



## Mission & Engagement -Lesson 2

### Podcast by Jen Sanders

**0:00:00.3** Hello, this is Jen Sanders, Director of Care and Connection at Redeemer Church here with our podcast on the practices of the Christian life, which it's like we are gardeners going out to our plots of land and putting our stakes in the ground. The few times I planted a garden and set a trellis into the ground, I was both skeptical and hopeful. I wondered if anything would come from this little plant or this seed that I was planting. I knew I could not make it grow, and in fact, I did a lot of things that might actually hurt its growth, because I would forget to water it or the soil was not as healthy as it could be.

**0:01:03.1** But nonetheless, I would attempt to plant and put my stake in the ground. And this might be how you feel as you go about these practices in our life as we try to follow Jesus, we put our trellis in the ground and we look to him sometimes or maybe a lot of times, skeptically, can I grow? Can I change? And the reality is we are limited, we are dependent on his spirit, on the sun, to grow us. And yet we are called through his word to practice and to live out these commands. So as we follow him in these practices of worship, scripture, mission, community, prayer and generosity, we look expectantly and look expectantly alongside you and hope to see growth in our lives together and in our community. Today we look further into the practice of partnering with God's mission in our world through hospitality. Hospitality is a constant and consistent theme throughout the Bible. God commanded the Hebrews, the Israelites long ago to remember their exile and oppression in Egypt and allow it to motivate hospitality to foreigners. He said, "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself. For you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 19:34.

**0:03:16.1** If you are like me, you have felt like a foreigner or stranger in life before. Maybe it was when you were in another country or you just moved to a new area, or just walked into a new space. And there's a hint in everyday life when I wake up that I don't belong, that I am a foreigner and stranger in this land. Some of that is because I belong to Christ. And some of it is Because evil is at work.

**0:04:02.9** Evil wants to isolate us, separating us from the Lord and each other. And the practice of hospitality is a practical and subversive weapon against this evil. It has already been extended to us in this world. The Lord himself has pushed back evil through his presence, through coming, living, dying, and rising again for us. All, he says, motivated by a love, a love that never ends and always perseveres. The Lord has welcomed us into his world so lavishly, given us

access to his treasures and himself, we cannot begin to explore hospitality without a continual understanding and reminder of his great love for us who do not deserve it. So we start there. In our exploration of hospitality, we start in our weakness. We are a foreigner and a stranger, and also from a place where we have been welcomed lavishly, where we are rich. Now, hospitality biblically looks a lot different than how the world might speak of hospitality, it is treating strangers and friends alike, it is welcoming one another into our homes and lives. I love Christine Pohl's definition of hospitality. She is a professor at Asbury Theological Seminary. She says hospitality is literally making room.

**0:06:01.0** If we are outside sitting on a bench at a park, it is just scooching over, scooching over. I like that word, scooching over to make room for someone next to us. That is hospitality. And again, it begins and ends with love. Paul encourages us in this and love that Hebrew writers encourages us that this begins and ends with love. Hebrews 13 says, "Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers. For thereby, some have entertained angels, unawares." There's a real sense that this hospitality that God is inviting us into is magical and mysterious. And we might not know what will happen as we enter into it. Jesus goes on further in the gospels to say that we are literally welcoming him, Jesus himself, when we welcome in the stranger the least of these. Our hospitality is worship.

**0:07:16.6** We get to witness more of him, more of his glory, more awe. The Lord himself from the beginning of time has had a heart for these groups of people, the poor, the sick, the orphan, the widow, the imprisoned. And this continues when Paul is talking. He says, "Remember those who are in prison as though in prison with them and those who are mistreated since you also are in the body, keep your life free from love of money and be content with what you have for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper. I will not fear. What can man do to me?" These scriptures seem to hint at some of the barriers to hospitality.

**0:08:20.9** Fear, love of money, security. And it also seems to tell us where our security and trust is to be found. Not only does God say to trust him, he reminds us that suffering is a guaranteed part of our life as we follow him. And hospitality seems to be sandwiched right between that suffering and somehow this suffering, though so painful is a mercy. It frees us from that which really enslaves us.

**0:09:06.7** Peter writes, "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God." He goes on and writes, "Don't be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though

something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. He sacrificed for us and invites us to follow him in sacrifice." Jesus says, "Take up your cross and follow me." There's a dying involved in our living.

Paul in the Romans goes on to talk about this living sacrifice that we are to be. He says, "I appeal to you therefore brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." And it's in this context of God calling us to worship him, to follow him in the sacrifice that hospitality is born. Paul writes that love be genuine, a poor what is evil, again pushing back the evil. Hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, but fervent in spirit. Serve the Lord. Rejoice and hope. Be patient in tribulation. Be constant in prayer. Continue to contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

**0:11:06.6** It would seem this outworking of hospitality as something we do together as brothers and sisters who are following Jesus. It seems to be an assumption that we're already taking care of one another. Brotherly love. We are showing this to one another as followers of Christ, we are caring for one another so that we might have something to invite others into. Over the past year and a half, there's a group of ladies from our church that has gone out dancing. For me it's been a place to claim joy and hope with my body where trauma and pain have consumed my body. When we go out and start dancing a circle forms on the floor, there's laughter and funny poses and knowing eyes that say pain and death won't have the final say. And over the course of the evening, the circle swells as strangers join us. They're invited in by someone in our group, welcomed by hand gestures or words, or sometimes just start dancing. There'll be hoops and hollers as they come in, warm welcome. And it never seems to fail that these strangers start asking, "How do y'all know each other?" And when church comes out of our mouth, they always say, "I wanna go to your church."

**0:12:41.0** Our group grows more rich and beautiful as these strangers join us. And just so you know, if you're listening to this podcast, you are automatically invited to join us dancing, though I know dancing is not everyone's cup of tea.

**0:13:00.4** But, the idea behind these circles that we're forming to welcome others in is something we all can be a part of. They just may be circles that are out on pickleball courts or maybe jazz clubs or circles that hike up mountains and invite others in. Or knitting circles in someone's warm, cozy home that neighbors are invited into. We're all wired differently and the Lord made us so uniquely. So we ask the question together, knowing that we're wired differently, where can we each make room in our life? It might just be that you move over when you take

your break at work by the water cooler and you make space for someone you have eyes to see. Another next to you could be in your front or backyard. What do you enjoy doing? And how can you invite others into that space? Certainly we all have tables. We have places that we eat, places where pizza is ordered or maybe a yummy soup or salad is created. We have room to offer others. What steps can we take to put our trellis of hospitality in the ground? So many of you are already deeply rooted in this practice.

**0:14:38.3** We first start by asking the Lord, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Lord, please make our homes and our communities look more like your kingdom. These commands surrounding hospitality are beyond us. We need Christ and each other. If we invite this stranger in, we will become strange. Do we want that? Do we want to become strange like Christ? As we pray his kingdom to come, our homes will look different. They will be filled with the orphan and the widow, and the imprisoned and the poor, and the foreigner in our land. They will be rich and beautiful and messy and awkward and strength in this place. We continue in the Lord's Prayer, we pray, give us this day our daily bread. We give thanks for all that he has provided and we share it with others. We end our prayer in our times of making room and hospitality with the prayer: Lord, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, not ours forever and ever. Amen.