

GOD'S MISSION IN THE DIVERSE CITY: DISCOVERING AND OFFERING HOSPITALITY

John White

Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary, Kyiv, Ukraine

Introduction

Today's world is incredibly diverse and, paradoxically, is simultaneously growing closer together and further apart. Globalization is connecting the world like never before, and yet, conflicts continually arise over issues of diversity like racism, nationalism, and political and economic oppression. How should the church respond to these issues? How does God's mission relate to these difficult times? It is this paper's goal to show that diverse peoples are concentrated in cities, and as such, the church should focus its ministry there. There are many ways that God's mission has been and can be accomplished, but this paper will focus on the ministry of hospitality, which is particularly appropriate and effective in ministering to diverse peoples in cities.

Methodology

In order to understand the issue of diversity and the potential of hospitality as a means of ministry to diverse peoples, this paper will first explore the concepts and examples of diversity in the Bible, paying special attention to the concentrations of diverse peoples in cities. Then, the concept and ministry of hospitality in the Bible will be analyzed. Literature on the theology and history of diversity and hospitality in the Bible will be consulted for this analysis. Then, these biblical concepts will provide paradigms for hospitality ministry to diverse peoples today.

Further, today's modern context of diversity will be explored through the missiological literature. This exploration will include studying the location, needs, and important issues of diversity today. Then, ways to apply biblical principles of hospitality will be considered for this modern context of diversity, referring to literature on urban missions, hospitality, and community. In addition to developing concrete applications of biblical hospitality for the modern context, barriers to showing hospitality will be analyzed and ways to overcome these barriers proposed.

Biblical Foundations

The issues of diversity and hospitality are discussed in detail in the Bible. The context of cities in the Bible is vital to this discussion since both diversity and hospitality are especially relevant in urban settings.

Origins of Diversity in the Bible

Diversity originated from God and is a part of God's global creative and redemptive mission. The beginning of diversity is seen in Genesis 10 and 11 as the nations are mentioned for the first time. The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 should be read together with the Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11.¹ In Genesis 10, the different nations that developed after the Flood are described, whereas in Genesis 11, the reasons behind the different nations and languages' development are explained.

God is clearly behind the creation of languages and the dispersing of the people into different nations around the world according to Genesis 11:7-9. Many scholars believe that God wanted humans to spread across the earth and for cultures to differentiate, but the people of Babel built the tower in resistance to cultural diversity.² Regardless of the people's intentions, God carried out His goal of having humanity fill the earth (Genesis 1:28, 9:1). The new creative element is the introduction of different languages, which naturally led to the creation of different nations.

Thus, diversity came into the world, and this diversity would play an important role in God's plan for redemption. The disciples are called to share the Gospel with the nations (Matthew 24:14, 28:18-20). And in the end, there will be representatives from "every tribe and language and people and nation" that will be redeemed and praise God (Revelation 5:9-10). God loves all the diverse peoples of the world and redeems all equally (Galatians 3:28), and thus, God's people should love the diverse peoples of the world as well.

Places of Diversity: Cities

Next, it is important to consider where diversity exists. More than anywhere else, diversity can be found in cities – both in biblical times and today. Diversity, of course, started in the city of Babel. Cities tend to be defined by places with large, dense, and diverse populations.³ Jared Looney shared that, "Cities are mosaics of subcultures. This internal diversity is probably one of the key contrasts between urban and traditional societies."⁴

In biblical times, there were more than 200 cities and villages in Galilee alone. Palestine was busy with diverse peoples, classes, trade, government, and politics. As Ray Bakke put it, "There was far more to Galilee than shepherds, fields, and olive groves."⁵ And because of the urban aspects of Palestine, the apostles were prepared for ministry in the cities of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire, as well, had diverse cities, where multiple cultures met, and some of the densest cities in the history of the world.⁶

¹ Miles Custis, Douglas Mangum, and Wendy Widder, *Lexham Research Commentary, Genesis 1-11* (Marlton, NJ: Lexham Press, 2012).

² Timothy Keller, "A Theology of Cities," (February 23, 2016).

³ Keller, "Theology of Cities."

⁴ Jared Looney, *Crossroads of the Nations* (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2015), 185.

⁵ Ray Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 131.

⁶ Roger Greenway and Timothy Monsma, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 56; Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997).

So, if diversity is most prominent in cities, what is that diversity like? Cities act as magnets, drawing a diversity of people into them.⁷ Both the strongest people and the weakest are attracted to the city, looking for opportunities to grow or survive. Minorities come to the city, banding together for support. Refugees and displaced peoples come to the city, seeking a new life. Yet dreams do not always come true in cities, and the competition is fierce. And although the exposure to different kinds of people might lessen prejudice in some urbanites, in others the sins of racism and classism are magnified, and conflict and violence can sometimes result. On the other hand, diversity can lead to a magnification of creativity and opportunities in cities, which attract even more people to come.⁸

Mission to Diverse Cities in Biblical Times

Therefore, if the greatest diversity of people is in cities, and Christians are called to bring the Gospel to those people, how should the church engage diversity in the city? What is God's mission to the diverse peoples of the city? In biblical times, the apostles were given the Great Commission to share the Gospel with all nations, or all peoples. Examining the early church's ministry in the Book of Acts, it is clear that it focused on bringing the Gospel to the diverse cities of the Roman Empire.

"Foreign mission" was invented by the church in Antioch, but not when they sent out Paul and Barnabas. Instead, foreign mission began in Acts 11:20 when "some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus" and then in Acts 11:29 when the church decided "to send relief to the brothers living in Judea." The Antioch Church reached out to a diversity of peoples by first doing ministry to different ethnicities within its own city and then supporting the poor in another land.⁹ These steps of ministry to foreigners and financial support for the needy then naturally led to the sending out of missionaries (Paul and Barnabas) to do ministry in other cities.

Paul and his team of missionaries concentrated their ministry within diverse cities. Volker Rabens explained that:

Paul selected large cities such as Corinth and Ephesus for his mission. This choice brought with it abundant advantages for his work, ranging from a developed infrastructure to a breadth of job possibilities, to a great diversity of population. The latter point is significant in that it allowed Paul the possibility of attending the synagogue. These advantages served the purpose that people could hear the gospel, and eventually themselves become "partners in the gospel." This was a relational enterprise. For the apostle "mission" meant a reciprocal process in which he shared his life. This process manifested itself in the joint work with his coworkers with whom Paul traveled to the cities, in the work of urban industry as well as in the synagogues and houses in which Paul engaged

⁷ Bakke, *Theology as Big as the City*, 12.

⁸ Keller, "Theology of Cities."

⁹ Raymond Bakke, *A Biblical Word for an Urban World* (Valley Forge, PA: Board of International Ministries, American Baptist Churches, 2000), 71.

with his fellow citizens. With the values that Paul communicated in this lifestyle, his congregations had a solid basis from which to lead a life attractive to further inhabitants of the cities and provinces.¹⁰

Biblical Examples of Discovering Hospitality

How was the Gospel brought to the diverse peoples of the city in the New Testament? One important way was through discovering hospitality. This idea really came from Jesus who told His disciples to look for a “person of peace” who would offer them a place to stay for ministry (Matthew 10, Luke 10). Hospitality is really a measure of openness and compassion, and a non-Christian who offered it was a likely candidate to receive and embrace the Gospel.

In Jesus’ ministry, there are clear examples of a person of peace in Matthew (Matthew 9:9-12) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19). There are some other interesting cases to consider as well. The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) did not directly invite Jesus into her home (although some unnamed Samaritans *did* invite Jesus to stay with them), but the woman certainly served as a bridge for the Gospel to the people of her town. Jesus cast a demon named Legion out of a man, and the man asked to stay with Jesus, but when Jesus told him to go home, that man became a tremendous witness to Jesus’ power in the Decapolis (Mark 5:1-20). It is interesting to note that probably both the Samaritan woman and man in Decapolis were not in a position to invite Jesus into their home, but both had great influence, nevertheless. These are two examples of an unexpected person, a sinner, becoming a powerful influencer of society for the Gospel.

In contrast, there were also occasions when a Pharisee invited Jesus into his home (Luke 7:36-50, 14:1-24). These Pharisees and their friends, for the most part, appeared skeptical of Jesus, but God still used these invitations to bless (and in some cases, convict) those who heard Jesus. In each of these cases, it appeared that God was using these persons’ openness to Jesus to bring people to Him so that they could hear the Gospel. And thus, their hospitality brought diverse peoples to Christ.

In the apostles’ ministry, there are a number of examples of discovering hospitality as well. Paul found a person of peace and accepted hospitality from Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15), the jailer in Philippi (Acts 16:25-34), Titius Justus in Corinth (Acts 18:7), and Publius in Malta (Acts 28:7-10). There is also a good example in Peter’s ministry (Cornelius in Acts 10). In most of these cases, the person offering hospitality was converted to Christianity, but not all (e.g., there is no mention of the conversion of Publius in Malta), paralleling Jesus’ experience. Therefore, considering all of these examples, it is clear that God can provide hospitality through non-Christians and new Christians as a means of sharing the Gospel with diverse peoples. Christians should look for those who are open to provide hospitality that forms a bridge over which the Gospel can more smoothly enter a new community.

¹⁰ Volker Rabens, “Paul’s Mission Strategy in the Urban Landscape of the First-Century Roman Empire” in *The Urban World and the First Christians*, edited by Steve Walton, Paul Trebilco, and David Gill (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 122.

Biblical Examples of Offering Hospitality

In addition to discovering hospitality, Christians are also called to offer hospitality. There are many examples of this in Scripture and in the early church. Showing hospitality is one of the marks of a true Christian (Romans 12:13). Both 2 John and 3 John encourage Christian hospitality, and 3 John specifically points to how hospitality can support missionary work (vv. 5-8).

Hospitality is not limited to being only between Christians. Abraham's hospitality to strangers in Genesis 18-19 is a prime example, and it is referred to in Hebrews 13:2, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Bergquist and Crane referred to this as "a radical kind of hospitality," and further commented that the early church in modern day Turkey would give the poor, and especially the elderly poor, the best seats in church services.¹¹ And although one cannot find the word "refugee" in the Bible, believers are called to care for aliens, strangers, and sojourners (e.g., Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:18-19; Matthew 25:34-40).¹² Based on these texts, Christians should offer hospitality in order to bridge the gap to different and/or unfamiliar people, and especially to those in need. Hospitality is an important step towards friendship, reconciliation, and ultimately, redemption from God.

An important element of hospitality is humility, considering others "more significant" than oneself (Philippians 2:3). Christians must never look down upon those they serve, but instead strive to understand them and help them become all that God wants them to be. This is the spirit of hospitality that is needed. Hospitality should not be given as a charity, but as an honor.

House churches exemplified the value of hospitality. They provided a simple context, that of the household, that different cultures could understand and identify with.¹³ The New Testament paints a picture of many churches meeting in private homes.¹⁴ These churches provided a simple and non-threatening setting to offer hospitality.

Basil of Caesarea provides a great example of the early church's value of offering hospitality to diverse peoples. In addition to taking theological stands on important issues, Basil was very involved in ministry to the poor and needy. "As social, economic, and political issues plagued Caesarea, Basil's preaching was also characterized by a prophetic discourse in which he challenged the rich, poor, and political leaders to pursue righteousness."¹⁵ Basil confronted the sin of slavery as well.¹⁶ And practically speaking, Basil established a "basileas" or "new city." The basileas provided a home for the poor, including abandoned

¹¹ Linda Bergquist and Michael Crane, *City Shaped Churches: Planting Churches in a Global Era* (Skyforest, CA: Urban Loft Publishers, 2018), Kindle Location 3797.

¹² Chad Erlenborn, "Who Is My Neighbor?" in *A Heart for the City*, edited by John Fuder (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1999), 361-362.

¹³ Clive Craigen, "House Church: Historical and Current Trends" in *A Heart for the Community*, edited by John Fuder and Noel Castellanos (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 2013), 224.

¹⁴ Mark D. Bjelland, *Good Places for All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Press, 2019), Kindle Location 870.

¹⁵ Edward Smither, "Basil of Caesarea: An Early Christian Model of Urban Mission" in *Reaching the City: Reflections on Urban Mission in the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Gary Fujino, Timothy Sisk, and Tereso Casino (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2012), Kindle Location 1388.

¹⁶ Smither, "Basil of Caesarea," Kindle Location 1424.

children, a hospital for the sick, a place for the poor to work and develop job skills, food supplies for the needy, and a place for travelers from other regions. "Basil insisted that his disciples be able to show hospitality to minister to other believers but also as a means to witness to non-Christians."¹⁷

In addition, Christian hospitality saved the lives of many people in the Roman Empire during times of epidemics and great need. Rodney Stark described the work of the early church in detail:

The power of Christianity lay not in its promise of other-worldly compensations for suffering in this life, as has so often been proposed. No, the crucial change that took place in the third century was the rapidly spreading awareness of a faith that delivered potent antidotes to life's miseries here and now! The truly revolutionary aspect of Christianity lay in moral imperatives such as "*Love one's neighbor as oneself*," "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*," "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*," and "*When you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it unto me*." There were not just slogans. Members did nurse the sick, even during epidemics; they did support orphans, widows, the elderly, and the poor; they did concern themselves with the lot of slaves. In short, Christians created "a miniature welfare state in an empire which for the most part lacked social services." It was these *responses* to the long-standing misery of life in antiquity, not the onset of worse conditions, that were the "material" changes that inspired Christian growth. But these material benefits were entirely spiritual in origin. Support for this view comes from the continuing inability of pagan groups to meet this challenge.¹⁸

Thus, during the spread of epidemics in the Roman Empire, the early church offered hospitality and service to both Christians and non-Christians, to both family and strangers. This witness through hospitality was one of the major factors behind the growth of the early church.¹⁹ Surely, Christians should include mercy ministry and hospitality as important aspects of Christian mission today.

Mission through Hospitality in the Diverse City Today

Considering the weight of biblical evidence regarding God's mission to diverse peoples and the use of hospitality as a means of ministry, this paper will now focus on understanding the needs of diverse peoples today and ways to minister to them through hospitality. There are certainly other effective means of ministry as well, but considering the exclusion that diverse peoples often face, it is the purpose of this paper to focus on a ministry of inclusion which takes various forms of hospitality. Applying the biblical principles discussed earlier, the methods of discovering and offering hospitality will be considered in the modern context. Developing these methods further, some more specific kinds of hospitality will be explored as well as some barriers that often hinder Christians from offering hospitality today.

¹⁷ Smither, "Basil of Caesarea," Kindle Location 1492.

¹⁸ Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 30-31.

¹⁹ Stark, *Rise of Christianity*.

Diverse Cities Today

It makes just as much sense today to focus on reaching the diverse peoples of the world in cities as it did during the early church. Urbanization has grown alongside globalization, as 55% of the world lives in cities today and it is expected that 68% of the world population will live in cities by 2050.²⁰ In Ukraine, 71.1% of the population live in cities. Ukraine has nearly 5 million immigrants and nearly 1.4 million internally displaced people as well.²¹ Different peoples are drawn together in the dense cities, and in this lies an opportunity for the church. As Roger Greenway expressed, “Cities are the new frontier of Christian missions. Because of their size, influence, diversity and needs, cities present enormous challenges. To neglect cities would be a strategic mistake because, as cities go, the world goes.”²²

More and more of unreached peoples, peoples who have little to no opportunity to hear the Gospel, are leaving their villages and homelands to enter cities, and there they are often more open to hear the Gospel. As Timothy Keller observed:

In the village little changes and people live in very stable environments. Thus they are suspicious of any major change. Because of the diversity and intensity of the cities, urbanites are much more open to radically new ideas – like the gospel! Because they are surrounded by so many people like and unlike themselves (see above), and so much more mobile and subject to change, urbanites are far more open to change/conversion than any other kind of resident. They may have moved to the city out of a searching restlessness. But even if not, once they get to the city, the pressure and diversity makes even the most traditional and hostile people open to the gospel.²³

So, how can the church engage the diverse city in an effective way? Of course, there are many strategies that are used today that are biblical and are quite effective in appropriate contexts. However, it is the purpose of this paper to address the two methods described above: discovering hospitality and offering hospitality.

Discovering Hospitality Today

One popular and successful mission strategy today is called disciple-making movements, or DMM. One prominent feature of DMM is seeking out a person of peace as someone who will show hospitality and function as a bridge to reach a new community of people. Essentially, this strategy strives to follow the biblical examples of Jesus and Paul, as described above, in order to start ministry among a new group of people. Today, “In over 600 areas and peoples, disciples are making disciples and churches are planting churches faster than the growth in population.”²⁴ This method

²⁰ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects” (May 16, 2018).

²¹ MOM Mihratsiia, *Mihratsiia v Ukraïni 2019: Tsyfry i Fakty*. (Kyiv: Fond Rozvytku MOM, 2019), 3, 6, 10.

²² Roger S. Greenway, “The Challenge of the Cities” in *Perspectives, Fourth Edition*, edited by Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 559.

²³ Keller, “Theology of Cities.”

²⁴ Rick Wood, “Are You In?” in *24:14: A Testimony to All Peoples*, edited by Dave Coles and Stan Parks (Spring, TX: Independently Published, 2019), 5.

has been successful among many different ethnic and religious groups in addition to doing ministry in slums.²⁵

The DMM method generally begins with prayer, asking God to lead the minister to a person of peace that is interested in the Gospel and open to helping share the Gospel with those he or she knows. Discovering a person of peace is often “more of a natural approach of discipleship that gets you into people’s homes and lives.”²⁶ Sometimes such people can be found simply through offering to pray for them and their needs as one gets to know the people in a new area. Often spiritual seekers respond to offers of prayer.²⁷

A person of peace is native to the area and the people, and thus, has many personal connections. Typically, “People of peace are key people who are spiritually open, have good reputations and have influence in the community.”²⁸ A person of peace can therefore immediately share the Gospel with many more people than a missionary or outside minister could. Furthermore, the long-term prospects of the person of peace are better than a missionary or outside minister since he or she is more rooted and contextualized to the area and people.²⁹

So, practically speaking, a minister of the Gospel should ask, who in my community is hospitable? It is very possible that this person is someone that God is working through. People who are hospitable typically have large networks of family and/or friends and they are skilled at bringing people together. And if this hospitable person will host meetings for Christian ministers to meet with others regularly, that opens up the opportunity to form deep friendships.³⁰ Jerry Trousdale further elaborates on this idea, specifically in the Muslim context:

The reality is that people of peace are God’s pre-positioned agents to bridge the gospel to their family, their friends, or their workplace. This element of Jesus’ strategy for engaging lostness is perhaps one of the most significant principles, and also one of the most neglected principles, for entering unreached people groups. Obeying Jesus’ commands on this (and note that His words are commands, not suggestions) overcomes historic barriers such as: how to gain access into highly restricted Muslim areas of the world through a home that God has already prepared to welcome and protect you, which will replicate quickly in that context; how to overcome cultural barriers and the challenges of contextualizing the gospel, during which the household of peace becomes an embryonic church that learns to discover from God’s Word how to overcome these barriers; and many other challenges that we will see later.³¹

²⁵ Craig Greenfield and Nayhouy Greenfield, “Incarnational: The First Sign” in *Living Mission: The Vision and Voices of New Friars*, edited by Scott Bessenecker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 41.

²⁶ Dave Arnold and Angie Arnold, “Hospitality in the City: Reaching the Nations Through Neighborliness” in *A Heart for the Community*, edited by John Fuder and Noel Castellanos (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 2013), 237.

²⁷ Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love with Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 191.

²⁸ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come. Revised and Updated* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 232.

²⁹ Greenfield, “Incarnational,” 41.

³⁰ Jay Pathak and David Runyon, *The Art of Neighboring* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 147-148.

³¹ Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements*, 90-91.

After a person of peace is found, that person's hospitality can serve as a means to start a Bible study. DMMs use "Discovery Bible Studies" in which the study also offers a kind of "hospitality." Instead of preaching or teaching to the seekers that come, the minister tries to "help the group to discover by themselves and to obey the truths in the Bible."³² The person of peace offers the place and relationship connections, and the minister offers the Bible and its truth, and each person invited can freely take and accept what they want to, without coercion.

A number of movements use methods similar to DMM today, including Church Planting Movements, Discovery, Four Fields, Rapidly Advancing Discipleship, Training for Trainers, and Zume. There are also many hybrids of these approaches, including some developed indigenously.³³ These movements or methods tend to be more effective working within one cultural group or population segment, and usually among the unreached, where no church exists.³⁴ Therefore, this method may have its limitations in urban settings where many cultures and population segments are present.

Barriers to Offering Hospitality Today

Before addressing ways that Christians can effectively offer hospitality to bless different kinds of people today, there are some barriers to offering hospitality that many Christians need to address. These barriers may be consciously felt or be simply subconscious mentalities that need to be faced and overcome. These barriers have been organized into four "mentalities," adapting and applying various ideas from the Bible and literature on the ministry of hospitality.³⁵

First, some Christians have a "Fortress Mentality." They are afraid of the dangers of the world, and that if someone got into their homes, that person would steal or damage their valuable possessions, or, even worse, hurt or kill them. This, of course, greatly discourages hospitality. These Christians are like the rich young man whom Jesus challenged to give up his possessions (Mark 10:17-25).³⁶ Christians are called to yield their possessions to God, realizing that all they have are gifts from God (James 1:17). Christians should also trust Christ for their ultimate safety and well-being (Psalm 27:1), understanding that many of the people who need hospitality face far greater dangers all the time, and that Christians should focus on loving them, not being threatened by them.

Secondly, some Christians have a "Glass House Mentality." They feel that they need time to rest and restore themselves from the pressures of the outside world,³⁷ so they look to escape from people and "soak in the sun" to recharge. They are afraid that if people came in, they would shatter the glass of their home of refuge. They fear burnout and

³² Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements*, 192.

³³ Stan Parks, "What is a CPM?" in *24:14: A Testimony to All Peoples*, edited by Dave Coles and Stan Parks (Spring, TX: Independently Published, 2019), 36.

³⁴ Parks, "What is a CPM?" 41-42.

³⁵ See David Anderson, "Unleashing the Family: Safe Families for Vulnerable Children (Lydia Home)" in *A Heart for the Community*, edited by John Fuder and Noel Castellanos (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 2013), 425-438; Arnold, "Hospitality in the City," 233-246; Pathak, *Art of Neighboring*.

³⁶ Anderson, "Unleashing the Family," 432-434.

³⁷ Anderson, "Unleashing the Family," 434.

their boundaries being overwhelmed. Perhaps they even dislike some of their neighbors,³⁸ and do not want them even getting close enough to smudge the glass of their home. To overcome this mentality, Christians should acknowledge that true rest and rejuvenation come only from the Lord (Psalm 71:20-21), and that they cannot completely escape from the world. It is reasonable to set boundaries – both outside and within the home, but boundaries should not be an excuse to never show hospitality, for God wants us to live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18), and even to love our enemies (Romans 12:20-21). As Jay Pathak and David Runyon put it:

Neighboring is not always about being happy and comfortable; it's about allowing God to polish off rough edges. Maturity happens when you put yourself in the place God wants you. Don't run because there's adversity. Maybe God wants to use the adversity to make you more like Jesus.³⁹

Thirdly, some Christians have a “Potemkin Village Mentality.” They are able to project a reasonably good image publicly, but they are afraid that if people came inside their home and got to know them better, all of their flaws and sins would be seen and they would be rejected. But in reality, all people are flawed and sinful, and people need one another's strengths to help them when they are weak (1 Corinthians 12:12-26) – and each person needs God's strength most of all (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Another aspect of this mentality is that some Christians fear that they have nothing valuable to offer others, and so, they never try.⁴⁰ They just try to keep up appearances without really risking opening up and offering hospitality. The solution to this problem is to realize that God gives gifts to all His children (Matthew 7:11; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11). Some Christians may not have gifts that are listed in the Bible, but instead are gifted in areas like cooking, cleaning, making repairs, telling stories, or listening (just to name a few possibilities). All of these examples can be valuable gifts if shared with others. The only way that Christians can truly see their gifts is by using them and giving them to others.

When you give away what you have, Jesus will give you more to give. Even if what you have isn't enough to solve the whole problem, just do what you can in the moment—give it anyway. Trust that God will fill you up with enough to supply the need that's right in front of you, and assume he will do it again for the next need as well. If you don't give, you don't get a chance to see God do a miracle.⁴¹

Finally, many Christians have a “Treadmill Mentality.” These Christians do not offer hospitality because they are just too busy in all of their activities to open their home to others.⁴² All they can do is just keep up their current activities – there is no room for hospitality. Many believe that time is the number one barrier against hospitality.⁴³ Just

³⁸ Pathak, *Art of Neighboring*, 139, 161.

³⁹ Pathak, *Art of Neighboring*, 168.

⁴⁰ Arnold, “Hospitality in the City,” 243.

⁴¹ Pathak, *Art of Neighboring*, 89-90.

⁴² Anderson, “Unleashing the Family,” 434.

⁴³ Anderson, “Unleashing the Family,” 434; Arnold, “Hospitality in the City,” 243; Pathak, *Art of Neighboring*, 43.

like possessions, all of our time belongs to God, who has appointed the number of our days (Job 14:5).

There are three principles for overcoming this “Treadmill Mentality.” First is the issue of priorities. How often do Christians follow God’s priorities and value the good of others over their own? Second, Christians need to eliminate (or minimize) “time stealers,” which vary from person to person, but some examples are watching TV, surfing the web, and playing video games. Finally, Christians need to be “interruptible” or sometimes “inconvenienced” by others. Christians need to develop flexibility and compassion.⁴⁴ Are Christians willing to sacrifice for the sake of others and consider them more important than themselves (Philippians 2:4)? Christians (in ministry, especially) need to invest some of their time to show true hospitality.

Offering Hospitality Today

Following biblical teaching and example, Christians are called to offer hospitality. Hospitality is not offered in order to change people, but to offer people a space in which they can choose to change.⁴⁵ And perhaps because the Gospel is lived through hospitality and not directly preached, hospitality ministry is particularly effective in ministering to different kinds of people, even those from other religions. Dave and Angie Arnold put it well when they remarked that, “Hospitality is universal and crosses any language or cultural barrier.”⁴⁶

This paper will specifically focus on three ways that Christians can offer hospitality to diverse peoples. Hospitality can be offered through ministry to immigrants, through ministry to the poor and needy, and by building Christian communities that are diverse, accepting, and proactive in the larger community.

Offering Hospitality to Immigrants

Immigrants have a unique set of needs. Unlike people native to the country and the city, immigrants

confront numerous challenges and an uphill battle to establish themselves and their families in their new environment. They may experience culture shock, an anti-immigrant bias, or even racism upon arriving in their new city. Finding a welcoming community instead of rejection expresses a love and compassion which embodies the heart of the Gospel, echoing Jesus’s teaching: “I was a stranger, and you invited me in” (Mt. 25:35). Whatever an immigrant’s motivation for connecting with a Christian church, an accepted invitation to church opens a window of opportunity to express the love of Christ.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Pathak, *Art of Neighboring*, 34, 54-55.

⁴⁵ John McKnight and Peter Block, *The Abundant Community* (San Francisco, CA: Barrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2010), 113.

⁴⁶ Arnold, “Hospitality in the City,” 242.

⁴⁷ Jared Looney and Seth Bouchelle, *Mosaic: A Ministry Handbook for a Globalizing World* (Skyforest, CA: Urban Loft Publishers, 2017), 108.

How can Christians show hospitality to immigrants? Churches can create “hospitable spaces outside of their church facility”⁴⁸ for doing ministry with immigrants. Some examples of these could be a community space like a tearoom or a library. Churches can rent nonreligious spaces for classes to learn the local language, tutoring for citizenship, legal help, or other kinds of service for immigrants.⁴⁹ Immigrants often need more than food and shelter; they need skills in order to survive in a new culture and get work. They also need friendship and community which they lost, at least in part, upon moving to a new country and/or city. Learning people’s stories can make a big difference.⁵⁰

Churches, parachurch groups, and mission organizations can also establish community centers, which are a great way to minister to different kinds of people that are new to the city, especially to immigrants, and offer a place for community and the learning of different kinds of skills. These examples of hospitality can be a great blessing to immigrants and provide a concrete example of God’s love toward the stranger, alien, and sojourner.

Offering Hospitality to the Poor and Needy

The poor and needy are often set off from the rest of society, considered as “other,” and even outcast or oppressed. Jesus “enters into the divided spaces in order to redeem them. He creates new possibilities for hope and transformation in relationships that have been marked by exclusion and marginalization.”⁵¹ Similarly, Christians can enter into the community of the poor in order to serve them and invite them into their homes and community to offer them hospitality.

People in poor urban neighborhoods often face danger on the streets, and so, they tend to live closed lives with “thick locks on their doors and hearts.”⁵² Poverty is not just a lack of economic resources, but is a lack of healthy relationships between people, within families, and within communities. The under-resourced need both spiritual and relational restoration.⁵³ That is why hospitality ministry is so needed, in order to offer both relationships and the good news of the Gospel. Of course, there is a risk to the minister who lives in poor urban neighborhoods and offers hospitality, but Jesus took risks as well.⁵⁴

It is important to live within and offer hospitality from within the community of the poor. The minister’s lifestyle can serve as a barrier between him or herself and the poor if he or she lives significantly differently or better than the poor.⁵⁵ And in many ways, the best way to incarnationally minister to the poor is to simply see them regularly, having space and activities in common. This fact dictates living nearby, and furthermore, living at a similar economic level with the poor. Even if the minister has less to offer, offering it from within the community can often make a bigger impact.

⁴⁸ Looney, *Crossroads of the Nations*, 285.

⁴⁹ Looney, *Crossroads of the Nations*, 285.

⁵⁰ Arnold, “Hospitality in the City,” 242.

⁵¹ Colin Smith, *Mind the Gap: Reflections from Luke’s Gospel on the Divided City* (Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2015), 122.

⁵² Doug Logan, *On the Block* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2016), 161.

⁵³ Bryant Myers, *Walking with the Poor. Revised and Expanded Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), xxiv.

⁵⁴ Logan, *On the Block*, 161.

⁵⁵ Smith, *Mind the Gap*, 151.

Colin Smith referred to this incarnational living and ministry as “radical inclusion” and “subversive hospitality.” Smith used these terms because Jesus was radical about including those whom society excluded and using hospitality in ways that were subversive of cultural norms. For example, Jesus allowed a sinful woman to anoint Him and declared that she was forgiven (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus washed the feet of His disciples as well (John 13:1-20). Using these new standards, Jesus created a new community around Himself.⁵⁶ And regardless of the different people that are ministered to, a new community is necessary to offer true and holistic Christian hospitality.

Building Hospitable Christian Communities

Christian community should go beyond just showing hospitality at home. As Mark Bjelland explained, “We need neighborhoods, zoning codes, housing systems, and public spaces that are welcoming to all.”⁵⁷ Christians need to live differently and positively influence the community that they live in. Christians are called to be good neighbors in every way possible.⁵⁸ Thus, Christians should be known for their hospitality, caring for their neighbors, and especially those with needs. Christians should also be known for their integrity, their generosity, their sympathy, their helpfulness, and their desire to forgive and reconcile.⁵⁹ All of these things make for a welcoming, hospitable community.

The idea of Christian hospitality affecting the whole community echoes the call that God made to Jeremiah when the Israelites were exiled in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:4-7). The Israelites were told to join with the larger community, learning its culture, and learning to be a blessing to the people and the city.⁶⁰ The Babylonians were, by definition, “other.” They were the people who had conquered Israel and displaced them from the land that they loved. Any yet, Israel was called by God to learn from the Babylonians, adapt to live with them, and bless them. This is hospitality on a community level.

Like the Israelites in Babylon, Christian ministers should actually join the community and live with people that are different than them. Christians can then seek the community’s transformation from the inside. They must learn to live incarnationally and contextualize their ministry. A person can never truly understand a community until he or she feels the need for help from others within it. Christians should stop thinking in terms of “outreach” and instead focus on mutual community.⁶¹ Only then can Christians truly love their neighbors, understand them, and really bless them through hospitality.

David Leong explains the important role of hospitality in developing a Christian community this way:

Christian community requires faithful imagination and creative perseverance to realize, but when we sit together in fellowship at the Table of hospitality, where all are truly welcome, we are overwhelmed with the reconciling love of God,

⁵⁶ Smith, *Mind the Gap*, 124, 143.

⁵⁷ Bjelland, *Good Places for All*, Kindle Location 909.

⁵⁸ Pathak, *Art of Neighboring*, 22.

⁵⁹ Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 283.

⁶⁰ Jonathan Brooks, *Church Forsaken: Practicing Presence in Neglected Neighborhoods* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2018), Kindle Location 1726.

⁶¹ Brooks, *Church Forsaken*, Kindle Locations 1740, 1755.

which draws near to us and our neighbors. This doesn't happen in an instant, and the path of life together obviously gets rocky at times. Yet our world desperately needs those who are willing to travel this journey together.⁶²

A hospitable Christian community can make a difference not just among immigrants and among the poor and needy, but among any group that feels it is "other." One such group is postmodern people. They tend to feel alone, without hope, and without meaning. They need to be invited in a welcoming, inclusive way, not feeling judged.⁶³ They, and all people that feel excluded, need a hospitable community.

Conclusion

Diverse people can be found in cities, and Christians are called to minister to them. Hospitality is a way to live out the Gospel and to reflect a loving and holistic Christian community. Hospitality can form an effective bridge for the Gospel, both when it is discovered in the larger community and when it is offered to it.

Discovering and offering hospitality are not necessarily the quickest ways to share the Gospel, but they are two of the best ways to show diverse people God's love and make a difference over the long term. Hospitality is both a biblical and effective ministry to immigrants and to the needy. Hospitality can help build a Christian community that can attract and minister to those in society that feel excluded.

Ukraine and other formerly socialist countries may have less diversity than the West due to the influences of the Soviet Union, but diversity exists and is growing, especially as cities themselves grow.⁶⁴ The methods presented in this paper of discovering hospitality, offering hospitality, and developing hospitable Christian communities can be effective in ministering to the needs of this growing diverse urban population. Hospitality ministries can build bridges for the Gospel to spread throughout cities in Ukraine and across Eurasia.

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⁶² David Leong, *Race and Place: How Urban Geography Shapes the Journey to Reconciliation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2017), Kindle Location 2564.

⁶³ Michael Rynkiewicz, *Soul, Self, and Society: A Postmodern Anthropology for Mission in a Postcolonial World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 248.

⁶⁴ R. Antony French, *Plans, Pragmatism & People: The Legacy of Soviet Planning for Today's Cities* (London, UK: UCL Press, 1995), 203; Michael Harloe, "Cities in the Transition," in *Cities After Socialism: Urban and Regional Change and Conflict in Post-Socialist Societies*, edited by Gregory Andrusz, Michael Harloe, and Ivan Szelenyi (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 26.

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John White

God's Mission in the Diverse City: Discovering and Offering Hospitality

Abstract: This paper focuses on ways to minister to diverse peoples in cities through hospitality. After surveying the Bible to better understand the origins and character of diversity, biblical examples of discovering and offering hospitality are explored. These ideas are then applied to a modern context with concrete suggestions for discovering and offering hospitality as ways to minister to diverse urban peoples. Barriers to offering hospitality are also analyzed and suggestions for overcoming them are given. Discovering and offering hospitality are both biblical and effective means for ministry to urban immigrants and the urban poor as well as a key component to developing Christian community that can bless and love the surrounding community. Churches, parachurch organizations, and mission organizations should take note of the importance of hospitality ministry among diverse peoples in cities.

Key Words: City, Community, Disciple Making Movement (DMM), Diversity, Hospitality, Immigrants, Needy, Person of Peace, Poor, Urban.

Джон Уайт

Божа місія в різноманітному місті: відкриваючи та пропонуючи гостинність

Анотація: Ця стаття зосереджує увагу на шляхах служіння різним людям у містах за допомогою гостинності. Для кращого розуміння витоків та характеру різноманітності, досліджуються біблійні приклади виявлення та надання гостинності. Потім ці ідеї застосовуються до сучасного контексту з конкретними пропозиціями щодо виявлення та надання гостинності як способів служіння різноманітним людям у містах. Також аналізуються бар'єри для надання гостинності та даються пропозиції щодо їх подолання. Виявлення гостинності є біблійним ефективним засобом служіння міським іммігрантам та маргінальним групам, а також ключовим компонентом розвитку християнської спільноти, здатної благословляти та любити оточуюче суспільство. Церкви, парацерковні організації та місійні організації повинні враховувати важливість служіння гостинності серед різних народів міст.

Ключові слова: місто, громада, рух учнівства, різноманітність, гостинність, іммігранти, потреба, людина миру, бідні верстви населення, місто.

John White, Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies, Director of the Center for Missiological Studies and Practice at Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary

Джон Уайт, доктор філософії з міжкультурних досліджень, керівник навчальних програм Української євангельської теологічної семінарії із місіології

jewwhite77@gmail.com

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