

# Community Church Planting



Disciples multiplying disciples  
Pastors multiplying pastors  
Churches multiplying churches

A program of C4J

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A catalytic Community Church Planting program initiated through  
2 Timothy 2:2 training projects

Disciples multiplying disciples  
Pastors multiply pastors  
Churches multiplying churches

Compiled by Bruce Bennett

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*“...upon this rock I will build my church...” the Lord Jesus Christ*

## Acronyms

C4J	– Communities for Jesus
CCP	– Community Church Planting
TCP	– Training Centre Church Planting
CB-CP	– Church-Based Church Planting
DCP	– Disciple Church Planting
SCP	– Seminary Church Planting
VCP	– Village Church Planting
OMS (SA)	– One Mission Society (South Africa)

## 9.6 Hospitality

**9.6.1.** Hospitality means love for strangers or fondness for foreigners. Hospitality derives from the Greek word philoxenos. *Philo* translates as fondness and *zenos* as foreigner. Hospitality is the ancient sacred spiritual path toward God's Presence. The love of God is the source for all hospitality, and so we give others hospitality as a gift from God. The flow of God's love reimburses our acts of hospitality. Hospitality is both the object and

***Hospitality = Philozenos***

***Philo = fondness***

***Zenos = foreigners***

***Hospitality = Love for  
strangers and foreigners***

subject of God's love. Hospitality is the designated vehicle for communicating God's love to the world. I have travelled and been hosted in many different circumstances around Africa. The rich hospitality, warmth and care given to me by the villagers of Africa despite poverty, war and language barriers, is always a pleasant surprise. I am learning that God inspired hospitality is to be found in most cultures. In the ancient Orient, it was a sacred religious duty to receive, feed, lodge, and protect a traveller. They treat the stranger as a guest. The strongest ties bind people who live and eat together. I am finding that this is still true today amongst most of the world's rural peoples. The present practice of Arabs is the nearest to ancient Hebrew hospitality that we will find. A traveller may sit at the door of a perfect stranger until the master will welcome him with an evening meal, and the stranger may stay a limited number of days without the host ever enquiring to his purpose, and the traveller may depart with a simple "*God be with you*" as the host's only compensation.

**9.6.2. Biblical hospitality comprises three distinct elements: receptivity, respect, and generosity.**

- Receptivity, a spirit that welcomes foreigners and strangers
- Respect, a spirit that reverences foreigners and strangers
- A flow of loving generosity, generous in time, gifts, and kindness

We will see from biblical accounts of hospitality that, coupled to the three elements above, we will invariably find one or more of the following: healings, angels, spiritual receptivity, the coming of the Kingdom of God, conversions, warmth, meals, accommodation and acts of giving. We will see that hospitality includes food and beds; however, it is ultimately the spirit of welcome and reverence, which defines hospitality. Godly hospitality paves the path for God's love and healing, ushering people into the stunning presence of God's Kingdom.

In Genesis 18:1-8 we read about Abraham who sees three strangers nearby. He hurries to them, bows low to the ground and says: "*If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way--now that you have come to your servant.*" *'Very well,' they answered, 'do as you say.'*"

God appeared to Abraham through these three strangers because he:

- was receptive to the visitors
- welcomed and revered/honoured the strangers
- generous towards these strangers

Hospitality flowed from the heart of God to the heart of Abraham and into the needs of strangers. Interestingly, in response to the gift of hospitality, God healed the womb of Sarah, which thereby secured the lineage of Israel.

**9.6.3. Hospitality is a central message throughout the Bible.** To the Hebrews hospitality was a deep religious duty – enjoined by the Law of Moses: "When an alien lives with you in your

land, do not mistreat him. We must treat aliens living in our neighbourhoods just as if they were native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.” (Lev 19:33-34) Biblical heroes display hospitality: “But no stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveller” (Job 31:32) To the Greeks in the first century hospitality was still a religious duty. Paul instructed the church “Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” (Ro 12:13) The writer to the Hebrews said, “Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.” (He 13:1-3). Jesus said “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating, and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. You heal the sick and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’ I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.” (Lk 10:5-12)

The passage implies we are to expect healings in the presence of hospitality. We are not dealing with coincidence when we **link hospitality, the coming of the Kingdom of God, angels and healing**. We will see this connection repeatedly in Scripture and practice.

**9.6.4. God prepares people of peace with gifts of hospitality to receive CCP workers.** God's instruction to Kingdom workers is that they must seek a person of peace and work through the gracious act of hospitality. Jesus taught Kingdom workers to seek out a person of peace, a person who has a:

1. Receptive spirit with a:

- Open heart toward God
- Open heart toward God's messengers
- Open heart toward the message of the Kingdom of God

2. Welcoming spirit which invites strangers to:

- Come into their (the hosts) life
- Into their family's life
- Into their home

3. Generous spirit where the host treats the stranger as an integral part of the family:

Together you become a part of the extended family of God.

Others will recognize you as a servant of God, and since they revere or honour God, they will revere or honour you as well. Interestingly, Jesus sends the Christ-follower to expand the Kingdom of God by seeking out unbelievers who will practice the gift of hospitality. The Spirit of God prepares unbelievers to receive Christ's messengers. We see the evidence of prior preparatory work of the Spirit in the heart of the believer before conversion by the

deposit of hospitality in the person of peace. People of peace are receptive, welcoming, and generous. God is always at work even amongst strangers, prisoners, our neighbours, and our enemies. The practice of hospitality releases a spiritual dynamic that sees the Kingdom of Christ come to new places, new communities, and new relationships. When the Kingdom comes in force and power, we will rejoice as healings take place. The best place to heal the sick is in a caring loving hospitable environment. The best time to teach and proclaim the Kingdom of God to unbelievers is in a hospitable environment alongside healing prayers.

**9.6.5. We see pagans practicing hospitality in the first century in conjunction with God's prior work of grace in their lives:** Acts 27 is an account of Paul en route to Italy as a prisoner. A violent storm threatens the ship and the lives of all on board it. Paul tells the people that the angel of God would deliver them and none would be lost. So it happens, they run the ship aground on a bay in Malta and God spares the lives of everyone. Moreover, God not only spares their lives, He has planned a receptive, generous, and hospitable welcome for them by the islanders.

“Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. The islanders (barbarians) showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, ‘This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.’ But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.” “ There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably. His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. They honoured us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.” (Acts 28:1-10)

We again see the biblical pattern – receptivity, reverence and the flow of generosity toward the destitute strangers. These three timeless rivers, receptivity, reverence, and generosity converge into the spiritual practice of transformative hospitality -- the Kingdom of God comes to Malta, healings take place and history records these gracious acts of hospitality on Malta.

**9.6.6. Inhospitality, indifference, and distance in relationships are the greatest obstacles to the coming of God's Kingdom in our day.** Our inhospitable spirits, our distaste of our neighbours, our neglect of prisoners, our racialism, our xenophobia, our indifference to our fellow believers and our hurried lives, hinder the will of God being done on earth as it is in heaven. Inhospitable, unfriendly, ungracious Christians are islands floating in a sea of indifference that is not conducive to building and expanding Christ's reign and rule on earth. We need to bridge the space between our islands with intentional loving acts of hospitality.

Hospitality or philozenos is *philo plus zenos (love plus foreigner)*, whereas xenophobia is *zenos plus phobia (foreigners plus fear)*. Hospitality or loving foreigners redeems humanity and builds God's Kingdom, whereas, xenophobia, fearing and hating strangers, destroys humanity and inhibits God's Kingdom.

**9.6.7. Our greatest tool for Kingdom ministry is the practice of hospitality, fondness, and friendliness toward strangers.** There is a hidden spiritual power in hospitality and welcome, which is waiting to be unleashed into our community. You and I can be part of this exciting move.

In CCP movements, we are urging the rediscovery of God's presence in the sacred art of deep sincere hospitality. I, like so many CCP workers have shared meals, slept in each other's homes, and felt the love, respect, friendliness, and care of God's people. It enables us to share and minister at deep levels into each other's lives. Bonds have been formed that will last through the storms of life – it is a rare privilege to be welcomed, accepted, respected and spoilt as I travel on God's business. It is no coincidence; I write this leaving the home of a gracious colleague from India.

***Hospitality***  
***Our greatest tool for***  
***Kingdom ministry***

**9.6.8. When we define hospitality primarily around our home and giving things, we exclude the poor in being able to practice hospitality.** Today there is much misconception about what hospitality means. To many of us it is all about things, giving meals, giving accommodation and serving teas. Hospitality is not primarily about our ability to cater; this is a good gift but catering in itself is not the spiritual practice of hospitality. Working endlessly in the kitchen is an act of service, not hospitality. Selfless service is a spiritual gift often opening doors for others, like Mary who could practice her gift of hospitality whilst Martha served in the kitchen. Catering, giving and serving are invaluable for hospitality, but they are not in themselves the spiritual gift of hospitality. These are all good activities, part of creating conducive environments for hospitality to take place. However, at the centre of hospitality are not our meals and our homes -- after all, our example is Jesus, and Jesus had no home, and Jesus did not pour tea and bake cookies. We can practice hospitality on pavements, at bus stops, across the neighbour's fence, in the shopping mall alongside our trolleys and sometimes over a cup of tea.

**9.6.9. CCP churches provide hospitality, a place of refuge for abandoned and abused people, who journey through the traumas of this life.** The Greek word for hospitality is philozenos – fondness for strangers. The English word for hospitality means – kindness in welcoming guests or strangers. The words hospice and hospital derive from the word hospitality. In the Middle Ages, a hospice was a charitable refuge provided by monastic orders offering refreshment to pilgrims and travellers. The hospice usually adjoined the cathedral or the church; it was only after the great plague that they converted hospices for the sick and dying. Church hospitality should provide a place of refuge for battered pilgrims who journey through dark difficult days. God calls Christ-followers to love strangers and welcome pilgrims as honoured guests. Hospitality is the love and welcome of strangers into our homes, into our church, into our lives and into the family of God. That is hospitality! This is central to CCP movements!



**9.6.10. Hospitality is primarily a gift of the Holy Spirit.** The generosity in hospitality is not dependent on the quality and quantity of our possessions. Our possessions, or our ability to bake or cook, cannot improve transformative hospitality. Hospitality is about my attitude to others, my love for my neighbours and my compassion for the plight of others. Hospitality is about what God does in me, about my spirit of receptivity to God, myself and to others. Hospitality is about my inner transformation that will enable me to welcome others into my life. Hospitality is about me being prepared for all of me to engage all of who others are. Hospitality enables me to be a Good Samaritan, who will cross the street to reach out and to meet all the needs of my neighbour. Hospitality is Mary giving all of her self to all of Jesus. “As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, ‘Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!’ ‘Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.’” (Lk 10:38-42)

**9.6.11. A hospitable heart has a spirit of receptivity, a deep awareness of human nature, of our need for God, and our need for community and connection with strangers.** The spirit of receptivity is an inner attitude, which makes us receptive to others and God. A consequence of this receptivity is that we will invite others (strangers) into our lives, our hearts, and our homes. The spirit of receptivity is an invitation to strangers to share in our lives and to share in our family. Receptivity paves the way to invite and receive outsiders into the Kingdom of God. The positive posture of invitation, or my willingness to invite others into my life, is at the heart of transforming hospitality that invites new relationships to embrace the Kingdom of God and the church. Mary was receptive and attentive to Jesus – hospitable. Martha was distracted, inattentive, and discourteous toward Jesus – inhospitable.

**9.6.12. A hospitable heart has a reverencing spirit that honours and welcomes others into our lives.** The Maltese Islanders revered Paul as a god. Publius and the islanders honoured Paul and the Christians in many ways. **Mary honoured Jesus** with an attentive and a devotional spirit. **Martha dishonoured Jesus** with an inattentive discourteous spirit. The spirit of reverence sees the divine image of God in our neighbours, our enemies, the aliens, or refugees and in prisoners. The spirit of reverence looks intently into the lives of others looking for points of contact. The spirit of reverence enables me to see the value that strangers offer to me, it enables me to perceive the inherent integrity and transformative value in others. The spirit of reverence is born out of deep respect for creation and humanity. The spirit of reverence demands that all of me, my full self, engage with your full self.

<p><b>Hospitality</b></p> <p><b>Welcoming the Kingdom of God into our relationships</b></p>
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In a state of reverence, I, my full self, stand in the full presence of others, because through my spirit of receptivity, the grace and love of Christ flows from His heart, into my heart. Since His heart is becoming my heart, His love and grace must flow through my heart into the lives of others. I revere, honour and welcome others because the love of Christ compels

me. I am able to stand in the full presence of others because together we stand in the full presence of God. Ultimately, hospitality welcomes the Kingdom of God into our relationships with others. In welcoming strangers and guests to share in our lives, we are practicing a deep transformative hospitality that ushers the Kingdom of God into our presence.

**9.6.13.** A hospitable heart has a spirit of generosity, an outpouring of physical, emotional, and spiritual generosity toward strangers. The spirit of generosity is a spirit that deeply desires to meet the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of others. In generosity there is a liberal mix of compassion, love, grace and giving that flow from the heart of God, into your heart, and then into my heart. The spirit of generosity teaches me that I have far more to give than I have ever realized, and that through giving myself to the cause of Christ and His Kingdom that I become infinitely rich. Generosity teaches that we need a lot less stuff, and a lot more congeniality. The chase in consumerism and capitalism without corresponding investment in cultivating relationships is a godless pursuit. Generosity changes the **giver**; it transforms our hearts by affirming the unlimited abundance of God by meeting all our needs in Christ Jesus. Generosity is not about the abundance of possessions; generosity is about the abundance of life: living life to the full because of our faith in an abundant God.

Generosity gives me the grace to talk a whole lot less, to be present and available in the lives of others and to be quiet enough long enough to hear the heart of wisdom in the angels that God brings alongside me. Generosity teaches me that in offering friendship and friendliness, in offering courtesy and kindness, and in offering worthiness and self-worth, I tap into the indescribable, incomparable riches, power, and grace of the reigning Christ.

In Genesis 24 when Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac, the servant asked God to reveal His choice through an act of hospitality. The servant had only one criterion for choosing Rebecca: her astonishing acts of hospitality in providing water to him and his camels, and lodging for him and his camels. Rebecca had a receptive, reverent, and generous spirit, which evidenced in hospitable acts; these alone affirmed the choice of Rebecca as a suitable wife for Isaac.

In Genesis 19, two angels appear to Lot while he was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. Lot sees them, gets up to meet them, awareness, and receptivity, he bows down to them, reverences and honours them, and invites them into his home where generosity flows. Three rivers receptivity, reverence, and generosity converge; the Kingdom of God is at hand, and this spirit of hospitality leads to the deliverance of Lot and his daughters. The men of Sodom hearing about the two strangers, in a despicable display of inhospitality, demand Lot to hand the strangers over to them for their perverse sexual gratification. God blinded the Sodomites for this act of inhospitality, obliterating the entire population with burning sulphur. Inhospitality leads to blindness and death, whereas hospitality leads to deliverance and healing.

### **Hospitality**

Paul says, “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in

**Perfect courtesy  
toward everyone**



affliction, and faithful in prayer. **Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.**" (Ro 12:9-13)

Paul also says "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for any honest work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, **and to show perfect courtesy toward all men.**" Titus 3:1-2

When I discussed this lesson with Dee, my wife, she asked, "How can I, in a lawless society, practice hospitality with strangers? Are you not asking me to expose myself to danger?" A good question, the answer is 'no'. Hospitality requires awareness; receptivity is about alertness and discernment, looking to see where the Father is at work, and joining him. Hospitality includes being responsive to God's leading, and this requires prudence. Not excuses, but prayerful prudence to join God where He works and directs us. This will sometimes be the refugee camps, prisons, hospitals, and hospices.

We are often discouraged from hospitality because others do not respond. We have tried befriending others but they just never reciprocate. In Luke 14:12-14 Jesus said to His host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Hospitality is a gift of love; it has no motive other than love, and no compensation other than love.

In the US, I travelled in the state of New York and came across a town called Three Rivers, a place where literally three smaller rivers converged into one larger river. In hospitality, we are talking of a place where three rivers meet: the river of receptivity, the river of reverence, and the river of generosity. Together these create a tidal wave of hospitality that ushers in the Kingdom of God.

Our model for hospitality is Christ himself. At the last supper when Jesus passed around the bread and the cup to His disciples, He transformed a meal into an act of hospitality that we can never reciprocate. With a spirit of receptivity, He received you and me while we were far from Him. With a spirit of reverence, He humbled himself before us on a cross. In an unparalleled unrepeatable act of outstanding generosity, Jesus gave His life for you and me. Two thousand years ago, three extra-ordinary rivers of receptivity, reverence and generosity converged into an act of hospitality that continues to mend broken lives, and continues to deliver unbelievers from the gates of hell. This generous love flowing into our hearts is the only reward that we need to practice hospitality in our broken communities.

If Christ-followers are gracious to strangers it shows that they are citizens of heaven – and that their hearts are not islands, cut off from others, but they connect with an eternal Kingdom reaching out to strangers, joining them to heavens eternity. Around the world, lonely hearts cry out to know God, and to unite with His redeemed family. God has plans for our hospitable spirit, far greater plans than we ever thought possible. Our investment in

strangers will bring about eternal dividends as they attach to the family of God. Your hospitable spirit is God's conduit to usher others into His Kingdom.

Godly hospitality astonishes; it is simple, sacrificial, sincere and always a pleasant surprise. In Kingdom hospitality, we see God at work in three places: **within** our hearts, **within** our churches, and **within** broken communities.

