video venue sites. The researcher was connected from the executive pastor to the campus pastor of one of The Rock's video venue sites. This campus pastor initially stayed connected and then stopped communicating with the

researcher. The only way the researcher could find ways to connect to attendees of The Rock was to reach out to friends using the social media site Facebook. Over Facebook, the researcher was able to subjects to interview and scheduled various telephone interviews.

Interviews with Constituents

The interviews were conducted in three different ways. Excerpts from the interviews can be found in the Appendix of this project. Some interviews were conducted with two or more people in a session, while others were conducted individually in person and on over the phone. Each subject in the interview was made aware the purpose of the interview. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information based on the experience of each subject. All subjects were made aware the interviews were about their specific churches and that each interview would be recorded and transcribed. The researcher assured the subjects of all interviews would be able to maintain their anonymity.

Explanation of Codes

In reviewing the literature, which included different disciplines, and transcriptions of the interviews, many different words and ideas began to appear often. By reviewing biblical, historical, contemporary business, and contemporary ministry literature, the researcher was able to recognize themes that transcend the different disciplines. Coding the literature allowed the researcher to discover skills which could be applied toward the application of developing a hospitable culture.

The research of the keyword search began with searching words in the biblical study of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 and the parable of the Prodigal

Son in Luke 15 and identified repetitive words. Following identifying the word repetition throughout the biblical study, the researcher then identified a list of words pertinent to this study. From there, the words were categorized by defining what the word identified, attributes listed, practices shown, and vehicles used to facilitate the attributes and practices. This method of categorization was used throughout the entire biblical study.

Results from a keyword study of repeated words from the parable of the Prodigal Son are found in Table 1. The results from a keyword study of repeated words from the parable of the Good Samaritan are found in Table 3. The cumulative collection of words from Tables 1 and 3 are found in Table 5. The top three ranking words from Tables 1 and 3 are listed in Table 4.

The research of the keyword search began with searching words in the literature review of hospitality portion of this study and identified repetitive words. Following identifying the word repetition throughout the literature review, the researcher then identified a list of words pertinent to this study. From there, the words were categorized by defining what the word identified, attributes listed, practices shown, and vehicles used to facilitate the attributes and practices. This method of categorization was used throughout the entire literature review listed cumulatively in Table 7 and then with the top three keywords in Table 8.

Explanation of Concepts and Categories

As the researcher completed the review of the literature and the interviews, several repeating ideas became apparent. These repeating ideas were then grouped into general concepts. Table 9 illustrated the concepts that emerged from the research dealing with the parable of the Prodigal Son and the parable of the Good Samaritan. Across the

top of each column are words that identify different key concepts. Table 11 illustrates how, under each key concept, there are words that were repeated five or more times throughout the biblical study and the literature review.

Table 11. Keywords and Concepts from Bible Study and Literature Review

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
Son - 120	Lost - 84	With - 67	Jesus - 106
Father - 97	Heart - 30	Question - 34	Hospitality - 73
People - 39	Spiritual - 16	Learning - 29	Church - 67
Samaritan - 24	Good - 15	With - 29	Community - 52
Student - 16	Digital - 12	Love - 13	Hospitality - 41
Human - 16	Technology - 12	Teaching - 10	God - 37

Once the concepts were identified in each of the different disciplines, categories began to emerge. In the end, the researcher identified four categories which included these concepts made up of the repeated ideas. The categories included characteristics concerning identity, specific attributes, practices and vehicles. Table 11 identifies the four categories along with the main concepts included within each of them. Table 12 is a synthesized version of Table 11.

Table 12. Highest Ranking Repeated Keywords in Biblical and Literature Review

Identity	Attributes	Practices	Vehicles
Father - 97	Heart - 30	Question - 34	Hospitality - 73
People - 39	Spiritual - 16	Learning - 29	Church - 67
Samaritan - 24	Good - 15	With - 29	Community - 52
Student - 16	Digital - 12	Love - 13	Hospitality - 41

Table 11 was developed by taking the top-ranking words across the biblical study and the literature review taking into account the amount of times each word was repeated in each category. This group of words has not yet been evaluated next to the interviews of EFCC, NCC and The Rock.

Identifying Key Principles

One of the tasks necessary for this research was the identifying of key principles in the biblical study, the literature review and the biographical interviews. The key principles were identified by repeated keywords and phrases. In chapter two, the Bible study portion of this study the researcher found several principles which stood out. Table 13 reveals the principles identified in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Table 13. Principles to Consider from Luke 15:11-32

The seeking sinner is welcome to the table of the Lord.
Hospitality begins in the heart.
Hospitality requires humility.
Hospitality takes initiative.
Inhospitality is just as powerful as hospitality.
Hospitality is flows from love.

The principles begin with the concept of repentance displayed in the seeking sinner, the lost son. The sinner here, or the lost son, is in fact seeking reconciliation and therefore welcome to the table of the Lord. Hospitality begins in the heart. Though simply stated, this concept is profoundly difficult to practice should a person not have a desire to reach out to others. Additionally, hospitality requires humility and initiative. This quality must begin in the heart and be acted upon for it to yield fruit in the life of another human being. An interesting feature is how powerful inhospitality is. Inhospitality and hospitality are both powerful mechanisms of what it means to welcome someone. Therefore, the heart becomes the subject of discussion. When a person's heart is inclined to reach out to and love another, hospitality will flow from that place.

Following the identification of principles in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the researcher began looking for themes in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Table 14 identifies six key principles found in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Table 14. Principles to Consider from Luke 10:25-37

Questions are welcome in God's economy.
Love is the central to Jesus' answers.
Hospitality is not ethnocentric.
Opportunities for hospitality abound.
Legalism is a barrier toward hospitality.
Love expresses itself through hospitality.

From a sequential study of Luke 10:25-37, the researcher found Jesus to be providing a context of hospitality immediately in the form of the lawyer asking a question. The principle Jesus is practicing is questions are welcome in God's economy. Jesus responds to the Lawyer's question by having the Lawyer explain his own position on the Law found in Leviticus 19:18, the law identified was to love one's neighbor as themselves. Jesus uses this opportunity to reveal the principle of love being central to his answers. The parable of the Good Samaritan in total show a general principle of hospitality being an issue detached from ethnicity. The crossing of ethnic boundaries is being shown to be a necessity of true hospitality. Jesus then uses the illustration of different travelers on the road to Jerusalem to show the principle of opportunities to practice hospitality to be bountiful. This road was known to be dangerous. Jesus pushes the issue of legalism by showing the inhospitable nature of the Priest and the Levite. This revealed the principle of legalism being a barrier to hospitality. Finally, in the actions of the Good Samaritan reveal the principle of love expressing itself through hospitality.

Following the identification of principles in the parable of the Prodigal Son and the parable of the Good Samaritan the researcher began looking for themes in the literature review of hospitality found in chapter three of this study. The following list in Table 15 identifies 12 principles found in the literature review.

Table 15. Principles from the Literature Review of Hospitality

Biblical hospitality must be seen through a Middle Eastern context.
The use of video technology has given birth to new communities.
Hospitality is shown by welcoming insiders and outsiders.
Welcoming people home is part of their spiritual journey.
Physical presence is an intrinsic part of hospitality.
Hospitality requires initiative.
Hospitality must meet people as the church changes.
Hospitality is an answer to isolation.
As religious practices change, biblical hospitality must remain consistent.
Hospitality is especially necessary in video churches.
People still need interaction with people.
Hospitality can be a vehicle for cultivating ethnic diversity.

As seen above, there were several principles found in the literature review portion of this study. The researcher found that biblical hospitality must be seen through a Middle Eastern context. The use of video technology has given birth to new communities. There is a need for hospitality to be practiced in these new communities. Hospitality is shown by welcoming insiders and outsiders. All organizations, including churches face the reality of a passive cultural move towards accepting a status quo. Welcoming the insiders and outsiders is necessary toward cultivating a genuine sense of welcome.

Welcoming people home is part of their spiritual journey. Hospitality is the context for spiritual growth. People grow spiritually when they feel safe and secure. Physical presence is an intrinsic part of hospitality. Presence leads to proclamation. The physical presence of people has shown to be necessary toward achieving an atmosphere

of welcome. Hospitality requires initiative. The practice of hospitality requires action. This requires someone to be watching for outsiders with an intentional desire to bring them into the community. Hospitality must meet people as the church changes. As the expression of the church changes over the years, the practice of hospitality must adapt while retaining its core values.

Hospitality is an answer to isolation. Social media has created a generation of detached and isolated people. The welcoming of people into communities is an answer to this isolation. As religious practices change, biblical hospitality must remain consistent. Religion has had different expressions over the years, where religion changes, the nature of welcoming people must remain consistent in order to cultivate healthy spiritual communities.

Hospitality is especially necessary in video churches, even as all churches need environments of hospitality in order to welcome people. Hospitable churches exemplify the heart of God toward people. Video churches are dependent on strong hospitable environments. People still need interaction with people. Human beings are designed to be interact with other human beings regardless of technological advancements. Hospitality can be a vehicle for cultivating ethnic diversity. Today people are moving all around the world as never before in history. As communities change in ethnic composition, churches will also change. The practice of hospitality can help bridge the cultural gap between the different ethnic representations in these communities.

Data from Interviews

The researcher conducted eight different interviews over the course of two weeks. The researcher began looking for people who attended EFCC, NCC and the Rock church

video venues. There are thousands of people who attend these services, but it was difficult to secure the interviews and schedule them in a timely manner. The researcher recorded each of the interviews and grouped them by churches. The recorded interviews were then transcribed and can be found in Appendix B.

Beginning with EFCC, then moving to NCC and ending with The Rock Church, the researcher identified keywords which had been repeated 14 or more times throughout the course of each interview. Following the identification of repeated keywords, the researcher categorized the words to match the same categories found in the biblical study and the literature review. Table 16 below shows the results of the data collected from the interviews with people who attended a video venue at EFCC. Excerpts from the interviews can be found in the Appendix of this project.

Table 16. Keywords Associated with Interviews from EFCC

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
People - 154	With - 66	Groups - 24	Church - 92
They - 131	Think - 63	Worship - 14	Hospitality - 63
We - 83	Feel - 37	Music - 13	Venue - 40
Community - 24	Faith - 22	Talking - 12	Service - 38
Pastor - 13	Welcome - 18		Video - 36
	Good - 14		House - 20
	Live - 14		Room - 14
	Together - 12		Campus - 12

The keywords illustrate a sense of togetherness, community, pastoral support, and a consideration toward the outsider in the category of identity. The attributes reveal that people who attended the EFCC video venue experienced a sense of emotional connection, togetherness, faith, a sense of welcome while being challenged to think and learn. The category of practice reveals the worship music, video venue, talking with

others and small groups to be part of their experience. The vehicles used to facilitate these identities, foster the attributes and practices were the church, hospitality, video venues, homes and church campuses.

The researcher then examined the data from the transcripts of the NCC interviews. The keywords which repeated throughout the interview were identified and categorized. Table 17 below shows the results of the repeated keywords associated with the interviews at NCC. Excerpts from the interviews can be found in the Appendix of this project.

Table 17. Keywords Associated with Interviews from NCC

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
We - 70	Think - 66	Group - 48	Church - 81
They - 40	Life - 32	Welcome - 16	Hospitality - 40
People - 40	Feel - 31	Questions - 10	House - 23
Our - 22	With - 30	Hospitable - 8	Video - 19
Pastor - 14	Live - 15		Campus - 14
	Comfortable - 10		Service - 8
	Teaching - 7		

The keywords taken from the interviews at NCC begin to show some of the identities, attributes, practices and vehicles, those who attend the NCC video venue experienced. In the identity category there was a sense of connectedness, an awareness of the outsider, people as a whole and a need for a pastor. The attributes which emerged were issues of comfort, teaching, feelings and a need to be engaged with the teaching. Those who attended NCC video venues practiced themselves or saw practiced in their church welcoming, openness to questions, groups and hospitality. The vehicles for this were the church, hospitality, video venues, church programs and homes.

The researcher then examined the data from the transcripts of The Rock Church interviews. The keywords which repeated throughout the interview were identified and

categorized. Table 18 below shows the results of the repeated keywords associated with the interviews at the Rock church. Excerpts from the interviews can be found in the Appendix of this project.

Table 18. Keywords Associated with Interviews from Rock Church,

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
People - 108	With - 59	Question - 31	Church - 82
They - 104	Feel - 36	Go - 27	Hospitality - 50
We - 31	Think - 26	Invite - 16	Video - 25
Pastor - 10	Physical - 10	Looking - 12	Venue - 15
	Experience - 10	Team - 9	Home - 11
	Love - 7		Campus - 10
			Service - 10
			Christ - 9

The keywords taken from the interviews at The Rock Church can be categorized into identities, attributes, practices and vehicles. Those who attend The Rock Church video venue experienced a variety of things including a sense of togetherness as a people with an openness to those outside of their community. They also shared a need to be connected to a pastor either on their campus or in one of their groups. The attributes of physical presence, feelings, experience and love are part of The Rock Church interviewees experience. The vehicles used were the church, hospitality, video venues, different homes, campuses and a reliance on Christ.

The researcher then developed two additional tables to show the total of all the key words and the top three keywords across tables 16-18. Table 19 below shows the total keywords shown in tables 16-18. Excerpts from all interviews can be found in the Appendix of this project.

Table 19. Cumulative Keywords from all Interviews

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
People - 302	With - 155	Groups - 71	Church - 255
We - 184	Think - 155	Worship - 14	Hospitality - 153
Community - 24	Feel - 104	Music - 13	Video - 80
Pastor - 37	Life - 32	Talking - 12	Service - 56
They - 275	Live - 29	Hospitable - 8	Venue - 55
Our - 22	Faith - 22	Questions - 41	House - 43
	Welcome - 18	Welcome - 16	Campus - 36
	Good - 14	Go - 27	Campus - 36
	Together - 12	Invite - 16	Home - 11
	Physical - 10	Looking - 12	Christ - 9
	Experience - 10	Team - 9	
	Comfortable - 10		
	Love - 7		
	Teaching - 7		

Table 20 below shows the top three repeated keywords from each church.

Table 20. Top Three Keywords Across All Interviews

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
People - 302	With - 155	Groups - 71	Church - 255
We - 184	Think - 155	Worship - 14	Hospitality - 153
Community - 24	Feel - 104	Music - 13	Video - 80

The researcher combined the total number of repeated keywords in Table 17 in order to show the most repeated words across the interviews from all churches. The words listed in Table 20 have been ranked by number of times repeated in context to the question asked by the interviewer and the intended answer given by the interviewee.

Identifying Key Principles from Interviews

After identifying all of the different repeated keywords and developing tables to show the collected data. The researcher began the development of Table 21. Table 21 shows eight different principles which emerged over the course of the eight different interviews of the 15 subjects in all three churches. The principles were collected by

identifying key themes informed by the Biblical review in chapter two and the literature review in chapter three of this study.

Table 21. Principles from the Video Venue Interviews

Individualism is an allure for video church
Intimacy is a precursor to spiritual growth
Small Groups skip a step of hospitality
Accountability is Harder to achieve
Hospitality is a critical component toward Christian discipleship
Community is critical toward developing healthy video church venues
Hospitality is a form of pastoral care
The hospitality of God is the context for spiritual growth

The eight principles listed in Table 21 reveal some of the appeal, context, spiritual growth needs, communal aspects and programs video venue churches either need or should provide in order to keep their constituents. This is relevant to this study as it pertains to the findings regarding what the allure for people to video venue churches is and how to encourage spiritual growth in these types of communities.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Analysis of Field Research

In an effort to discover the skills necessary for churches to create and sustain a culture of hospitality amongst their various constituencies, the researcher interviewed 15 different people from three different churches. These churches included Emmanuel Faith Community Church, North Coast Community Church and The Rock Church. Of the 15 interviewees, four of the people are presently or had been pastors within the church their interview coincided with. Two pastors were interviewed from EFCC. One was the campus pastor of the current video venue; one was a staff pastor for the church at large and one was a pastor who helped start the video venue at EFCC. The interviews from NCC included four people who served on a ministry team but were not in leadership positions. The interviews from The Rock Church included one ministry leader over the area of stage design and one pastor who had helped launch one of the church's campuses.

Interviews from Emmanuel Faith Community Church

The researcher interviewed two pastors and their spouses from EFCC referred to in this project as Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Jones, and another pastor referred to as Mr. Brown. The interviews were conducted off site and recorded and then transcribed for data analysis. Through these interviews, several ideas emerged. These ideas were then categorized as ministry concepts in either an identity, an attribute, a practice or a vehicle by which the characteristic of hospitality would be practiced within a video venue.

The ministry concepts mentioned by the EFCC interviewees included repeated keywords captured in the recorded and transcribed interviews. The ministry concepts helped to frame the keywords in a way that allowed the researcher to identify principles.

The interviews from EFCC were unique in that the interviewer was able to hear from ministry leaders, pastors on the staff of the church and their wives. Mr. and Mrs. Smith shared from their experience that hospitality for them was a big topic of discussion with regard to church in general but especially in a video venue service. They believed the practice of hospitality must go beyond a handshake at the door from a volunteer greeter and be motivated by a heart to love people who were outsiders of the church and desired to become part of the community.

They spoke of issues of hospitality likening them to that of their home. As a home is clean and presentable, the church should be the same, as guests come into a home and feel welcomed, the church should be able to do the same. They expressed a desire for people attending the video venue service to feel special. This includes helping visitors find their way to the service from the parking lot to their seat, meaning, it should be easy for a visitor to find their way around their campus. They mentioned the need for visitors to be able to be able to easily drop their kids off at a service designated for them or for there to be some clarity surrounding whether or not they should take their kids into the service or not. Mr. and Mrs. Smith ended their time mentioning the practice of hospitality being an act of faith, meaning it is part of a person's overall context of spiritual maturity.

Mr. Brown began attending the video venue service at EFCC due to his desire to be in service that offered music different to that being offered in the live venue. Mr. Brown had been attending EFCC since childhood with his parents. His decision to choose

a video venue was part of his journey of owning his faith and finding a peer group with similar worship music style interests.

Mr. Brown is in the 20-29-year-old demographic and was interested in attending a service style designed specifically for him. Service style and teaching was a prominent issue for Mr. Brown. The video venue provided a contemporary feel, casual dress attire and modern worship music verses the suit and tie and hymnal style of worship he grew up with. Attending large church like EFCC, meant for Mr. Brown, sitting in the main service far away from the speaker. The introduction of the video venue allowed Mr. Brown to feel as close to the preaching pastor as he was in the live service.

Mr. Brown shared his perspective of the practice of hospitality at EFCC as greeters who would welcome visitors and regular attendees on a weekly basis. His desire for hospitality to be practiced included a sense of providing a space for people to feel at home. His thought was that when a person feels at home, they would be more ready to be able to hear from the Lord what the preacher had to say and what the music declared. He spoke of the need to treat people like family in the church service. This idea emerged as he described his perceived need to provide a space for people to be welcomed and included in the life of the church.

Mr. Brown also identified EFCC's practice of hospitality to be shallow in its application. He desired the church be able to go beyond a handshake and a hello. He expressed, that from his perspective, there was a sense of individualism that occurred in the service, meaning, people who came to attend the church came to accomplish the task of sitting, listening and then leaving. Mr. Brown had a desire to see the church be more connected as a family and go beyond the task of handshaking.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones have attended the video venue at EFCC for 10 years and have enjoyed it. They both expressed a desire for people to experience a sense of being with one another verses a church where a person approaches church from the perspective of receiving teaching only. They also expressed a desire to attend the video venue as a way to express themselves in a different worship style than that of the live service. They expressed their reason for attending the video venue was also impacted by their desire to be in a smaller grouping of people verses the large 1300 seat ministry center where the live venue happens.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones expressed an internal need to be connected to a community. They believed the smaller 400-seat video venue allowed for them to be connected to a smaller community. They both expressed hospitality as a quality that welcomed people into their lives. They believe the practice of hospitality to go beyond having greeters at the door smiling and handshaking. They were careful to mention the need for greeters to be present at the doors of the service but recognized there was something more to being hospitable than a smile and a handshake. They both mentioned that hospitality, from their perspective, occurs when people have some genuine time to interact with one another.

Mr. and Mrs. Jones discussed the difference between attending a video venue church on the campus or watching a video service online. As they discussed the difference between the two methods of intaking a sermon, they landed on the reason a person attends a video venue instead of watching online, is to be part of a community. Mr. and Mrs. Jones both believed the community aspect to be a highly necessary part of the video venue.

Table 22 below shows the ministry concepts across the top and the repeated keywords from the interviews of the video venue attendees at EFCC. The numbers beside the ministry concept in this table and all subsequent table represent the number of times the word was repeated in the section associated with it.

Table 22. Keywords Associated with Interviews from EFCC

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
People - 154	With - 66	Groups - 24	Church - 92
They - 131	Think - 63	Worship - 14	Hospitality - 63
We - 83	Feel - 37	Music - 13	Venue - 40
Community - 24	Faith - 22	Talking - 12	Service - 38
Pastor - 13	Welcome - 18		Video - 36
	Good - 14		House - 20
	Live - 14		Room - 14
	Together - 12		Campus - 12

Interviews from North Coast Church

The researcher interviewed four ministry partners (volunteers) and one attendee who does not serve referred to in this project as Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Mr. and Mrs. Hall and Mr. Reed. The interviews were conducted off the site of NCC and recorded and then transcribed for data analysis. Through these interviews, several ideas emerged. These ideas were then categorized as ministry concepts in either an identity, an attribute, a practice or a vehicle by which the characteristic of hospitality would be practiced within a video venue.

The interviews of the attendees of the NCC video venue were conducted in two separate sessions. One interview was conducted with Mr. and Mrs. Miller and Mr. and Mrs. Hall, the second interview as conducted with Mr. Reed alone.

The Millers and the Halls shared much with regard to their experience of attending an NCC video venue. The Millers have been attending NCC for more than five

years, the Halls for less than one year. Both couples attend an NCC video venue off the main site of the NCC roughly 15 miles away. One of the reasons they attend this video venue is because they like the teaching of NCC pastors and the ease of access to a facility close to their home. The Millers began attending the live service at the main campus and migrated to the multi-site campus after having moved their home further from the main campus. The Halls have never attended the live service at the main campus, their primary exposure to NCC has been through the video venue at the multi-site.

The Millers expressed they did not feel or sense a difference between the live venue campus or the multi-site because the live venue services presented the speaker on the large video screens in the live venue. The Millers had been part of another church prior to attending NCC. This other church also had a large 1000+ seat auditorium with the preaching pastor on the large screens. For the Millers, watching preaching pastors on a screen has been part of their church experience for a long time.

The Halls had previously attended a 100-person church with no large screens. NCC was their first exposure to preaching pastors on large screens. They were concerned with the preaching pastor not being present but found it to be pleasant. In fact, they had no idea the NCC multi-site campus was going to be a video venue service, they were surprised to find out they were not going to see the preaching pastor live. The Halls credited the teaching to causing them to forget they were watching a screen. The community at NCC was very hospitable and within a month the Halls were invited to attend a small group where they met the Millers.

Both couples expressed the quality of hospitality, from their perspective, to be practiced in way that is different than entertaining. They used the words hospitality and

entertaining to distinguish between the practice of hosting people in a home and getting a home ready for something like a party. To them hospitality meant “come as you are into my home” where entertaining meant “let me clean up my house for you.” The couples went onto to describe their experience at NCC in a way that distinguished between what was happening on the multi-site campus and what happens in their small groups.

The Halls and the Millers went on to describe the act of hospitality as a way of welcoming people into their lives. They understood the practice of hospitality to include supporting others in their church and those in their small groups. This support may look like inviting people over for a meal or maybe meeting someone from the church over a cup of coffee. Both couples expressed hospitality to be that of creating an environment where there were no shame and people could feel at ease with each other.

Both couples expressed their delight in the way NCC offered multiple worship styles in different video venues within the multi-site. One could attend a modern rock-and-roll style of music, country western music, traditional music or video venue where there was no music but just the message. The Halls expressed that the Sunday night dinners NCC provided at the multi-site was a method of NCC offering a hospitable environment for people.

The Millers expressed the culture of NCC attendees at the multi-site to be one where the ministry volunteers are attentive to people as they come and go at the church. One instance mentioned by the Millers was their ability to recognize a parent who lived on their street interacting with them at the church. Upon recognizing the parent, Mrs. Miller invited the parent into their small group and continues to interact with the parent on a day to day basis. Both couples expressed how their small groups were a critical

component in their experience of the church to be hospitable. The Millers and the Halls felt as though the NCC multi-site provided a comfortable environment where people could get to know one another and dive deeper into relationship at their leisure. In their opinion and experience, friendships were built, and communities were made stronger as a result of the method of hospitality NCC incorporated into their multi-site strategy.

Mr. Reed has worked in large churches in the past and now works for a software company which services churches. He comes from large church background where his primary occupation was video production. He is very familiar with large church and video production and currently attends one of NCC large video venue multi-sites. As we began our discussion on the issue of hospitality in the video church, Mr. Reed shared his concerns with how hospitality is generally practiced in the mega-church model. Having been part of a large church staff, Mr. Reed understands the upside and downside to programmatic hospitality that is specifically motivated toward church growth.

Mr. Reed's experience at the NCC multi-site has been good. He is still attending there currently. He expressed that the NCC staff was present and interactive without feeling forced. The people designated to for hospitality engaged in a meaningful way as well as the campus pastor, children's director and worship leader. All had a way of communicating an atmosphere of welcome. He believed the NCC multi-site was able to genuinely convey their desire for people to feel welcomed without treating people as numbers in the crowd.

When asked the question about how the NCC multi-site was able to convey a sense of intimacy in the congregation, Mr. Reed expressed that he felt skeptical at first but as he experienced the video venue he believed there to be a healthy level of close

connections with other people in the service. He observed the campus pastor to be well suited for the for the job which, to him, meant NCC did a great job in vetting their staff. Mr. Reed felt the campus pastor and other campus staff must be able to exemplify qualities such as good theology and hospitality.

Mr. Reed expressed he felt that his experience in the video venue church at the NCC multi-site was similar to his experience to other churches where the preaching pastor was live. Mr. Reed reference the NCC multi-site culture to carry in it the desire for people to connect in groups. He mentioned it was stated several times and throughout the organization, meaning, he had heard small group connection stated several times across multiple ministry areas. He felt the small groups ministry did a good job describing the types of groups, this allowed he and his wife to find a group they believed they considered joining. Upon joining the group, the culture of the small group carried in its similarities of the staff and ministry volunteer culture.

When asked about how he personally practiced hospitality, Mr. Reed mentioned he was very connected in his small group. The relationships formed in the small group's ministry allowed for people to experience genuine hospitality from the church. This then fostered an environment for friendships to be made, where, members of the small group invited others over to their homes on a regular basis. Mr. Reed expressed that he regularly practiced inviting people from his small group over to his home, however, he rarely invited people outside of his small group over to his home.

Mr. Reed expressed that he believed hospitality to be part of what helps believers or regular church goers, grow spiritually. His experience at the NCC multi-site showed that as regular hospitality was practiced in the church services on the campus, people

would be more readily willing to accept an invitation into a small group where they could go deeper in discussion on the sermon topic and how it applied to their lives specifically. This kind of regular discussion in their small groups allowed for others to hold each other accountable to the principles being taught by the preaching pastor. Mr. Reed felt the groups offer a certain level of relational connectedness which also allowed room for new people to join. His thoughts on this caused him to sense the church protected itself against the formation of cliques.

Table 23 below shows the ministry concepts across the top and the repeated keywords from the interviews of the video venue attendees at NCC.

Table 23. Keywords Associated with Interviews from NCC

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
We - 70	Think - 66	Group - 48	Church - 81
They - 40	Life - 32	Welcome - 16	Hospitality - 40
People - 40	Feel - 31	Questions - 10	House - 23
Our - 22	With - 30	Hospitable - 8	Video - 19
Pastor - 14	Live - 15		Campus - 14
	Comfortable - 10		Service - 8
	Teaching - 7		

Interviews from The Rock Church

The researcher interviewed a former pastor from The Rock Church and two ministry leaders, and their spouses referred to in this project as Mr. and Mrs. Cook, Mr. and Mrs. Hill and Mr. Bell. The interviews were conducted off the site of The Rock Church and recorded and then transcribed for data analysis. Through these interviews, several ideas emerged. These ideas were then categorized as ministry concepts in either an identity, an attribute, a practice or a vehicle by which the characteristic of hospitality would be practiced within a video venue.

The ministry concepts mentioned by The Rock Church interviewees included repeated keywords captured in the recorded and transcribed interviews. The ministry concepts helped to frame the keywords in a way that allowed the researcher to identify principles.

Mr. and Mrs. Cook attended The Rock Church video venue at a multi-site 30 miles from the main campus. They shared their reasoning behind attending this specific video venue was due to their daughter's history of serving at the church. As they began attending, they began to become more involved with the different ministries. They shared this to explain their appeal of the church to be a pre-existing relationship and not the video venue per se. Their desire to be part of any church community hinged on the community itself and not a live preaching pastor. They felt connected to the people in the community at The Rock Church multi-site.

When asked to generally share their thoughts on the characteristic of hospitality, they both shared their unique connection to the topic. They had previously served on the church's hospitality team and had good experiences doing so. As they shared their experience, they began to speak of their perception of the need for a live preaching pastor in the service. Their feeling was that, as a church grows, the relationship to the preaching pastor changed. The larger the church the less expectation they had to be connected to the preaching pastor.

Their pastor, as they described, was the campus pastor, who was present week to week and interacting with them regularly. They went on to emphasize their definition of hospitality to be linked to the church community itself. The Cooks expressed they regularly saw the practice of hospitality applied in The Rock Church multi-site. They saw

hospitality in the different ministry teams of the church, expressing each team was meaningfully connecting to the people involved on the team.

When asked about their own regular practice of hospitality, the Cooks expressed they both were open and welcoming to people within the church service. They welcomed people into their home from different ministry teams and shared meals together regularly. When inviting people from these ministry teams to their homes, they encouraged people to bring people in the church or out of the church that needed to be connected in community. The Cooks used rallying points such as decorating the church and planning the stage design to invite others to their homes. They believed in doing ministry with others they were able to foster intimacy and get into discussions that led to spiritual growth and maturity.

The Cooks believed people the church community need to connect in small groups or ministry teams where these people could identify their spiritual gifts and then with others practice them so that they could see themselves as part of the larger community of the church. They believe helping people find their purpose in the Kingdom of God would lead to a deeper connection between others. Their definition of hospitality included this kind of ministry discovery and connection.

When asked to describe how people in their church practice hospitality, the Cooks identified the method followed by the hospitality team. They viewed the church to be hospitable as it helped people easily move from the parking lot to the auditorium, including how kids can find their classes and people could find a cup of coffee and a welcoming greeter. The Cooks described a six-point ministry process practiced by the

hospitality team. This process included greeters in the parking lot, in the different doorways leading into the church, the refreshment area and in the service itself.

When asked about how people spiritual grow at The Rock Church multi-site in the context of hospitality, the Cooks mentioned it was important for visitors and regular attendees to make a face-to-face contact with a ministry volunteer or staff member who would either give them a piece of paper or sit with them and discuss their spiritual life. They believed this to be practiced at their campus. The Cooks expressed that people attending this church and any other church needed to be able to connect with someone face-to-face as an essential part of their spiritual journey.

Mr. and Mrs. Hill had a similar reason for attending a Rock Church multi-site. They began attending as a result of being invited by someone they knew. Upon arriving to the church for the first time they were unaware of it being a video venue service. They were expecting a preaching pastor to be live, however, their experience was not affected by the video presentation of the preacher. The Hills primary concern with the church centered on the church's ability to offer a healthy community of people over the method of preaching practiced.

When asked to define how they defined the practice of hospitality, the Hills expressed hospitality as the practice of welcoming people into their homes and being welcomed into the community at large. They specifically illustrated this point by discussing the nature of sharing meals together over potluck dinners. They also expressed the desire to be invited over to someone's house after church or invited out to a meal with people from the church. They were clear to identify the need for a church community to

show hospitality, it must go beyond a handshake and smile from a ministry volunteer greeter.

When asked how The Rock Church multi-site practiced this, they explained they were warmly welcomed by people in the congregation. People at the church shook their hands and participated in small talk and some with deeper discussions. The Hills felt the church to be welcoming but did not feel it was anything above and beyond, they simply felt greeted and welcomed. In their initial time at The Rock Church multi-site, they did not receive any unique initiations out to lunch or over to someone's home other than that of the person they had previously knew.

When asked about how spiritual growth is connected to hospitality, the Hills expressed that the practice of hospitality should be seen as more of a part of an overall discipleship methodology. The Hills were not involved in a small group at The Rock Church multi-site and therefore did not experience the culture of small groups practiced. They did however express a desire to be in a community where people were hospitable to the point of getting to share issues of sin and repentance. They believed any church must be a place where people are investing in the lives of others tangibly and spiritually.

The Hills appreciated the accessibility of The Rock Church multi-site venue. They believed the smaller size church of 300 people or less seemed more approachable and less intimidating. They believed this to be a reason people were more willing to attend the multi-site. They again emphasized their connection to the church to be largely associated with pre-existing relationships. They also reiterated several times the need for the community to be healthy in its acceptance of visitors to the church. They believed this acceptance of outsiders to be an essential piece to the church's hospitality ministry.

One of things the Hills highlighted was the culture of the congregation of The Rock Church multi-site. They mentioned how people were eager to get each other a cup of coffee and help people find their way around the campus. They believed this to be an important feature of creating a welcoming community. They went on to describe how the people in their circles of relationships desired relationships over church programs or services. To the Hills, hospitality included people's need for relationships and the church community's ability to offer relationships.

Mr. Bell had attended The Rock Church main campus for some time before joining staff to launch a new multi-site venue as the pastor over small groups, events and setup and teardown. Mr. Bell described the need for multi-site to be able to provide a similar experience to that of the main campus. He mentioned the need for the main campus to set the tone for the existing multi-site campuses. He described this tone setting to be associated with the ministry practices, methodologies and strategies including the ministry of hospitality. He described the need for the pastors, staff and volunteer ministry leaders to practice hospitality for the purpose of connecting people to the multi-site as well as maintaining sense of connection to the main campus. Mr. Bell believed that when people visiting, or attending the multi-site campus, feel connected in a way that emulates what they might experience at the main campus, the chances that they would stay and become part of the multi-site community would be higher.

When asked about why people may choose a video venue service over a live preaching service, Mr. Bell mentioned one of the key issues being the driving distance from the church to the person's home. When people felt the distance to the main campus was too great, they were more willing to go to the multi-site venue. With this in mind,

Mr. Bell described the need for a healthy and connected community. People who are choosing to attend the live service or video venue would make the decision based on the community they lived in and the community they wanted to be part of. Bell mentioned that, in his experience, people were more willing to stay in their community and not drive to another community if that community welcomed them and made them feel a part of it.

Mr. Bell mentioned that people that attended The Rock Church main campus and those that attended the multi-site venues specifically chose The Rock Church because of its unique culture. Therefore, church culture was equally important for people choosing a video venue as the driving distance. According to Mr. Bell, The Rock Church's distinctive culture was why someone in a community would choose to be part of The Rock Church multi-site over choosing another church of equal driving distance.

When asked how he defined hospitality, Mr. Bell mentioned the need for a church community to be one that embraces people and welcomes them into the community. This would include greeting and how the greeter made the visitor or regular attendee feel. Bell referenced the ministry teams as a means of demonstrating the practice of hospitality in the community. His thought was that if the ministry teams are regularly practicing hospitality by being hospitable to members of the community and visitors the church would experience hospitality as a whole. According to Mr. Bell, the goal of hospitality is to welcome people in a way where the person can experience the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When asked about how hospitality was practiced at the multi-site venue, Bell remarked that the multi-site felt more at home than the main campus. His sense was that people were more willing to be hospitable at the multi-site due to the nature of the main campus' appeal for first time visitors. Bell mentioned that people at the multi-site

connected more easily with others due to its size and culture. The main campus had a regular attendance of multiple thousands of people whereas the multi-site was significantly smaller at about 300 people in regular attendance. The way the multi-site was able to achieve the more welcoming environment was its ability to incorporate mealtimes and regular events where people were able to get to know one another more easily. Another feature of the multi-site was that it was uniquely situated in a Hispanic dominant city. The cultural component of the specific ethnic group influenced the connection between people.

When asked about how often people practiced inviting others over to their homes, Bell mentioned an intentional effort to encourage folks to invite others over for meals at a frequency of every other month. This allowed for people to get to know one another should they desire to be connected in this manner. People were also encouraged to join small groups regularly where they would connect over a meal and share things they were learning from the video teaching as well as challenge one another to grow more deeply on their spiritual journey.

When asked how people spirituality grow in relation to how they experience hospitality, Bell mentioned that it was extremely important for people to be able to share life together in order to build the trust necessary to challenge each other spiritually. This challenging of one another included supporting one another through the good times and bad, laughing, crying, hugging and sharing different points of view regarding the teaching they were receiving. In this way, Bell identified hospitality to be a necessary piece of the discipleship process for believers on their spiritual journey.

Table 24 below shows the ministry concepts across the top and the repeated keywords from the interviews of the video venue attendees at The Rock Church.

Table 24. Keywords Associated with Interviews from Rock Church

Identity	Attribute	Practice	Vehicle
People - 108	With - 59	Question - 31	Church - 82
They - 104	Feel - 36	Go - 27	Hospitality - 50
We - 31	Think - 26	Invite - 16	Video - 25
Pastor - 10	Physical - 10	Looking - 12	Venue - 15
	Experience - 10	Team - 9	Home - 11
	Love - 7		Campus - 10
			Service - 10
			Christ - 9

Ministry Concepts

In analyzing the data gathered during the review of the biblical, historical, literary as well as the interviews of the different people who attended each of the three churches, including pastors, ministry leaders and attendees, the researcher discovered four ministry concepts which framed the key issues necessary for sustaining an hospitable church culture. The four ministry concepts are identity, attributes, practices and vehicles.

Table 25 below shows the ministry concepts across the top and the Top repeated keywords from the biblical study, literature review and the personal interviews from all three churches.

Table 25. Top Words from Biblical Study, Literature Review and Interviews

Identity	Attributes	Practices	Vehicles
People - 302	With - 155	Groups - 71	Church - 255
We - 184	Think - 155	Worship - 14	Hospitality - 153
Community - 24	Feel - 104	Music - 13	Video - 80

Identity

The key issues of identity that emerged from the biblical study, literature review and interviews were people, we and they. The word “people” refer to how people in the are central to the heart of God and therefore must be a high priority in how churches are motivated to minister to the. Throughout this study, the word “people” is mentioned several times with regard to both those who are outside the family of God, the Church, and those who are inside the family of God. Both groups are in need of the love of God which comes through the believers inside and outside the church.

The word “we” was identified in relation to how people see themselves inside the church community. “We” represents those that have experienced the love of God and desire to learn more about him as a result of that love. The church community identifies itself as “we” which speaks to an insider culture that is naturally developed in a family or team dynamic. There is a need for the insider group to feel connected to one another by practicing hospitality with each other in order for them to practice hospitality to the outsider.

The word “they” was referenced several times with regard to those outside the community of faith. The outsider does not know what happens inside the community of faith, the church, until they have come into it. There is a need for the insider to pay attention to those inside the community and it is equally important for the insider to pay attention to those outside the community. This is exemplified in the parable of the

Prodigal Son and the parable of the Good Samaritan. Each parable pays specific attention to the outsider with a desire to show them what those inside the church are experiencing.

Attributes

The key issues of attributes that emerged from the biblical study, literature review and interviews were with, heart and welcoming. The word “with” identified the understanding that a quality of being with others on the journey is an essential piece of hospitality. This was observed by the researcher in every aspect of this study including those being interviewed, the literature review and biblical study. Going on the journey with people is what it means to be “with” people, this is the idea of being present with others when interacting with them. People are unique and delicate, they must be treated with dignity and not as means to an end, specifically as a way to grow church attendance.

The attribute “heart” reflected the need for a presence of genuine motivation toward showing hospitality to people. Throughout this study, the motive of the heart was recognized as being one of high priority. The interviewees from all three churches identified the motive of hospitality an important part of what it means to welcome people into their faith community. “Heart” also references the heart of God toward those inside the church and to those outside the church. God’s heart is such that it desires people to experience the genuine love of God.

The word “welcoming” was identified as a high priority attribute within a faith community as it distinguishes a hospitable community from an inhospitable community. To be “welcoming” is to bring the outsider inside. A “welcoming” community exemplifies a place where people are brought into that specific community. This attribute

specifically identifies a hospitable environment and therefore must be evident in a community for is to sustain a culture of hospitality.

Practices

The key issues of practice that emerged from the biblical study, literature review and interviews were groups, learning and questions. The research showed that “groups” were an integral part of how churches facilitated a hospitable environment. Two groups were specifically identified in the way people experienced hospitality. The dominant group was the small group mechanism. Churches that had small group systems and were intentional to move people into them showed a stronger sense of connectedness which produced a sense of hospitality. The second category of group was that of the ministry team. Hospitality occurred in ministry teams as the teams connected with one another in a variety of ways.

The practice of “learning” showed to be of significant value in the way people experienced hospitality. Churches which had an educational process or intentional mechanism of instructing others toward engagement with one another showed healthier signs of a culture of hospitality. “Learning” is an essential part of what it means to connect with another human being. As people interact with one another they are learning about the other, in this learning of one another, people are sharing thoughts, feelings and physical exchanges such as hugs and handshakes. This is not to say that handshakes and hugs are “learning”, however, these practices are part of the broader picture of people “learning” about themselves and each other.

The ability to ask “questions” was an important practice shown in the literature review, biblical review and personal interviews. When someone has the freedom to ask

questions, they immediately feel set at ease and thereby welcomed which is a hospitable practice. The freedom given to another to ask questions is a practice of hospitality in that it is an intentional practice of allowing and cultivating a space where people feel free. Jesus welcomes the Lawyer to ask questions in the parable of the Good Samaritan and thereby shows him hospitality. People in churches need to feel as though they can ask questions of one another so that they might relax in that environment and entertain the possibility of joining this community.

Vehicles

The key vehicles that emerged from the biblical study, literature review and interviews were church, hospitality and community. The word “church” was the most repeated word associated with the topic of hospitality in this study. The primary reason for that is the church is where hospitality is carried out. This study focused on the effects of the video venue church model on Christian hospitality. The faith community that represents the church at EFCC, NCC and The Rock Church primarily practiced hospitality at the physical location of their respective churches. This suggests that churches should both capitalize on the opportunity for their people to experience hospitality with one another and train people to practice hospitality with one another off of the church campus.

The word “hospitality” was categorized as a vehicle because it facilitates hospitable behavior. When the researcher presented topic to those being interviewed, the interviewees immediately had some kind of context associated with it. This suggests people in churches, especially church leadership understand how important the vehicle of hospitality is toward bringing people into the church community. “Hospitality” is the act

of welcoming those inside the church and outside the church, home. The home referenced is a place of welcome, love, comfort, safety and security offered by God. In the parables of the Prodigal Son the father offers the prodigal this kind of space, this is also true in the parable of the Good Samaritan when the Samaritan offers safety and security to the stranger. Every human being on the planet is in need of the hospitality of God and when they experience it, they feel an immense sense of inclusion.

The word “community” is one of the more familiar words associated as a vehicle of hospitality because it expresses a group of people of like mindedness who are in some way in covenant relationship. “Community” is what many in the interviews expressed as a necessity for people to practice hospitality, meaning, hospitality is practiced in the context of community. As people search for a place to belong, communities have the unique ability to offer safe harbor for weary and searching souls.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Findings

The biblical study, literature review and personal interviews produced repeated keywords and themes which then were categorized as ministry concepts which then the researcher used to derive principles of healthy hospitality and considerations toward sustaining healthy hospitality.

The research of this study produced 20 different themes to consider with regard to principle findings and considerations. Of the 20 different emerging there were seven principles of healthy hospitality which stood out. They were, biblical hospitality must be seen through a Middle Eastern context, hospitality is a critical component toward Christian discipleship, community is critical toward developing healthy video church venues. hospitality is the context for spiritual growth, physical presence is an intrinsic part of hospitality. people still need interaction with people, and hospitality can be a vehicle for cultivating ethnic diversity.

First, biblical hospitality must be seen through a Middle Eastern context. This principle suggests those who desire to practice a biblical hospitality understand the hospitality depicted in the bible specifically as Middle Eastern. Middle Eastern hospitality is exemplified by a shared food and tea over deep and genuine discussion. There is a unique openness among the Middle Eastern people where questions are appropriate, and agreements and disagreements are shared with a smile. This kind of

hospitality cannot be contrived or used for the numeric gain of a church congregation. It is motivated by honor and inclusion.

Second, hospitality is a critical component of Christian discipleship. The Christian discipleship curriculums which can be found from a variety of publishers is lacking in the way of the incorporation of hospitality as a key component of discipleship. Disciples of Christ must seek to take on the character traits of Christ, hospitality being one of them.

Third, community is critical toward developing healthy video church venues. If a church is going to endeavor to create a multi-site video venue or one on their campus, they must think about the need for the development of community from the onset. The development of community must be at the forefront of the endeavor as it will become the fabric which can sustain the effort.

Fourth, hospitality is the context for spiritual growth. The practice of hospitality provides an atmosphere of safety, security and welcome. It is in this context people are able to begin their journey of faith and maturity. It is true that people grow when they undergo stress, however, this is still in the context of a perceived sense of inclusion. As people understand their place in the community of faith and the need for them to be part of the whole church, not just an isolated segment, they grow.

Fifth, physical presence is an intrinsic part of hospitality. This study shows that the presence of a pastor, teaching pastor or campus pastor, is necessary for people to feel they are welcomed. In several of the interviews people experienced the video venue service for the first time not knowing they were attending a service without a live preacher. The experience of the visitor in this scenario was not negatively impacted

because of the presence of the campus pastor, staff or ministry leader who was physically present at the venue.

Sixth, people still need interaction with people. Technology has come a long way and it will continue to advance into realms we may not understand at this point, however, at this point in human history, people still need people in order to thrive. The literature review revealed a deep need from human beings to be connected to one another in person.

Seventh, hospitality can be a vehicle for cultivating ethnic diversity. As the world changes and becomes more and more ethnically diverse, hospitality can be the vehicle which allows people of different cultural backgrounds to experience a sense of inclusion. This has the greatest opportunity in the church to unite people and create space for stronger and diverse congregations.

Table 26 below shows seven principles of healthy hospitality which has been identified from the repeated keywords, the biblical study, literature review and personal interviews from EFCC, NCC and The Rock Church.

Table 26. Seven Principles of Healthy Hospitality

Biblical hospitality must be seen in a Middle Eastern context.
Hospitality is a critical component toward Christian discipleship
Community is critical toward developing healthy video church venues
Hospitality is the context for spiritual growth
Physical presence is an intrinsic part of hospitality.
People still need interaction with people.
Hospitality can be a vehicle for cultivating ethnic diversity.

The research revealed seven different considerations regarding how to sustain healthy hospitality. They were, small groups skip a step of hospitality, accountability is harder to achieve in the video venue, intimacy is a precursor to spiritual growth,

hospitality is an answer to isolation, individualism is an allure for video church, hospitality is a form of pastoral care, and hospitality requires initiative.

First, small groups run the risk in skipping a step of hospitality. It was evident in the interviews that many churches run the risk of skipping the practice of hospitality in their churches if they move people into small groups too quickly. At North Coast Church one of the subjects in the interview said: “At North Coast, we're a large church but to make us seem small we want to drive you to small groups which is not only North Coast saying it, you hear it all over the place. So, I knew that was probably part of the DNA, I just knew that small groups would be driven home, and it was. As far as hospitality in our small group, it was kind of cool what they do well is share before you actually enter into a small group, they do a really good job of describing the demographics of that small group along with the geographic location.” This study showed that people who participated in small groups were more likely to be hospitable toward one another, however, they were less inclined to practice hospitality outside of their small groups and in the broader community of the church.

Second, accountability is harder to achieve in the video venue. Where larger churches offer a layer of anonymity to the congregant, the video venue church offers an additional layer of anonymity between the congregant and the preaching pastor. These layers of distance between congregants and the teaching pastor have the potential to allow people to adopt a Christian label and a church without being in an accountable relationship in the community. This may be true at the church with live preaching as well, however, the consideration here is that video venue being off the site of the main campus already provides a layer of distance between the congregant and preaching pastor.

Third, intimacy is a precursor to spiritual growth. People grow spiritual when they develop a sense of trust with God, their pastor, friends, campus pastors, small group leaders and participants. When the video venue develops a culture of openness, trust and closeness, people are more able to spiritually grow as opposed to a setting where people felt distant, disconnected and skeptical of the leadership.

Fourth, hospitality is an answer to isolation. Isolation and anxiety are on the rise with the advancement of technology. The literature review showed how technological advancements in internet streaming allows for high connectivity and the propagation of new kinds of groups, however, people are still in need of face to face contact in order to address their feelings of isolation. Internet groups and chatrooms cannot fully address the need for human interaction. People today have more access to information and communication than ever before in human history, yet they are more isolated and anxious. A hospitable culture and practice of hospitality in churches has the ability to combat isolation with genuine relationship motivated by a desire for the inclusion of others.

Fifth, individualism is an allure for video church. An interesting consideration that became clear in this study is how the nature of offering options to people using a variety of music preferences and in one case no music at all and just a video, showed that church goers (at least those in this study) sought an individualistic approach toward the selection of their church. They desired to be part of a known church body with a high-profile teaching pastor and yet had the ability to pick and choose aspects of their worship experience.

Sixth, hospitality is a form of pastoral care. Many of the interviews in this study shared how their expectation and experience of hospitality provided a sense of spiritual care, love and support. These are the attributes for pastoral care. If small groups and church cultures have a healthy environment of hospitality, the church begins to offer itself its own version of pastoral care.

Seventh, hospitality requires initiative. The act of hospitality begins somewhere. Somebody must reach out to somebody else, taking the risk of rejection and offering peace and inclusion. Training people in with this in mind or cultivating a culture of taking initiative will help to sustain a culture of hospitality.

Table 27 below shows seven considerations to sustain healthy hospitality, which has been identified from the repeated keywords, the biblical study, literature review and personal interviews from EFCC, NCC and The Rock Church.

Table 27. Seven Considerations to Sustain Healthy Hospitality

Small Groups skip a step of hospitality
Accountability is Harder to achieve in the video venue
Intimacy is a precursor to spiritual growth
Hospitality is an answer to isolation.
Individualism is an allure for video church
Hospitality is a form of pastoral care
Hospitality requires initiative.

Strengths of the Project

The research project was particularly strong in five ways. These strengths included the use of the grounded theory, studying pastors and ministry leaders and attendees from Emmanuel Faith Community Church, North Coast Church and The Rock Church, the biblical study, emphasizing creating and sustaining a culture hospitality, and focusing the work around the video venue church as represented in San Diego County.

One of the strengths of the research project was the use of the grounded theory. Through the review of the literature and interviews, the coding process, organizing the repeating ideas and words into ministry concepts, and categorizing these concepts enabled the researcher to create a theory. This approach worked well with the diversity of material being studied. Rather than proving a hypothesis, this approach enabled the researcher to generate a hypothesis.

Another strength of this study was the studying of pastors and ministry leaders from three different churches. All three churches had delightful people and wonderful leaders. This study took the time to highlight these pastors, staff, ministry leaders and congregants by discussing their experiences. Understanding the methods and reasons as to how and why pastors cultivated unique environments in their video venues was invaluable.

The biblical study was a strength of this study in that it went beyond a cursory understanding of two well-known parables. The parable of the Prodigal Son uncovered issues of hospitality and inhospitality inside and outside the house of the father. This allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of the insider and outsider concepts with regard to faith communities. The parable of the Good Samaritan revealed the nature of Jesus' hospitality toward the Lawyer in entertaining his questions. This allowed the researcher to understand how to develop principles from the interviewees when the word "questions" became one of the repeated keywords in the interviews.

The researcher believed that emphasizing creating and sustaining a culture of hospitality was a strength of this study. This is especially true in today's era of the decline of church attendance. People today have grown tired of church manipulation;

these people desire something genuine. Churches can provide a genuine sense of inclusion if they practice a hospitality motivated by love and learning those in attendance.

Finally, focusing the work around the video venue church as represented in San Diego County was a strength. The video venue was born in San Diego County and has spread across the country. The researcher had the opportunity to work with people from three different churches who have been implementing the video venue from 10-20 years.

Weaknesses in the Project

The project had several weaknesses. The primary weaknesses included the lack of diversity among those studied, not interviewing those in a non-video venue, starting as a project specifically to staff and volunteer ministry leaders, and a broad definition of the “hospitality” within the church. All are discussed below.

The researcher was able to interview different ethnic representatives from across all three churches; however, the researcher felt the diversity among those studied to be lacking. The video venues’ locations in different cities meant that there were different ethnic compositions of each church. The ability to interview a broader grouping of ethnic representation may have added value to the research.

The scope of this project was limited to studying three churches and those who attended the video venue or multi-site of their church. This study did not include interviewing non-video venue attendees nor assess the reasons as per why these attendees chose not to attend a video venue. Adding this study would have broadened the scope of research significantly in the way of observing how hospitality was practiced in non-video contexts and comparing the research to the video venue or multi-site research.

When the researcher set out to secure interviews, the researcher reached out to known associates who had access to people willing to be interviewed. This was a good idea in theory; however, the researcher's associates were typically connected to staff and key ministry volunteers who desired to protect their church from criticism. This view of the interview process could have skewed the results. The staff and ministry volunteers also came from a more involved starting point and vested interest, as opposed to that of a congregant who may have only attended for a short time.

Throughout the course of interviewing the different people from the three different churches, it became clear to the researcher that the definition of "hospitality" had been broadened from a sense of welcome and inclusion to a specific ministry program. The broadened definition of hospitality in the church needed to be qualified, perhaps by not using the word "hospitality" at all. The word "welcome" or "inclusion" or perhaps specifying the sharing of meals could have avoided some of the confusion between the practice of biblical hospitality and the hospitality ministry many churches have as programs.

Suggestions for Improvement

There are several possible improvements to this project. First, the researcher would begin by gaining support of senior leadership by offering access to beneficial data, a more in-depth study of the topic of hospitality with more sample interviews, more qualifying questions with a stricter sample group, additional study on why people choose video venue churches over tradition live preaching services, a greater understanding of the background of the interviewee, and an understanding of how the diverse ethnic composition of each group plays a role. The researcher was able to gain verbal support by

each of the pastors of the churches; however, the researcher believes that the project would have been better served if the senior leadership identified key staff to help provide access to congregants for interviews. It's possible that a promise of beneficial data would help with this.

Second, the researcher interviewed 15 subjects, which is substantial enough to yield results leading to principles which can be implemented. However, this could have been even more beneficial should it have consisted of a more in-depth study of the topic of hospitality with more sample interviews. More time spent on uncovering the practices and methods in San Diego and other parts of southern California and interviewing more people, would have yielded a broader sample of results.

While interviewing the people from all three churches, it became clear to the researcher that there was a need for more qualifying questions with a stricter sample group. The researcher adjusted the questions during the interview to help better define the topic, which was helpful both to the interviewee and the researcher. These adjusted questions would be helpful in future research in this area.

There is much to be said about video venues and contemporary church culture. While it was insightful to learn about from those sharing about their experience in a video venue, the researcher believes an additional study examining why people choose video venue churches over tradition live preaching services would add more context to the overall topic. This would require much more time and resources to accomplish but would add much needed context to the topic of why people choose a video venue over a live service.

It would also be helpful to consider the background of the interviewee. When the researcher set out to interview different people, the challenge at the time was simply to find willing participants. What became evident is the experience different people had in their church life. Some had large church backgrounds and expectations while others had small church backgrounds and experiences.

Finally, the researcher hypothesizes that it would have positively impacted this project to better understand of how the diverse ethnic composition of each church impacts the findings of this study. Each church had a unique demographic. The researcher believes that a better understanding people from different political, financial and ethnic backgrounds could have positively impacted this research.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PERSONAL REFLECTION

Personal Growth

Throughout the project, the researcher discovered areas where he desired to grow. The ministry concepts raised interesting questions in that there were many characteristics the researcher observed in his own life and ministry and had not actively practiced in his own church community. The researcher used this opportunity to develop a personal growth plan to apply the principles of creating and sustaining a culture of healthy hospitality, this would include the incorporations of the considerations for sustaining healthy hospitality within the church. This study aided the researcher in the understanding the benefits and pitfalls of the video venue church and how it may apply to his own church.

First, working with different churches was a great experience. The researcher has had the benefit and privilege of working with many other church pastors in the past and this experience enhanced his understanding of the need to continue to do so. There is great benefit to working with other church pastors and ministry leaders on a project such as this one. There are many different types of people in this world and each will gravitate to different cultures of church ministry. Each culture needs core essential practices such as teaching, music, children's ministry etc. It became very clear to the researcher that the ministry of cultivating an environment of hospitality is a core essential to a church. The culture of hospitality, beyond the ministry of handshaking and smiling greeters, is just as

important as the music and teaching at the church. This was evidenced by the many mentions of the interviewees on the importance of community.

Second, researching this topic allowed the researcher to make real time ministry assessment of his ministry. An ongoing study of this topic will allow the researcher to continue to create a culture of hospitality in his own church while being able to help other church ministries course correct as needed. The researcher plans on continuing this study later in the year as a means of developing a robust “culture of hospitality” action plan.

Third, the biblical study helped to inform the researcher’s own theology of hospitality. This research project can be used as a base of teaching others the biblical practices of hospitality. The use of the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan can be broken down into easy, memorable, and repeatable steps for instruction and application. The researcher will begin working on a training curriculum which will include a condensed portion of the biblical study of this research project.

Fourth, throughout the course of the study, the researcher recognized the need to begin building a greeter team immediately. The church the researcher serves in has had greeter teams in the past, but the team has dissipated. At the time the greeter team disbanded the researcher failed to recognize the importance of a robust team of people who greet visitors and regular attendees. Though a greeter team is not a solution to the need for a robust culture of hospitality, it does provide the necessary beginnings of a friendly church. The researcher plans on developing this team immediately.

Fifth, the researcher identified the need to create a culture of hospitality in his church. A culture of hospitality includes several different elements. Some of these elements were clearly outlined by some of the ministry leaders in the interviews. These

elements include good signage which helps people find their way around the campus, friendly greeters around the church at doors and along the paths people walk, coffee and other refreshments and most importantly, a congregation who owns the culture of inclusion. The people of the church must understand that they are the greatest asset of the church. They are the ones who have the ability to practice hospitality in the seating area, around the coffee area, in the children's area and in the parking lot. This kind of culture would energize the church and make it a place where people experience the love of. The researcher plans on working with key ministry leaders in order to put together a plan of action later this year as it will require planning and key training moments.

Sixth, the researcher learned the importance of inviting people from church over to his home. Currently, the researcher leads two small groups, one in his home and one at another church member's home. Still, there is a great need for the senior leadership in the church to practice the art of hospitality and model it to the congregation. Inviting others over for a meal and shared conversations in a casual environment can lend itself to organic training and the changing of the church's DNA. The researcher plans to identify key ministry leaders, asking them to have a meal at his house and then ask them to join him in the effort toward creating a culture of hospitality within the church.

Seventh, the keywords identified under the identity ministry concept clearly mention an intentional effort toward inviting those outside the faith community into the faith community without asking them to religiously convert. The researcher desires to practice this ministry concept by inviting members of his housing community into his home for a meal. There may be times members of the church may be present, at times,

however, the goal is to do the things that Jesus did and practice a culture of hospitality at home.

Suggestions for Further Research

Initially, the research project included a plan to survey each of the three congregations as well as personally interview 20 people from each church. The researcher and thesis advisor determined this to be too large of a project for the purpose of this study. That kind of study would still be beneficial to the church at large in Southern California and other parts of the United States that share a similar demographic.

Second, the researcher intends to conduct more research in order to determine more historical and contemporary ministry examples from more diverse settings demonstrating the healthy practices of hospitality. The goal would be to develop a teaching module which would be taught in churches via training seminars.

Third, specifically studying the biblical context for hospitality, especially with a consideration toward Middle Eastern hospitality in Israel and the surrounding countries could provide more rich understandings and applications for the American church leaders who desires to create and sustain healthy environments of hospitality.

Conclusion

The practice of hospitality is means to bridge the gap between people of different religions, creeds, ethnic, financial and social backgrounds. It is imperative for the church, its pastors, and ministry leaders, and congregants to adopt a personal and corporate culture of hospitality. As the church changes and technologically evolves, the ancient practice of creating a welcoming space for others must be present in order to share the love of Christ in a genuine and loving way. People today more than any time in history

are desperate for community and are finding it in the most obscure places. The church has the potential to be a powerful influence toward creating safe and welcoming home for weary souls.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Raw Data Excerpts from Face to Face Interviews**Emmanuel Faith Community Church***First Interview*

“Hospitality – it's a big, big topic because it's as simple as shaking somebody's hand at the door when they come in and greeting them. But it's a little different depending on the environment that you're in. When you're hospitable at your home, you're typically inviting some type of guest, whether it's friend, family or somebody unknown, into your household where you spend most of your time, right?”

“If you have no idea where to go and you're in this big parking lot and there's these big buildings around you, you don't feel very special. You walk in, you just go, okay I'm this little thing here. But now if you pull into a parking lot and somebody kind of shows you where to park and then greets you and says, oh yeah, you're going to be going over this way, whether it's a church, whether it's somewhere else, you already feel like, okay they see me, I'm wanted here. That's hospitality.”

“Open doors, friendly faces at the door of people who have different backgrounds who kind of look like the people walking in the door, and then when you walk in do you want a big, empty room that's white walls, blue carpet that's not friendly but very sterile. No way, because then they walk in, they go I don't know if I fit here. Or if you have greeters at the door for a Sunday service wearing tuxedos and not wearing whatever the congregation's wearing, like clothes-wise whether it's a button-up shirt or it's a T-shirt or hat, it doesn't matter.”

“The congregational care, the face, the eyes, the handshakes, the hugs, the show up to the hospital, all of that. So the church is doing that well under your leadership, your video venue has all the elements that says "you belong here, you are welcome here, we want you here, we care for you here," and you guys are saying all of that. So, the church provides the context for the audience, the congregation, Joe Schmoe who's maybe looking for Jesus, finds Jesus, or the Christian that's been a Christian for 30 years.”

“Because typically you have these structured environments that build relationships, but they build kind of sterile or safe relationships, which is fine, it's a good starter, but when you invite someone into your house, and so if you treat the church as your house this is going to be a little different right, but when you invite someone to your house you can clean the mess but if your fence fell down in the back yard you can't hide that, you can't just put up another wall and pretend it's not there.”

“Because to me hospitality is an exercise of faith. You could say is it a spiritual gift. Some people are really good at it, some people aren't. But I look at are you practicing no matter if you're good or not. If you have the resources to practice it,

whether you have a home or not, are you doing this? Are you willing to go outside of yourself to get to know other people? So, you can experience God work through community. Hospitality is a big part of that. So, if they're practicing, to me that's a healthy indicator saying okay, they're engaging with their Christian community.”

Second Interview

“Yeah, so I was looking for something younger, the video service was just taking the same preaching obviously from the main service, which was still good, and adding in from the seating to the lighting to the music, everything was more contemporary and modern. Yeah, so that was all focused on the younger demographic by making those adjustments to primarily those things – seating, lighting and music.”

“I think hospitality to me, and I guess maybe this comes more as a perspective that the church is a family, and so I think that when you are inviting somebody into church or when you have people that are within church that there should be more of a dynamic of a family gathering rather than just like an event that you go to of friends, but when you're there it's a community that's deeper than just acquaintances.”

“I think that people grow in their faith within the church because of hospitality because if going off of my definition of that family, that's how I see hospitality being is essentially treating one another like you would family, is you can only really continue to grow with somebody spiritually, emotionally, when you trust them and when there is some level of trust and just being comfortable with one another, and so if that isn't there, then there's not going to be any true growth and true depth within the community. Sure, there may still be people individually growing on their own, but as a community you're not going to grow if you aren't comfortable and if you don't trust people.”

“I would say small groups are very limited but some small group stuff, I guess the way my church expands on small groups is more or so classes, and so they essentially break up everybody into age or gender groups in order to kind of create these different like classes, you can be starting in elementary school all the way through 80- 90-year-olds you've got different age groups and different classes, like you kind of have your group to go to and then from there you can have your own kind of smaller community that's a little bit more welcoming and a little bit more hospitable.”

Third Interview

“Yeah, I think it had to do with the people that were there. The worship style is definitely more, I guess my heart worship language, but the knowing that the people that I want to be around, friends, were there. So, it seemed like the right choice.”

“I think even when the main campus had offered a similar style of worship; I still would have chosen to go to Resonate. I think because it was a similar age group and because I felt it was still more intimate and it was still, I like the lower lighting, I like the feeling of it being intimate rather than it being this big auditorium with bright lights and I feel like I can worship freely.”

“I think hospitality is more of a willingness and openness to bringing people into your life, whether it's your home or your circle or whatever that looks like. It's bringing people in to be a part of something. So that community that's developed at a video venue diving deeper with them in a smaller setting, going out to coffee, whatever that looks like, that's being hospitable. It doesn't just have to be in your home or at the church venue.”

“I think the video venue had some good parts of hospitality as far as commonality of maybe desire of experience, but the challenges would be feeling kind of separate from the body overall and that can produce like either a clicky feeling where you're not connected, or just a disconnected feeling that I would see people experience sometimes from the overall church.”

“I just think food goes with hospitality so often, and there's no food, there's no place to gather around that would make you linger longer even. I just know our last church we were at, right when you walked into the sanctuary there was just tables of food. And I just felt like it created this everyone knew you just go right there, and it creates a place to linger and you felt like welcome.”

“Yeah, I'm more inclined to invite people to church services because at home I tend to, like that's my sanctuary. So, I tend to, unless there's an event or something like that, something significant, I prefer to invite people to go to church with me. And then I go home, and I can relax and not have to prepare anything because that takes effort, because of season of life, just being tired and so definitely lacking in the "come to my home" area.”

“I think there's something about the Cheers song, go where everybody knows your name, there's truth behind that that you're missed if you're not there and they're always glad you came. But I've seen people do this, and let me just say, this is not my gift. I'm terrible at this, by the way, but there are people that I just love it that they know everyone's name that comes in and they know that they call them by name and they say something about them and there's something that like, I see some of the main greeters or the venue pastor kind of taking a personal interest.”

“Hospitality is discipleship. It may not be sitting down and doing a lesson with somebody which is what we kind of often think of discipleship is, but it's modeling Christian love and that welcoming attitude towards people that is hugely important, and it may only be a few minutes a week, but it really can...if that attitude of your wanted here gets someone to want to come back and stay a part of the community, it's in the community where we find Jesus...we find it in the spoken word also, we find Jesus, but we find Him in worship, but in the community is where he's identifying himself as this is the body of Christ.”

North Coast Church

First Interview

“But we started when we visited the church going to the live campus. When we went to Vista, we went to the live. We lived down there and we were checking out

churches in the area, and we just enjoyed the teaching and since the live was there, we thought we might as well go to live.”

“But a lot of churches are like that, it's a big room...our old church did that, it was like 2000 seats or whatever and after you're 10 rows back or whatever, like you're looking at the screen anyways.”

“I think the teaching was so powerful that it was really quickly forgotten that you were looking at a screen versus a pastor. Also, the campus, like we have Jay as a campus pastor for, you know we're going to be talking about hospitality and feeling like you're a part of a church, I think Jay and the staff their kind of make you feel that way. We did attend live recently, and it didn't feel any different, in fact watching Chris preaching in person, I actually forgot, oh that's the actual him. I just think the teaching is powerful and it's more important that it's good sound teaching versus how you hear it or are reviewing it.”

“The way the Bible talks about hospitality, it doesn't mean getting your house all cleaned up and having a party and inviting your friends, that's entertaining which is different. Hospitality is like having people over any time, it's the person who needs a place to stay that night or a meal or whatever, you just bring them in. Maybe it's not even at your house, but it's feeding people and helping people in general. I don't know how that plays out in church.”

“The way I look at hospitality is not just opening your home, but kind of opening up your life to help support others in your church and others in your community, and that might be like life group preparing your home and having it feel welcoming and comfortable, but it could also mean taking out a friend or a couple who needs time with adults or watching their kids so that they could go out or like planning a time when you can take them all out and spend time together so they can get some adult time.”

“And they really do their part, so they announce the areas to get connected so often that you know if you're not connected in the church it's because you haven't taken a step to get connected, it's not because the church hasn't provided it. Where I think a smaller church might feel opposite where if you're not connected it's because I'm sitting here and there's 50 of you guys talking to each other and nobody's talking to me.”

Second Interview

“And for me from the North Coast satellite video church standpoint which I was super hesitant to check out, I just didn't think a video would even with my role in tech and knowing that so many churches were moving towards that and I don't want to preach nine times a weekend, I want to show a video for some of the services and thinking that's just not personal, people are going to disconnect, you're going to lose people, but after experiencing it from a hospitality standpoint, I felt like it could be like I can go there and totally disconnect and not talk to anybody and leave, and it's not what I experienced. So, my experience at church didn't change a bit from my experience with a non-video.”

“Yeah, if it happens as a result of hospitality I think it's because there's a level of comfort with the generalization like where all these people are nice people and if that's genuine and hospitality is part of the DNA in that force, I think people pick up on that and therefore you build up chips. So then when you do have a conversation, I think they'd be more readily acceptable to that because they already see a realness if the hospitality is real.”

“So I think if it's sincere, like they're really pushing the coffee shop vibe in the foyer, as you're coming in, I think too like with leadership in the church, whoever it is, whether it's a worship leader or campus pastor in this case, children's director or pastor, but just them being available in between services and seeing their willingness to engage, I think that kind of speaks of hospitality from the church and again it can't come across as forced. So, if you have somebody that's just comfortable in their shoes, that happens to be a leader in the church, I think that comes across as genuine hospitality and therefore the level of comfort with the people that are experiencing that.”

“With regard to the last time I invited someone from church over to my house... Probably, well it's from our small group, so like three weeks ago. I thought your question was going to be when we invited somebody from our neighborhood to our church. Now that's a way longer time.”

“I was actually surprised of the level of intimacy and hospitality at a video driven church as far as the message goes, because it's my first exposure to it. I've obviously read about it, I've seen it, I've seen it done via access to stuff on the internet just from again being involved in the church on staff, so I wasn't naive to it but I just didn't think it could be done well to where you wouldn't necessarily miss a beat of that could have been something that would have been lacking. And it's quite like for me with even the campus pastor there just like he should be preaching, and I think they do a good job of that vetting whoever the campus pastor is like their theology always the people that I've heard so far have been just strong and genuine, and if that lends to that level of comfort in terms of the hospitality vibe at that venue, then maybe that's all part of it.”

The Rock Church

First Interview

“The church that we attended is the San Diego Rock Church but it's the San Marcos Campus, and the reason we chose to go there even to check it out is because our daughter is a sign language interpreter there, and so we knew someone there. And when we went to visit, for us it wasn't a matter of having a live pastor in front of us that made the difference, it was the community and the people at the church that were the important factor for us.”

“Interestingly enough, I was on the hospitality team, so I can incorporate what I think about the church in general, but I can also give you my ideas of being involved in the hospitality team. For me, it was the interaction of the people, meaning the people of the church, not necessarily the pastor, but the church as a whole. Because for me whether the pastor was there live or not, when you get to a certain size of church you really don't

have much interaction with that pastor anyway. And we do have a pastor that's the campus pastor, and so if there was a necessity for the role of the pastor, there was a physical person there. So, hospitality more has to do with interaction from people to people rather than a pastor with the people.”

“So the last time I invited people to my house was probably a month ago, and it was a creatives team, a group of people that were like-minded that were involved in different aspects of the church meeting the creative side, meaning both the physical venue of the church and if you want to call it decorations, but also the preparation for Christmas events and that kind of thing to actual physical doing the work, making cookies, making decorations, making whatever that was going to interact between the church and the people with a physical visual sense. And as far as from the church, it was all people like I said that were like-minded and interested and that was their gifting or talent. And we also invited each person to bring another person with them, so it made the group bigger and they did not have to be from the church, they just had to be like-minded with the sense of creativity so that was making our circle bigger, an inviting ministry.”

Second Interview

“I went to a church with a video service that was at the beach, so I was part of a ministry called Christian Surfers, and so I liked the idea of it being outdoors, I felt like the people that were non-Christians that I wanted to invite to church, it was like intimidating to invite somebody that wasn't a church person to a church with no walls. So, I felt like it was a lot less intimidating for them and they were more willing to go to church in that environment than they were to go to a church building.”

“Hospitality to me means that people are friendly and inviting and they know your name and they want to know about you beyond just the Sunday morning. These people are people that I'm still, even though I don't attend The Rock Church with, they're friends, they became friends of mine. So, some of my best friends were people that I met at that venue. Or who were introduced to me through that venue. So, I feel like hospitality is like the family aspect of it, like making church not just an institution but a family. So that we treat people like family, not as outsiders.”

“I mean you couldn't just walk up to the church and nobody talk to you. I feel like there's been churches that I walk into and the only person that might have said something to me was the person that I sat next to and the greeter. Like pretty much everybody was super intentional, anybody that was on the leadership team, the setup team, these microsites are very intentional on the greeting and sitting down with you, what do you need? Do you want some coffee? Can I get you some coffee? Then like, how did you end up coming here?”

“I think often people have misconceptions of the church or of Christianity because of their...I mean most people that are unchurched or non-Christian is because they've had some negative type of experience with that and normally it's judgmental or it's prejudice or something's happened, divorce, so these are people that are coming into a church

setting, I feel like they're not really looking for Jesus at that point, they're looking for a relationship, they're looking for people who will love on them.”

Third Interview

“Within the hospitality arena, what you're really trying to bring people into is a relationship with the church as a congregation, as a body, without the loss of a connectedness to that main campus. The thing that becomes the issue is are the people who are being presented as the leaders, hospitality people within the satellite, are they the same type of individuals and have the same heart as the folks at the main campus, and what you'll have there is either it will be the same or there will be discrepancies.”

“What we found out there was that folks didn't want to go the distance to the main campus, so our location was in San Ysidro and the main campus up in Point Loma, so people from south town were driving up to Point Loma to go to church. So, folks were finding that they were really spending a lot of gas. Then we had a lot of volunteers who were spending most of the day at the church, they just would miss out on a lot of stuff at home. That's one reason.”

“Hospitality means to me how I feel the embrace of the church upon the congregants, upon the people who are attending that church or parish or whatever. That would be how I'm greeted, how it is that I feel committed to the folks who are volunteers or part of the church, and then how they handle me with my individual need that I might have on top of what the Gospel is being spoken about within the church for that day. I mean it really means a whole lot because for me the atmosphere, the love of Christ, I mean really in reality that's what brings people into the Gospel and the faith is how they interact with the people of God. When that is exuded, when the grace and love of Christ Jesus is poured out of the people who are part of the church, it makes the Gospel that much more tangible.”

“Another thing that we did for the church, and I ran the portability ministry, so that was the set-up and the tear-down, is I actually would do breakfast once a month or so, I forget how many times I would do it a month, but it was pretty often where I would make breakfast, bacon, eggs, pancakes on the grill at church. I tried to do it regularly not only as a hospitable form of trying to take care of my team, but also to do that with the other teams that were within the church and for the congregants who would attend that little breakfast as well. So, I would try to do that pretty often. That's what I felt would be a great bonus for the people who were coming to the church.”

“So the hugs, the smiles, the laughs, the togetherness, even the sad time, crying, the sadness, I mean we went through a suicide at our church in the worship pastor and I mean that was very devastating but you know it's one of those things where if we weren't close enough, it would have caused a lot more failure. But in hospitality in regard to just the togetherness and the physical nature of it, that's actually massive in the development of faith because it's not just the head knowledge, it's actually the heart as well, and that heart and that touch, that physical kind of touch is incredibly important for the body of

Christ to show who we actually are besides knowing verses in scripture, you have to actually know it by how we act with one another.”

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