

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Do Not Neglect to Show Hospitality to Strangers:
Developing and Implementing a Program of Home
Hospitality at Furnace Creek Baptist Church**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT REPORT ABSTRACT

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The researcher identified the lack of intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between members of Furnace Creek Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, VA and people in the local community as an issue that should be addressed. This problem was addressed by developing and implementing a program of home hospitality with members of FCBC. Hospitality in private homes was identified as an important and biblical method of increasing interaction between the church and the community that has been neglected in doctoral action research. Many hospitality projects have addressed the corporate hospitality dynamic, but few have dealt with Christian hospitality in private homes, other than those related to housing refugees. The researcher developed a three-month program of practicing hospitality that included one month of teaching and small group study on biblical hospitality, followed by two months of participants practicing hospitality. The study included before-and-after questionnaires to conduct a longitudinal comparison, a personalized hospitality plan for each participant, a unique hospitality notebook for participating members to record their hospitality activities, results, and thoughts, and post-intervention interviews. Thirty-eight percent of eligible member households participated in the project. Individual results varied, but the overall number of intentional interactions between members of the church and people in the community increased fourfold. The project was a success. The small-group and sermon material should be useful for other local church contexts, along with some of the practical ideas implemented. Home hospitality can be an important tool for church revitalization and evangelism in an increasingly hostile culture.

Keywords: biblical hospitality, table fellowship, church revitalization

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Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Ministry Context	3
Problem Presented	9
Purpose Statement	11
Basic Assumptions	13
Definitions	14
Limitations	17
Delimitations	18
Thesis Statement	19
Conclusion	20
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	21
Literature Review	21
Unconditional vs. Conditional Hospitality.....	21
Definition/Description of Hospitality.....	30
God’s Hospitality as Motivation and Example.....	35
The Challenge of Jesus’ Hospitality/Table Fellowship.....	38
Public Policy: Migrants.....	40
Conclusion.....	41
Theological Foundations	42
Biblical Theology of Hospitality.....	42
Biblical Examples of Hospitality.....	50
Biblical Commands for Hospitality.....	55
Theoretical Foundations	61
Conclusion	69
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	71
Intervention Design	71
Intervention Tasks: How?.....	72
Intervention Persons: Who?.....	78
Intervention Places: Where?.....	81
Intervention Time Line: When?.....	83
Intervention Resources: With What?.....	86
Implementation of the Intervention Design	86
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	96
Participation	96
Quantitative Results	97
Qualitative Results	101
Obstacles to Hospitality.....	101
Practice of Hospitality.....	104
Purpose of Hospitality.....	105
Relation to Church Mission.....	106

Impact of the Hospitality Project	107
Summary of Results	109
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	111
Research Implications	111
Research Applications	118
Research Limitations	121
Further Research	122
Final Summary	123
Appendix A: Hospitality Program Information Letter.....	125
Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Letter	126
Appendix C: Hospitality Sign-Up Form (Consent Form).....	127
Appendix D: Preliminary Hospitality Questionnaire (Q1).....	131
Appendix E: Notes For Four Sermons.....	133
Appendix F: Notes For Four-Week Small Group Study	135
Appendix G: Personal Hospitality Plan	139
Appendix H: Hospitality Notebook (HNb).....	141
Appendix I: Aquarium Sign.....	146
Appendix J: Post-Intervention Hospitality Questionnaire (Q2).....	147
Appendix K: Questions For Post-Intervention Interviews.....	149
Appendix L: Consent Form Bulletin Insert	150
Appendix M: Hospitality Effort Bulletin Insert.....	151
Appendix N: Hospitality Aquarium Bulletin Insert.....	152
Appendix O: Hospitality Library Bibliography	153
Appendix P: Q1 – Participant 8	154
Appendix Q: Invitation Page of HNb – Participant 6	156
Appendix R: HNb – Participant 12.....	157
Appendix S: Q2 – Participant 14	161
Bibliography	163
IRB Approval Letter	170

Tables

4.1	Eligible Households of FCBC	99
4.2	Participating Households of FCBC.....	99
4.3	Participating Couples	99
4.4	Participating Singles	99
4.5	Project Period Hospitality Data	100

Abbreviations

BTDB	<i>Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
ESV	<i>English Standard Version</i>
FCBC	<i>Furnace Creek Baptist Church</i>
HNb	<i>Hospitality Notebook</i>
NDBT	<i>New Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i>
IRB	<i>Institutional Review Board</i>
P1, P2, etc.	<i>Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.</i>
Q1	<i>Questionnaire 1: Preliminary Hospitality Questionnaire</i>
Q2	<i>Questionnaire 2: Post-Intervention Hospitality Questionnaire</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A lack of intentionally interacting with people for the sake of the gospel in the surrounding community is a common characteristic of churches in need of revitalization. This tendency is no secret among church revitalization experts. In Thom Rainer's book *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, the symptoms he observed in dying churches included the tendency to become self-focused and insular rather than reaching out to the surrounding community through evangelism.¹ Andrew Davis noted in his book *Revitalize* that churches in need of revitalization usually have "little connection to their surrounding neighbors."² Mark Clifton says that dying churches cease to be part of the fabric of the community and are often "still trying to use primarily attractional methods in a community that no longer responds to those methods."³ In light of this tendency, a dying or unhealthy church is unlikely to see a significant spiritual turnaround without addressing the issue of a lack of intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel with the surrounding community.

When the author of this research project thesis became the pastor of Furnace Creek Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, VA in 2015, the church exhibited most of the common features of a dying church, including the tendency toward insulation, a fixation on the attractional model of church ministry, and failure to intentionally seek deeper relationships with outsiders in the

¹ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2014), 25-44.

² Andrew M. Davis, *Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017), 43.

³ Mark Clifton, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2016), 25-26.

community. By God's grace, many important changes have taken place and the church is heading in a positive direction. Intentional interaction with neighbors for the sake of the gospel, however, is still an area in which the church must grow.

Interaction with neighbors must go beyond inviting them to church gatherings. A 2018 Barna study found that among U.S. adults described as "non-Christians" and "lapsed Christians," thirty percent preferred exploring issues of faith in a casual, one-on-one setting, twenty-three percent preferred a casual, group conversational setting, while only twenty percent preferred to explore issues of faith at a formal church gathering.⁴ While still inviting neighbors to church gatherings, members need to increase the gospel and relational intentionality of interactions with neighbors in a non-church setting. If their neighbors are not particularly interested in exploring issues of faith at a church facility, then the church must engage their neighbors outside the church facilities.

One place where the kind of casual conversations that lead to discussions of faith and spirituality can take place outside the church facility is in the private homes of believers. In the future, biblical hospitality in the homes of believers can be one of the most effective means of engaging people in the community. The idea of engaging others through hospitality and table fellowship is nothing new or novel. This thesis paper will show that such a practice reflects God's character, follows biblical examples including that of Jesus himself, and is explicitly commanded in Scripture. The action research related to biblical home hospitality will

⁴ "Beyond an Invitation to Church: Opportunities for Faith-Sharing," Barna Group, March 26, 2019, accessed December 8, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/opportunities-for-faith-sharing>. According to the study, "Lapsed Christians identify as Christian but have not attended church within the past month. Only 4 percent consider their faith very important. Non-Christians identify with a faith other than Christianity ('religious non-Christians') or with no faith at all ('atheists / agnostics / nones')."

demonstrate that it is an effective way of increasing intentional interaction between church members and their neighbors, leading to greater revitalization of the church.

This first chapter conveys basic information about the action research to be conducted at FCBC in Rocky Mount, VA. First, the ministry context of FCBC is described. Next is a description of the presenting problem that will be addressed by the action research. A clear purpose statement is then given, followed by the research's basic assumptions, special definitions, and research limitations and delimitations. The chapter concludes with the project's thesis statement.

Ministry Context⁵

FCBC was founded in the early 1950's as a local church for the Scuffling Hill community, an area of Rocky Mount, VA.⁶ Rocky Mount is a small town of approximately 5,000 residents located in Franklin County, which has a population of about 55,000. Almost all Franklin County residents who are religious claim to be Protestant or evangelical; however, almost fifty-seven percent of residents claim no religion at all.⁷ While the impression of many Christians in the area is that almost everyone in the county is religious, the reality is that there is a definite need for churches to reach out to the community at large.

Most of the charter members of FCBC lived close to the church facilities. Curtis Robertson, who later became the church's first pastor, led a number of local men to faith in

⁵ Some of the material in this section is adapted from Philip Bramblet, "Church Revitalization Strategic Plan for Furnace Creek Baptist Church" (class paper submitted in CHMN 820 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Spring 2021), 1-5.

⁶ Historical information was gathered from church files, records, bulletins, directories, and conversations with members.

⁷ "Rocky Mount, Virginia," City-Data, accessed October 27, 2022, <https://www.city-data.com/city/Rocky-Mount-Virginia.html>.

Christ and organized backyard prayer meetings. The majority of early members knew each other well and were literal neighbors and relatives. This made for a sense of community connection that is remembered fondly by long-time members. The church began as a community church with significant interaction between neighbors.

When the current pastor arrived in 2015, many of the houses immediately surrounding the church facilities were still occupied by long-time church members. Since then, however, most of those members have passed away and been replaced by new families. Long-time members have generally not reached out to these new families in the neighborhood effectively. The demographics of the neighborhood surrounding the church facilities have become much younger, but few of these neighbors have been engaged by current members.

Historically, the church was centered largely on programs, events, and activities, and could be described as primarily attractional in philosophy.⁸ Over the years, the church had various children's clubs, a volleyball team, bowling teams, outreach programs, Woman's Missionary Union, extensive Sunday School programs, Vacation Bible Schools, summer camps, and more. The formal choir was always an important feature, and its Christmas cantatas were sometimes broadcast on local television. One member stated that people from other communities were impressed with FCBC's programs in the 1980's. Another, however, stated that in the 1980's many people in Rocky Mount viewed FCBC as a "country club" kind of church.

Eventually the church grew to be one of the largest churches in town, averaging around two hundred in regular attendance. After Curtis Robertson's service of twenty-three years as

⁸ By "attractional" is meant the tendency to focus on bringing the community in to the church activities, usually centered on the church facilities, rather than a focus on going out to the community or including the community in everyday activities outside the facilities. Attracting community members to church events is certainly not wrong, but many church revitalization writers identify the attractional theory as insufficient by itself in today's culture.

pastor (ending in the 1970's), the average pastor stayed only five years. The many programs and events continued, however, and these years of intense community activity in the 80's and 90's are what most of the long-time members look back on as the "golden years" of the church. They want to recapture the thriving, family feeling of those years, but have been unable or unwilling to reach new families with children.

Philip Bramblet, the author of this paper, was called to pastor FCBC in late 2015 after the church declined for a number of years and the previous pastors (a senior pastor and an associate pastor) resigned under contentious circumstances in 2013. Attendance and giving held steady for a couple of years, but declined from 2017 to 2020. Most of the remaining members were elderly, and the church lost a significant number of them through death. The church was in need of revitalization.

The coronavirus pandemic in 2020 had a large impact on attendance and participation of the mostly elderly members. On the other hand, some younger families joined the church around that time so that the church demographics, currently averaging around fifty people in worship service, are actually quite young compared to pre-pandemic. Since 2020, attendance has held steady while giving has declined slightly as some older members have passed away or left the church.

A number of events are most predictable and central to the congregation of FCBC. The church gathers at 10am on Sundays for Sunday School, which may also be referred to as discipleship groups or small groups. Historically, participation in Sunday School has been proportionally high (around seventy-five percent) and continues to be well attended. Six discipleship groups currently meet (from nursery to adult), and these classes engage in prayer and Bible study. The children and youth discipleship groups are taught lessons based on the

teachers' own study of Scripture. One of the adult discipleship groups focuses on fellowship and discusses the previous week's sermon. The other three adult discipleship groups teach a Bible curriculum published by Lifeway.⁹

At 11am on Sunday the main weekly worship service is held. This service has always included singing, praying, giving financially, and preaching. It currently includes a Scripture reading, also. Music for the service is played on a piano and is a mix of newer congregational songs and older hymns.

Since September 2020, a fellowship meal has been held every week after the worship service. Over half the congregation participates in this time of fellowship. A potluck meal is shared, and toward the end of the meal those present discuss what is going on in their lives, brainstorm about what they can do as a church for outreach, encourage one another, and pray together. The Sunday fellowship meal is a major highlight of the week for those who participate.

Another weekly activity is the Wednesday evening Bible study at 7pm. Fewer members attend this meeting. It consists of Bible study and prayer. Sometimes a specific topical series will take place on Wednesday evenings, such as an evangelism training course. Only five or six families attend the Wednesday evening service on a regular basis.

Other regular activities in the past few years have included hosting a community yard sale at the church facilities in May and October, having a church picnic at a local park in September, doing a Trunk-or-Treat event at the church facilities on Halloween evening during which gospel tracts are handed out with the candy, bringing in guest speakers on Sundays during the month of October for the Fall Bible Conference, holding quarterly business meetings, Christmas caroling in the community in December, and holding special Thanksgiving and

⁹ "Explore the Bible," Lifeway, <https://www.lifeway.com/en/shop/explore-the-bible>. Accessed December, 2023.

Christmas services that include greater congregational participation. Many of these activities are focused on the congregation and are held at the church facilities. Some of these activities do engage the community, but not always in a very personal way. It is desirable that the church would increase focus on intentional, personal relationship-building with the community.

Starting around 2020, new members began joining the church. These new members are generally younger and more active. They include a good number of children and youth. They see the pastor as the leader and are eager to follow his oversight.

Two groups have, in a sense, been present in the last few years. One consists of some of the long-time members who are less engaged and supportive of the current pastor; the other consists primarily (but not exclusively) of newer members who are highly engaged and excited about the direction of the church.

The core group of active members are eager to study Scripture, have genuine spiritual fellowship, and put their faith into practice. This is seen in the way they have taken the initiative in these areas. For example, they regularly make positive comments about studying the Bible and express a desire for even more Bible study. They are not interested in being entertained, but are more focused on biblical content. The weekly meal for fellowship was the suggestion of one of these families rather than an initiative of the pastor. After an evangelism training course, some of the youth of the church approached the pastor several times, asking him to accompany them as they went to public places to share the gospel with strangers, which they did. A key younger man in the church told the pastor that he was clearing time in his weekly schedule so he could serve others more in order to follow Jesus' example. One father related that his children now insist on bringing gospel tracts whenever they go out and eagerly give them to strangers. Other members have for the first time invited people into their homes to show hospitality in response to the

pastor's teaching; however, those invited into the home have usually been fellow members of the church rather than non-members in the community. This core group is eager to support the pastor in his action research for the thesis project. They include approximately ten family units.

Because of the church's history of having an affinity with the attractational model of doing church, they have struggled to intentionally and personally reach out to new people in the community. Many of the older members' efforts were aimed at convincing former members to come back to FCBC, rather than trying to meet new people or build new relationships. There has been a lack of engagement with the community as it currently exists, and too much focus on the "good old days." The long-term members have not practiced home hospitality toward strangers and outsiders, and neither have many of the newer members. This has produced a situation in which the church is not well known in the community, especially among those who have moved here in the last twenty years. Among some long-time community residents, the church has a reputation for a country-club mentality and internal division.

The newer members of the church are keen to change this dynamic and reputation by engaging with new people. They have shown a willingness to push beyond their comfort zone. They seem to have bought into the mission of the church, which is "to glorify God by telling and living the gospel in our community."

On the other hand, many have a natural tendency to stay at home and keep to themselves during the week. Many in the church are natural introverts who prefer to spend their free time with their own family. The church services sometimes have visitors, but rarely do these visitors come as a result of intentional relationship-building on the part of the members. Interaction with the community for the sake of the gospel will not increase without an intentional effort.

Problem Presented

Historically, FCBC tended to put on events in order to attract members of the community to the communal gathering of the body. This method is no longer effective or desirable as the church's primary method of connecting with the community. First, with the church's decrease in numbers and increase in average age, the church struggled to put on such events. Second, the local culture itself seems less responsive to this method. Unchurched people in the surrounding area seem to have little interest in attending explicitly religious events. Finally, the attractional model of church is not as consistent with the current pastor's philosophy of ministry. Believers should not demand the community come to them. They must go out and engage the community where they are. The church must find new ways of connecting with the community outside of the church facilities.

The members of the church cannot fulfill the purpose and mission Christ has given them without pushing themselves toward greater interaction with outsiders in the community. The mission statement of FCBC is the following: "To glorify God by telling and living the gospel in our community." This mission explicitly requires interaction with people in the community. The teaching of Scripture and the example of the early church also demonstrate an expectation of community interaction on the part of believers.

The congregation has various reasons for not intentionally interacting with people in the community. Some work full time jobs and are raising children, which takes up much of their time. Others are retired but stay quite busy. Some are retired and prefer to be left alone. Some view their home as a retreat and sanctuary from the troubles of life and thus prefer not to invite outsiders in. They may have issues of fear, or concern with how they might be perceived. Some are simply not in the habit of talking to strangers or developing new relationships. Making time

for intentional interaction with others in the community is a common issue. The main obstacles to interacting with the community are not material, but psychological and spiritual.

Isolation from community is not a unique problem for the members of FCBC, but part of a larger social trend. According to *Greater Good Magazine*, “The General Social Survey, a periodic assessment of Americans’ moods and values, shows a 10-point decline from 1976 to 2006 in the number of Americans who believe other people can generally be trusted.”¹⁰ In a vicious cycle, declining trust leads to less interaction with others, which in turn leads to greater declining trust. This decrease in social trust is especially prominent among younger generations. This is borne out in other surveys that show feelings of intense loneliness are more likely among younger people in America today than among the elderly.¹¹ A 2021 survey by the Survey Center on American Life showed that “the role of friends in American social life is experiencing a pronounced decline. The May 2021 American Perspectives Survey finds that Americans report having fewer close friendships than they once did, talking to their friends less often, and relying less on their friends for personal support.”¹² In general, Americans are experiencing less community and friendship-building and more isolation and loneliness.

American Christians are not immune to these social tendencies. As part of their society, they may be expected to demonstrate some of the same issues. The culture today seems to foster distrust, fear, and outrage. These attributes do not encourage an open, friendly attitude toward

¹⁰ Pamela Paxton and Jeremy Adam Smith, “America’s Trust Fall,” *Greater Good Magazine*, September 1, 2008, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/americas_trust_fall. Accessed January 31, 2023.

¹¹ Jamie Ballard, “Millennials are the Loneliest Generation,” *YouGovAmerica*, July 30, 2019, <https://today.yougov.com/topics/society/articles-reports/2019/07/30/loneliness-friendship-new-friends-poll-survey>. Accessed January 31, 2023.

¹² Daniel Cox, “The State of American Friendship: Change, Challenges, and Loss,” *American Enterprise Institute: Survey Center on American Life*, June 8, 2021, <https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/the-state-of-american-friendship-change-challenges-and-loss/>. Accessed February 1, 2023.

neighbors. They certainly do not encourage intentionally practicing home hospitality toward strangers.

Before the hospitality project, only a few families of FCBC occasionally practiced home hospitality toward non-relatives. These hospitality events usually involved fellow church members rather than unrelated people in the community. There is a core group of members who share a weekly Sunday fellowship lunch at the church facilities. These members enjoy the benefit of regular table fellowship together and are thus fairly close relationally. This group consists of about thirty percent of active household units, or fifty-six percent of attendance at the Sunday worship service. While this church interaction is good, it does not often extend to the community outside the church. Members do sometimes invite people from the community to attend church gatherings, but interaction beyond this superficial level is rare. The problem at FCBC is a lack of intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between church members and the local community.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to develop and implement a home-based hospitality program with the members of FCBC. This is one biblical method by which members may connect with the community. The intention is to teach the church members about the importance and necessity of biblical home hospitality, to equip them to show hospitality in a way that is intentional and mission-driven, and to help them organize and schedule the actual practice of hospitality in their homes with people in the community.

Biblical home hospitality is a method for fulfilling the mission of Christ that does not require a large budget or a large group of volunteers. Anyone with a place to live can welcome people into their home for a meal or other activity. Members of the church must be convinced of

the importance and necessity of showing biblical home hospitality. This may be accomplished primarily through teaching. As they become committed to the concept of biblical home hospitality, the members of the church can assist in developing a hospitality plan for themselves/their family. By assisting in the development of their family plan for biblical home hospitality, they will have more interest and buy-in for its implementation.

For better or worse, Christians are not immune to cultural influence. They are also part of the society in which they live and are influenced by the broader culture around them. The decrease in social trust, increase in feelings of loneliness, and eroding of friendship is also experienced by believers. It is certainly seen in their neighborhoods.

There are, however, reasons for hope. Gallup reports that belief in God is decreasing in America, yet eighty-one percent of Americans still respond positively to the question, “Do you believe in God?”¹³ This means that even if neighbors are not religious, they likely have some kind of spiritual belief with which Christians can connect. In addition, seventy-nine percent of unchurched individuals agreed that they were open to discussing a friend’s faith if that friend was a sincere believer.¹⁴ The societal decline of friendships and increase in loneliness, combined with a high percentage of people who still believe in the spiritual realm and are willing to discuss issues of faith outside of a formal religious context, means that Christians have a golden opportunity to build intentional friendships through biblical home hospitality.

Practicing home hospitality is an appropriate and biblical way for believers to counteract these social trends and make an impact in their neighborhoods. Biblical home hospitality today is

¹³ Lydia Saad and Zach Hrynowski, “How Many Americans Believe in God?,” Gallup, June 24, 2022, accessed February 7, 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/268205/americans-believe-god.aspx>.

¹⁴ Rick Richardson, *You Found Me: New Research on How Unchurched Nones, Millennials, and Irreligious Are Surprisingly Open to Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 59.

a counter-cultural practice that will make believers stand out for their love and kindness. Showing a genuine interest in neighbors and members of the community will connect with the loneliness and friendlessness of our society. Inviting neighbors into the Christian home will provide the casual setting in which many are more comfortable discussing issues of faith than they are at a formal church gathering. The fact that the Bible gives commands and numerous examples of hospitality shows the wisdom of God in practical application. This thesis project seeks to restore biblical home hospitality to its proper place in the Christian practice of FCBC.

Basic Assumptions

Certain aspects and foundational ideas related to this thesis project are assumed by the author without being proven in this paper. The author considers these ideas to be reasonable and supportable, but doing so is beyond the scope of this project. Three specific assumptions will be mentioned.

The first of these assumptions is that the Bible is the Word of God and is thus authoritative in the beliefs and practices of Christians. Many secular studies exist in the realm of the “hospitality” industry, which includes commercial tourism-related places and activities like hotels, resorts, home-based vacation stays (e.g., Airbnb), cruises, and restaurants. These studies are not utilized in this project since they are not usually based on a theological foundation of biblical hospitality and relate to activities very different from biblical home hospitality. The Bible itself is the primary source for understanding the necessity and nature of the kind of hospitality to be practiced by members of FCBC. The Bible is assumed to be the authoritative revelation from God to His people, the church. Secular studies, while insightful, do not have directive authority over the church. While applying secular hospitality industry philosophy and

theory to the practice of home hospitality by Christians may be an interesting study, it is not the focus of this study.

Another assumption is that members of FCBC will support and engage in the desired action research. Because the primary researcher is the pastor of any eligible participants, he must be careful not to exert inappropriate or unethical pressure on potential participants. Their participation must be completely voluntary, with no sense of potential punishment or negative consequences for declining to participate. The researcher has not gained any promises or commitments from members of the church, but he assumes a significant portion of the church would participate willingly. This assumption is based on the researcher's knowledge of the congregation.

The researcher also assumes the participants will support the research by being honest about their interactions with the community through home hospitality. Honesty cannot be guaranteed, but efforts will be made to encourage accurate reporting of results. The researcher will seek to make clear to participants that all data is valuable for the purpose of the action research study. Not practicing biblical home hospitality is as valuable data as practicing hospitality. Participants will be encouraged to value accurate reporting over any sense of trying to please the pastor or create a more favorable impression. They will be informed repeatedly that identifiable personal information will not be revealed in any published report.

Definitions

Since the purpose of this project thesis is to develop and implement a home-based hospitality program for FCBC, ideas related to the practice of biblical home hospitality will be defined. While there is not much specialized language needed in the thesis project's discussion of biblical home hospitality, the following definitions will provide greater understanding.

Hospitality. Most studies connecting local churches with the idea of hospitality seem to be about how a church welcomes visitors to corporate church activities (a “welcome-to-our-gathering” kind of program), or about sharing the church’s facilities with an outside group. In this project thesis, however, hospitality refers to the practice of welcoming people, especially outsiders or strangers, into one’s home for the purpose of intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel. This follows a more historical and culturally traditional understanding of the practice of hospitality, which Joshua Jipp, Assistant Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, defines as “a set of social instructions such as providing food and lodging which are to be applied to outsiders, such that potential enemies are transformed into allies, or outsiders into insiders.”¹⁵ Biblical home hospitality entails the potential transformation of relationships. Practicing hospitality in their own homes will naturally increase the intentional interaction of members of FCBC and people in the community. Biblical home hospitality is different than the social practice of entertaining. The goal is not to put on a show or impress guests with the décor or food, but to offer a sincere welcome to strangers/outsideers that transitions them into a new relational identity built around the gospel of Christ.

Intentional Interaction. Since increased “intentional interaction” is the specific measurement of the action research, this phrase needs to be defined more clearly. By “intentional interaction,” the author refers to interpersonal interaction for the sake of building relationships that lead to opportunities to tell or “live” the gospel with people from the community. Such interactions might begin with common pleasantries and getting to know basic facts about people, but they also include efforts to get beyond everyday chit-chat and discuss issues related to faith, religion, religious experience, philosophy of life, the gospel, and other meaningful topics or

¹⁵ Joshua W. Jipp, *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts: An Interpretation of the Malta Episode in Acts 28:1-10*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 153 (Boston: Brill, 2013), 19.

interests. The “intention” part of this interaction relates to the mission of FCBC “to glorify God by telling and living the gospel in our community.” Any interaction that builds relationships that increase opportunities for the sake of the gospel may be considered “intentional interaction” for the purposes of this thesis project.

Table fellowship. This refers to sharing a meal with others that connotes a welcome, acceptance, or identification with each other. Discussions of table fellowship often center on the many examples of Jesus eating with others—especially socially disreputable people—in a way that invites or affirms relationship. David Gowler, Associate Professor of Religion at Emory University, says that the table fellowship of Jesus “breaks down social barriers to include outsiders as insiders.”¹⁶ Eating together in this way implies the establishing of friendship.¹⁷ As participants in the action research eat with outsiders in their homes, they will be interacting in a way that has the potential to build relationships and form new friendships. Eating together has always been a central part of Christian practice. In Acts 2:42-47, Luke’s summary of early Christian practice includes multiple references to food. They devoted themselves to fellowship and the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42), and their entire Christian life is summarized as *receiving their food* “with glad and generous hearts” as they gathered in the temple and in each other’s homes (Acts 2:46, English Standard Version).

Unlimited, unconditional, or universal hospitality. These terms are used interchangeably to refer to the principle of welcoming the stranger without any conditions and regardless of

¹⁶ David B. Gowler, “‘You Shall Love the Alien as Yourself’: Hope, Hospitality, and Love of the Stranger in the Teachings of Jesus,” *Religions* 10, no. 3 (March 2019): 9, accessed February 18, 2022, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/rel10030220>.

¹⁷ Note how Jesus cites his detractors as accusing him of being a “friend” of the undesirables with whom he shared table fellowship (e.g., Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34).

consequences.¹⁸ Often discussed in reaction to the work of deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida, these concepts relate to the ideal of total, unquestioning welcome of anyone and everyone. The example of Abraham's unconditional welcome and hospitality toward the three strangers in Genesis 18 is frequently cited. This ideal of unlimited hospitality is usually recognized to be unattainable and even undesirable in real life, since unqualified welcome of unknown and uninvited people into one's home is potentially dangerous. The stranger at the door may be friend or foe. In regard to the hospitality program developed for FCBC, participants must be made aware of the potential risks of hospitality. Although these risks are no greater than the normal risks of daily living, they do exist.

Limitations

Limitations of this thesis project exist that are beyond the control of the researcher. Perhaps the most significant is willing participation. The researcher cannot guarantee that the desired participants will actually engage with and support the action research. As noted above, participation is assumed; however, unforeseen events in any family could inhibit their participation.

A related limitation is expenses for participants. Hosting outsiders in one's home may involve some increased expenses for participants. Limited funding could be a potential limitation for participation. Having the church provide some funding to participants to cover hospitality expenses was considered but ultimately rejected. Doing so would create additional, unnecessary complexity for the project, and it is hoped that participants will continue the practice of biblical home hospitality on their own initiative and funding beyond the time period of the thesis project.

¹⁸ Dominador Bombongan, Jr., "The Deepening Digital Divide and the Concept of Hospitality," *Landas* 26, no. 1 (2012): 24.

Another limitation is the participants' housing being unavailable or undesirable for hospitality purposes. This could result, for example, from unsanitary conditions or current remodeling. To address this limitation, participants will be given the option to interact with people at a park or restaurant; however, hospitality in the home will be presented as the desired first option.

The total number of members of FCBC is another external limitation on the study. The church averages about fifty attendees at the main Sunday worship service. The study could not extend beyond the number of actual, available members since membership in the church was one of the delimitations of the research. The researcher's minimum goal is participation by ten family units, but he cannot guarantee the participation of anyone.

Delimitations

Some limitations on the project thesis were determined by the researcher. He chose the following limitations:

1) The study participants will be independent adult households. Participants must be individuals at least 18 years of age who live independently from their parents. This means children living in a home under a parent or guardian will not be included except in tabulating basic numbers.

2) The participants showing hospitality will be members of FCBC in Rocky Mount, VA. Non-members will not be included in the formal study of those engaging in hospitality as hosts. Even if they are regular attendees, they must be members of the church to participate officially. All attendees will be offered the Hospitality Plan Form (see Appendix G) and Hospitality Notebook (see Appendix H), but only eligible participants will sign the consent form and

complete questionnaires and interviews. Only the data of officially participating church members will be collected and analyzed.

3) The purpose is to develop and implement a program of biblical *home* hospitality; however, since the problem and thesis relate to interaction with the community, other instances of interaction will be noted, such as meeting people at a park or restaurant. These options will be offered as a non-preferred but allowable alternative for participants who may be unable or unwilling to host people in their home.

4) To qualify for the study, the recipients of the home hospitality must not be relatives, close friends, or currently attending FCBC. The reason for this delimitation is to encourage interaction with people in the community who do not already have a close relationship with the participants. Having close friends, family, and fellow church attendees over is certainly allowed and encouraged, but the goal of the study will be better served by focusing on people in the community with whom members do not already have friendships.

Thesis Statement

The thesis of this doctoral project is the following: *If a home hospitality program is developed and implemented at FCBC, intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between the church members and the local community will increase.* By teaching the members about the importance and necessity of biblical home hospitality, by equipping them to show hospitality, and by organizing them to do so in practice, it was expected that the connections between church members and people in the surrounding community would increase. The ultimate purpose for this increased interaction is that members of FCBC would have opportunities to tell and demonstrate the gospel of Christ.

Increasing the intentional interaction between church members and people in the community may lead to potential evangelistic outreach and to new visitors at the gathering of the body. While increased intentional interaction is the specific goal, instances of telling the gospel or people from the community visiting church services because of the hospitality effort will also be noted. It is hoped that church members who participate in the action research will continue community outreach through biblical home hospitality as a regular practice and way of life. Those who participate have the opportunity to push beyond their comfort zone toward a more actively biblical use of their homes in the service of Christ's mission.

Conclusion

This chapter described the ministry context of FCBC in Rocky Mount, Virginia. The problem identified at the church was a lack of intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between the church members and the local community. The purpose of this thesis project was to address the problem by developing and implementing a program of biblical home hospitality for the members of the church. This home hospitality would be offered to people in the community who are not relatives, not close friends, and not currently attending FCBC. The thesis is that if this program is developed and implemented, intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between members of the church and the community will increase. The limitations and delimitations of the project were presented, as well as a few assumptions and special definitions. The next chapter lays out the conceptual framework for the thesis project by focusing on prevalent themes in the current literature, the theological foundations for biblical home hospitality, and the theoretical foundations for a home hospitality program.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter includes a review of current literature about biblical hospitality, a description of the theological foundations for biblical hospitality and thus the proposed project thesis, and also the theoretical foundations for the thesis. The literature review identifies common themes in the scholarly discussion about biblical hospitality as well as some areas that may be underdeveloped. The theological foundation displays a biblical theology of hospitality, biblical examples of hospitality, and biblical commands for hospitality. The theoretical foundation focuses on principles for implementing a biblical hospitality program in private residences rather than in the corporate gathering of the church.

Literature Review

The literature review begins with a description of unconditional versus conditional hospitality as presented in the literature. Next, the way current authors describe and define biblical hospitality itself is reviewed. This is followed by a consideration of a few themes that are prominent among authors dealing with hospitality, including the idea of God's hospitality as the motivation and pattern of His people's hospitality, Jesus' table fellowship as a challenge to Christians today, and the implications of biblical hospitality on the issue of immigration.

Unconditional vs. Conditional Hospitality

Many current writers on hospitality focus on the tension between the desire to accept all strangers regardless of circumstances, versus mitigating the inherent risks involved in such unconditional acceptance. All authors examined by the researcher agreed that totally

unconditional hospitality is not practicable, but most still saw it as a worthy goal that challenges an overly self-protective impulse. The tension is seen as a healthy tension that constantly pushes toward greater openness or greater discernment, whichever is needed.¹ Christian authors tend to interpret these poles in light of the biblical mandate of love, which includes both the right to defend one's own, and the desire to protect the vulnerable stranger/guest.

The literature on hospitality includes many references to the philosopher Jacques Derrida's discussion of absolute or unconditional hospitality vs. limited or conditioned/conditional hospitality.² Although Derrida comes from the perspective of a postmodern deconstructionist, his concepts often frame the discussion, even in Christian writings. The juxtaposition and inevitable tension of unconditional vs. conditional hospitality is worth exploring in relation to a biblical view of hospitality.

Dominador Bombongan, Professor of Theology at De La Salle University, highlighted Derrida's reference to the "law of hospitality" in distinction to the "laws of hospitality."³ The law (singular) of hospitality is the principle of unlimited acceptance of the stranger, regardless of conditions or consequences. This law demands that uninvited strangers be welcomed and cared for regardless of who or what they are; indeed, without inquiring into them at all. On the other hand, the laws (plural) of hospitality are the conditions that are necessary to actually practice

¹ Leonardo Boff writes, "There ought always to be a dynamic articulation between conditional and unconditional hospitality so that one is not sacrificed in the name of the other. . . . Unconditional hospitality needs conditional hospitality so that it becomes effective. And conditional hospitality needs unconditional hospitality so that it does not become bureaucratic, and does not lose its openness, which is something essential when welcoming someone." Leonardo Boff, *Virtues: For Another Possible World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 57.

² Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). Of course, these observations are not original with Derrida. In 1975 Henri Nouwen spoke of "the polarity between hostility and hospitality" and of "our hope to receive our fellow humans with unconditional hospitality." Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 11.

³ Bombongan, "Deepening Digital Divide," 24.

hospitality in the real world. In reality, one cannot simply take in every stranger without some kind of discernment or judgment taking place.⁴ There is continual tension between the unconditional law of hospitality and the conditional laws of hospitality.

Derrida did not provide solid answers to the tension between these competing aspects of hospitality. Instead, what he did was insist “on a continuous need for negotiation between these interweaving forms of hospitality.”⁵ Derrida called on everyone to push the boundaries of hospitality toward unconditionality, while recognizing that pure unconditional acceptance of everyone is impracticable. Bombongan said that Derrida’s challenge “forces us to closely consider our ideas and expressions of hospitality and dares us to transcend or go beyond calculative, limited and legalistic forms of hospitality. It compels us to offer ever greater and more generous hospitality, even to the point of confronting our self-preserving convictions and beliefs.”⁶

Peter Benson of Cambridge University summarized Derrida’s dilemma in this way: “On the one hand, there is a moral imperative to show hospitality, especially to people in distress or fleeing from danger; and on the other hand, the total abandonment of borders would obliterate the home into which they are being invited.”⁷ Benson’s description relates the dilemma to the issue of migration, as do many current authors, but his point is clear. Total openness to strangers (including evil ones) will kill the very possibility of hospitality. Benson said that “both sides of the dilemma must always be kept in mind. The idealistic claims of an unrestrained hospitality, though impossible to follow as a law, must never be completely silenced by claims of

⁴ Bombongan, “Deepening Digital Divide,” 35.

⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁷ Peter Benson, “Xenos: Jacques Derrida on Hospitality,” *Philosophy Now*, Dec. 2017, https://philosophynow.org/issues/123/Xenos_Jacques_Derrida_on_Hospitality. Accessed February 16, 2022.

impracticality.”⁸ There seems to be fairly wide consensus on this dynamic in the current literature.

Richard Kearney, Professor of Philosophy at Boston College, described the two sides of hospitality as the “deconstructive” approach and the “hermeneutic” approach.⁹ Deconstruction relates to Derrida’s ideal of “true hospitality as unconditional.”¹⁰ Kearney noted, “Derrida acknowledges that such hospitality . . . is impossible,” yet “one senses a tacit ‘ought’ whispering behind the deconstructive ‘is.’”¹¹ Behind Derrida’s and others’ philosophizing, there seems to be an assumption that unlimited, unconditional reception of strangers is an ethical imperative or at least ideal.

Kearney then focused on what he calls the “hermeneutic” approach. He designated French philosopher Paul Ricœur as the exemplar of this approach. Kearney said, “Ricœur bases his hermeneutic approach on the model of a ‘linguistic hospitality’ that one enacts, for example, when one translates a guest language into a host language. The host language welcomes its guest and, of course, in the act of translation is transfigured by the guest language and vice versa.”¹² A translator must seek sympathetically to discern the full meaning of his text, as well as the best way to translate that meaning from one language to another. In the same way, a host should apply discernment in seeking to understand the stranger and guest, whether good or evil. A translator also recognizes that no translation can fully translate the meaning. The languages will

⁸ Benson, “Xenos.”

⁹ Richard Kearney, “Hospitality: Possible or Impossible?,” *Hospitality & Society* 5, no. 2 & 3 (2015): 174. Also in Richard Kearney and Melissa Fitzpatrick, *Radical Hospitality: From Thought to Action* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021), in Chapter 1 “Linguistic Hospitality,” accessed August 7, 2023, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=6461955>, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁰ Kearney, “Hospitality,” 174.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 175.

remain different. Similarly, the host in hospitality understands that his guest remains different, and does not insist that his guest become just like the host.¹³ There is a welcome, but also an appropriate distinction and judgment.

The application of this hermeneutical approach leads to a conditional kind of hospitality in which it is proper for the host to discern between the benevolent stranger and the hostile stranger.¹⁴ Kearney said, “The ethical conditions of hospitality require that sometimes you have to say ‘no’. [sic] We are often obliged to discern and discriminate; and, so doing, one generally has to invoke certain criteria to determine whether the person coming into your home is going to destroy you and your loved ones or is going to enter in a way that, where possible, is mutually enhancing.”¹⁵ One cannot effectively practice hospitality without discerning between the benign stranger and the probable threat.¹⁶

Miroslav Volf, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, confirmed the legitimacy of making such judgments by distinguishing between “differentiation” and “exclusion.”¹⁷ To differentiate is to judge someone to be different while still recognizing their connection and interdependence.¹⁸ To exclude is to cut the bonds between people by demonizing or dehumanizing the other.¹⁹ Excluding is not an appropriate process of

¹³ Kearney, “Hospitality,” 175-176.

¹⁴ Ibid., 175.

¹⁵ Ibid., 177.

¹⁶ John Caputo, “Unconditional Hospitality – When the Other Is Not Welcome,” *Theological Reflections: Eastern European Journal of Theology* 20, no. 2 (2023): 91.

¹⁷ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 64-68.

¹⁸ Ibid., 65-66.

¹⁹ Ibid., 67.

“drawing and maintaining boundaries,” but a sinful practice that regards the other/stranger as an absolute enemy or non-entity.²⁰

Kearney described the Bible as often representing the tension between these two types of hospitality: conditional and unconditional.²¹ Sometimes the stranger/foreigner is a political or religious threat to God’s people. Such foreigners should be opposed; however, strangers who are not a political or religious threat should be loved and shown hospitality. Kearney, like many authors, then highlighted the example of Abraham’s hospitality which tended toward the unconditional side (especially in Genesis 18).²² His conclusion was that individuals and societies must always make the wager between hospitality and hostility.²³ Hospitality always involves tolerance for a degree of risk; otherwise, it will never be practiced.

Christian authors have, of course, applied these ideas to explicitly Christian or biblical hospitality. Tobias Brandner, Assistant Professor of Church History and Missiology at Chinese University of Hong Kong, cited Derrida approvingly and said that “it is this internal tension between possible and absolute hospitality that keeps the concept alive.”²⁴ Cindy Bolden, Board Chair of A Place at the Table, described her ministry of hospitality in unlimited, unconditional terms reflective of Derrida’s ideal.²⁵ There seems to be a general leaning and almost intuitive notion that all people should be welcomed regardless of circumstances.

²⁰ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 67.

²¹ Kearney, “Hospitality,” 180.

²² *Ibid.*, 179-180.

²³ *Ibid.*, 173, 182-183. See also Kearney and Fitzpatrick, *Radical Hospitality*, in Chapter 1 “Linguistic Hospitality.”

²⁴ Tobias Brandner, “Hosts and Guests: Hospitality as an Emerging Paradigm in Mission,” *International Review of Mission* 102, no. 1 (2013): 102.

²⁵ Cindy Bolden, “Hospitality at Community Wells: The Life-Giving Waters of John 4:7–15,” *Review and Expositor* 117, no. 4 (2020): 526. A Place at the Table is a pay-what-you-can cafe in Raleigh, NC, providing community and good food for all regardless of means. It is an exercise in community hospitality.

Jakub Walczak, a Polish Carmelite whose doctorate in spiritual theology is from the Gregorian Pontifical University, also seemed initially to lean toward the unconditional side by focusing on Abraham's unconditional hospitality in Genesis 18 and the love of the stranger commanded in the Old Testament.²⁶ After surveying some New Testament principles, however, he (like Kearney) noted the inherent risks involved in showing hospitality to strangers, and stated that "the ideal to which we should strive is selfless love."²⁷ One might think that he intended by this to affirm unconditional hospitality, but he actually went on to note the biblical reality of human depravity, which implies that one should not indiscriminately welcome the unknown stranger.²⁸ He asserted, "The fact that we love somebody does not give this person the right to harm us, to put our lives at risk or to destroy us."²⁹ Indeed, to accept or allow the commission of evil would be inconsistent with biblical love, for love includes protecting others from harm.³⁰ Walczak concluded that Christian hospitality must be limited through careful analysis and discernment of people and situations.³¹

In evaluating the current state of the literature, Shirley Ho, Assistant Professor of Old Testament at China Evangelical Seminary, noted the two main ideas (conditional vs. unconditional hospitality) and identified Amy Plantinga and Richard Kearney as proponents of conditional hospitality, while Jacques Derrida and Joshua Mills-Knutsen were placed on the unconditional side.³² By examining the hospitality portrayed by Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9,

²⁶ Jakub Walczak, "The Conditions of Christian Hospitality," *The Way* 60, no. 3 (July 2021): 88-90.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

³² Shirley S. Ho, "Making Wise the Stranger: Sapiential Hospitality in Proverbs 1-9," *Open Theology* 7, no. 1 (2021): 612.

however, Ho reflected a slightly different focus. She argued that biblical hospitality is not simply about whether or not to embrace the stranger as he is: to protect oneself or risk destruction; rather, it is about having the resilience to receive the stranger (with all the risks involved) in order to protect the guest from fraudulent hospitality—like that offered by gangs (Proverbs 1), sexual predators (Proverbs 5-7), and financial scammers (Proverbs 6)—and to transform him through wise instruction. Ho noted that Lady Wisdom calls indiscriminately for people to enter her home for hospitality and table fellowship. She exercises a kind of proactive, unlimited hospitality.³³ This certainly puts Lady Wisdom at risk, yet she “operates from a position of power and strength” as the host (an idea unpopular to most authors on hospitality), and she has the resilience to weather and recover from the attacks of the stranger.³⁴ Despite the risks, Lady Wisdom invites the stranger in, but she does so from a position of authority in order to instruct and protect the stranger. In this way, her brand of unconditional hospitality is “a fitting manifestation of love.”³⁵

Ho’s work on protective sapiential hospitality confirmed and developed Jayme Reaves’ earlier book-length treatment of hospitality in which she examined the Abrahamic tradition (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) of protective hospitality. Following Ricœur’s hermeneutical approach, Reaves attempted to host Jewish and Muslim ideas of honor-bound, protective hospitality within the discussion of Christian hospitality.³⁶ In doing so, she concluded that all the Abrahamic religions have a history and theology of protective hospitality that encourages and

³³ Ho, “Making Wise the Stranger,” 617-618.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 618, 621.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 618.

³⁶ Jayme R. Reaves, *Safeguarding the Stranger: An Abrahamic Theology and Ethic of Protective Hospitality* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 33-35.

impels them to take the risk involved for the sake of those who are threatened.³⁷ Reaves said, “The practice of protective hospitality is situated not in the avoidance of risk, but instead in considering how risks should be encountered and managed with and on behalf of the threatened other.”³⁸

What is often missing from the discussion, however, is a clear description of specific circumstances under which hospitality is explicitly forbidden in Scripture. The focus is usually on pushing the ideal of unlimited hospitality while acknowledging that there must be some limitations because of real threats in the world. What specifically has led to this situation? A biblical worldview of creation, fall, and redemption best explains the current situation and future hopes of humanity. Within that context, there are passages of Scripture that explicitly command non-hospitality to certain kinds of people (e.g., 2 John; 1 Cor 5). On what basis the biblical writers make this judgment is not often examined.

In addition, when instances of biblical *inhospitality* are examined, they are sometimes interpreted negatively, even though the text of Scripture is presenting them positively. For example, when Fleur Houston, a United Reformed Church minister who worked with the Churches Refugee Network in the UK, considered the purifying reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra, she characterized them as racist, xenophobic misinterpretations of the law.³⁹ In this way, only the positive examples of hospitality need be examined, while the positive examples of inhospitality are dismissed as actually negative and non-representative of normative biblical teaching. This

³⁷ Reaves, *Safeguarding the Stranger*, 152.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

³⁹ Fleur S. Houston, *You Shall Love the Stranger As Yourself: The Bible, Refugees, and Asylum* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 124-132.

critical stance toward the biblical accounts cannot be accepted by those who agree with the assumption of biblical authority and inerrancy noted in Chapter 1 of this thesis paper.

This discussion of conditional versus unconditional hospitality relates to the problem of lack of intentional interaction described in this project in that families of FCBC must be challenged to be aware of the inherent risks of connecting with members of the community and hosting them in their homes, while at the same time potentially pushing themselves beyond their accustomed comfort zone in regard to welcoming strangers. The unconditional hospitality of Abraham in Genesis 18 and the proactive call of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 are a challenge for the church members to extend the invitation to community members who may be different and even seem threatening in some way. They are not, however, required to abandon all discernment in regard to whom they host; indeed, love must apply to protecting not only the stranger, but also their own families. Members do not have to welcome strangers who legitimately appear to be a threat to physical safety or biblical fidelity; however, they must be challenged to examine any tendency toward isolation and self-protectionism that has no substantive basis.

Definition/Description of Hospitality

Many current writers refer to the 1985 work of John Koenig in their discussions about Christian hospitality. Koenig, Professor of New Testament at the General Theological Seminary, noted the ancient Greek and near-Eastern tradition of hospitality in which “hospitality is seen as one of the pillars of morality upon which the universe stands.”⁴⁰ The great seriousness of hospitality in the ancient world is reflected in a number of stories in the Old Testament, and in

⁴⁰ John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership With Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 2.

the commands to show love to the stranger. Koenig summarized the idea of hospitality as “partnership with strangers.”⁴¹ He explained, “New Testament hospitality has to do with the establishment of committed relationships between guests and hosts in which unexpected levels of mutual welcoming occur, whether or not the participants are already known to one another.”⁴² Koenig related this concept to the biblical idea of *koinonia*.⁴³ His work emphasized that the host/guest relationship is not a one-way street. The host is not simply caring for the guest, who receives all the benefits; rather, the guest also blesses the host. There is a mutual benefit to hospitality, and this is why Koenig highlights the idea of hospitality as partnership.

While recognizing the insightfulness of Koenig’s work, Andrew Arterbury, Assistant Professor of Religion at Baylor University, critiqued his definition of hospitality from a historical perspective, stating that it is “simultaneously too broad, too narrow, and too fluid.”⁴⁴ It is too broad, he claimed, in that it sometimes is based on a modern idea of hospitality rather than a first century Mediterranean idea; it is too narrow in that Koenig limits hospitality to being given only toward strangers, whereas that is not always the case in antiquity; and it is too fluid in that he often reads the concept of “stranger” *into* a biblical passage in which it is not actually present and makes it a spiritualized or metaphorical concept rather than concrete.⁴⁵ Arterbury wants to limit the definition of hospitality to a more historical and biblical definition to avoid the danger of abstracting and philosophizing it into obscurity.

⁴¹ Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 8.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9. *Koinonia* is often translated “fellowship” or “partnership” in Scripture.

⁴⁴ Andrew E. Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting*, New Testament Monographs 8 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

Koenig himself cited the earlier work of Henri Nouwen, Professor of Pastoral Theology at Yale Divinity School, who lamented that the power and depth of ancient, biblical hospitality has been so watered down.⁴⁶ It is much more central and important than most realize. He said that hospitality is “a fundamental attitude toward our fellow human being,” not just receiving guests into our homes (although that is important).⁴⁷ For Nouwen, hospitality “means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy.”⁴⁸ He emphasized the idea of creating a safe, accepting atmosphere in which both the stranger/guest and the host can grow and learn from each other. The concept of hospitality as providing a safe space for others has been very influential and is a common theme in the literature.

The idea of hospitality as a transforming experience also runs throughout the subsequent literature. Hospitality “transforms both sides, host and guest.”⁴⁹ Commenting on hospitality shown through the table fellowship of Jesus in Luke’s gospel, Eric Baretto, Associate Professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary said, “Such meals are transformative spaces because of Jesus’s presence.”⁵⁰ Igor Lorencin, Lecturer of New Testament Studies at Friedensau Adventist University, said that hospitality can turn a stranger into a guest, and a guest

⁴⁶ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 47. Christine Pohl notes that Nouwen’s book *Reaching Out* is “behind many contemporary discussions.” Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 3.

⁴⁷ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 48.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 51; see also Reaves, *Safeguarding the Stranger*, 39, 43. A number of authors pick up Nouwen’s reference to the importance of a safe *space* for hospitality.

⁴⁹ Brandner, “Hosts and Guests,” 100.

⁵⁰ Eric D. Barreto, “A Gospel on the Move: Practice, Proclamation, and Place in Luke-Acts,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 72, no. 2 (2018): 179.

into a friend, and that it thus “seems to possess power to transform human relationships.”⁵¹

Brendan Byrne, Professor of New Testament at Jesuit Theological College, argued that the hospitality of Jesus led to human transformation by removing the “social stigma of the [negative] label,” thus altering in a positive manner the identity of His guests.⁵² This idea of transformation is mentioned by many others.⁵³ It has also been picked up by most popular-level works relating to Christian hospitality. *The Art of Neighboring* speaks of turning strangers into acquaintances and then developing a deeper relationship.⁵⁴ *The Gospel Comes With a House Key* says hospitality is “for the purpose of making strangers into neighbors and neighbors into family.”⁵⁵

This being the case, biblical hospitality goes beyond mere entertaining. The focus is not on the hosts and their attempt to impress their guests; rather, the focus of hosts is on their guests and the attempt to build deeper relationships for the good of both parties. For this attempt to be explicitly Christian, a gospel or doxological motivation must also be understood. This is directly relevant for the practice of hospitality by members of FCBC in that transformation of relationship is the essence of what is meant by *intentional* interaction with people from the community.

There is much discussion about the lexical origins of hospitality, focusing mainly on the Latin and Greek etymology. The Latin etymology of hospitality is said to be able to refer to

⁵¹ Igor Lorencin, “Hospitality as a Ritual Liminal-Stage Relationship with Transformative Power: Social Dynamics of Hospitality and Patronage in the Third Epistle of John,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 49, no. 3 (2019): 150.

⁵² Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke’s Gospel*, rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2015), 10.

⁵³ Bolden, “Hospitality at Community Wells,” 532-533; John Navone SJ, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” *New Blackfriars* 85, no. 997 (May 2004): 330.

⁵⁴ Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon, *The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 75.

⁵⁵ Rosaria Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes With a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 14.

either host *or* guest, and in this way highlights the “fluidity of the guest-host relationship.”⁵⁶ This fluidity is said to be reflected in the Greek term *xenos*, which “refers to the stranger who receives a welcome or acts as a welcomer of others.”⁵⁷ Houston said, “The Greek word for ‘hospitality’ is *philoxenia*, literally, ‘love of stranger,’ where *xenos* has the dual meaning of ‘stranger’ and ‘guest.’”⁵⁸ Gowler gave the following definition: “Hospitality, from the Greek *xenia* or *philoxenia*, has at its root the word for ‘stranger’ or ‘foreigner’ (*xenos*), and it includes the ancient virtue of welcoming, hosting, and assisting strangers or travelers.”⁵⁹ The etymology highlights that hospitality is primarily related to how one treats outsiders or strangers—those who are different or foreign in some way. In this way, biblical hospitality is not simply entertaining well-known friends and family, but does indeed push toward the boundaries of unconditionality, as highlighted above.

Jipp defined biblical hospitality—given in a more historical setting—as this: “A set of social instructions such as providing food and lodging which are to be applied to outsiders, such that potential enemies are transformed into allies, or outsiders into insiders.”⁶⁰ This definition includes the *practice* of hospitality (sharing and provision), the *objects* of hospitality (outsiders), and the *goal* of hospitality (transformation/relationship). What might be added is the biblical *motivation* of hospitality, namely, the glory of God by way of imitation of His own hospitality in Christ (see next section).

⁵⁶ Hershberger, *Christian View of Hospitality*, 19; Reaves, *Safeguarding the Stranger*, 41-42.

⁵⁷ Hershberger, *Christian View of Hospitality*, 19.

⁵⁸ Houston, *Love the Stranger*, 152.

⁵⁹ Gowler, “Love the Alien,” 6.

⁶⁰ Jipp, *Divine Visitations*, 19.

Jipp's definition (with minor modification) is useful for the members of FCBC in that it encourages them to focus on hospitality to people they do not necessarily know well or with whom they do not have much interaction: outsiders or strangers, mere acquaintances rather than close family or friends. It pushes them to go outside the boundaries of their usual circle of friends and family and invite others in. This could be a major challenge that requires overcoming psychological or emotional fears. Spiritual battles may need to be won. This definition also gives them a focus on the transformative and relational goals of hospitality. As they interact with the community, the love of Jesus is shown in such a way that Christ's mission is pursued and evangelism potentially takes place. Through this process, unbelievers in the community may be transformed into the family of God. It should be kept clearly in mind, however, to view guests primarily as Divine-image-bearing people to be cherished, and not merely evangelism projects.

God's Hospitality as Motivation and Example

One of the common themes in the literature is the connection between Christian hospitality and the concept that God Himself is the ultimate Host who shows hospitality to humanity both in creation and redemption. In this way, God's hospitality is both a motivation for the believer's hospitality, and an example to follow.

Christine Pohl, Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Asbury Theological Seminary, said in her oft-cited work *Making Room*, "The distinctive quality of Christian hospitality is that it offers a generous welcome to the 'least,' without concern for advantage or benefit to the host. Such hospitality reflects God's greater hospitality that welcomes the undeserving, provides the lonely with a home, and sets a banquet table for the hungry."⁶¹ Bendanglemla Longkumer,

⁶¹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 16.

Associate Professor of Christian Theology at Leonard Theological College, began her discussion of hospitality as missional by asserting that “it invites others to experience the redemptive . . . hospitality of God.”⁶² Christian hospitality is an outworking and reflection of God’s hospitality.⁶³ This is one of the most oft-asserted concepts of the current literature on biblical hospitality. It is to be celebrated that so many thinkers are beginning with a God-centered orientation.

The hospitality of God is described as being revealed through creation, His dealings with His people in the Old Testament, the mission of Jesus Christ, and the ultimate promise of the kingdom of God. In the creation account, God prepares a safe home (the garden of Eden) with abundant provision before creating humanity as His invited guests.⁶⁴ As Norman Wirzba, Professor of Theology at Duke Divinity School said, “God’s original creation of the Garden of Eden was and continues to be an act in which God ‘makes room’ for what is not God to be and to flourish.”⁶⁵

In the wilderness wanderings, God provides safety and food for His traveling people.⁶⁶ He brings them to the Promised Land, a new home flowing with milk and honey, and establishes them there as His guests.⁶⁷

⁶² Bendanglemla Longkumer, “Hospitality as a Paradigm in Mission: An Ecumenical and Indigenous Exploration,” *Quest* 4 (2019): 2.

⁶³ Jody B. Fleming, “Spiritual Generosity: Biblical Hospitality in the Story of Lydia (Acts 16:14-16, 40),” *Missiology* 47, no. 1 (2019): 58; Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 2; Dustin Willis and Brandon Clements, *The Simplest Way to Change the World: Biblical Hospitality as a Way of Life* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 37-42; Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 8. Houston, *Love the Stranger*, 163; Jipp, *Divine Visitations*, 213-216.

⁶⁴ Christopher J. Freet, *A New Look at Hospitality as a Key to Missions*, Critical Christian Issues 8 (Gonzalez, FL: Energion, 2014), 10-13; Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” 331.

⁶⁵ Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 111.

⁶⁶ Freet, *New Look at Hospitality*, 13-16; Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” 331.

⁶⁷ Freet, *New Look at Hospitality*, 16; Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” 331.

In the New Testament, Jesus extends the welcome and hospitality of God to all, even the socially despised toll collectors and sinners. In His gracious table fellowship and in His teachings, He points to the future and eternal hospitality of God available in His kingdom through repentance and faith.⁶⁸ The hospitality of God—His heart of welcome and provision for the other—is a thread that weaves throughout Scripture from beginning to end.

It is in response to the hospitable nature of God that His people are to welcome the stranger and make them guests. Longkumer said, “It is becoming clear that, as Christians, there is a requirement to welcome strangers and care for them, which is a reminder of God’s hospitality toward us.”⁶⁹ This fits with a basic principle of Scripture, that believers ought to treat others the way they have been treated by God in Christ. For example, Ephesians 5:1-2 says, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (ESV). The imitation of God includes imitating His hospitable welcome of strangers, especially those who might be considered undesirable.

Many authors note this theme of God’s hospitality, but a possible deficiency in the literature is the way God responds to rejection of His hospitality. Just as Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden when they refused God’s hospitality, so the Jews were cast out of the Promised Land through exile when they proved to be persistently bad guests. Indeed, this perspective can continue into Jesus’ offer of God’s hospitality through salvation and entrance into His eternal kingdom. All who refuse to enter God’s eternal home through the offer of Christ will be

⁶⁸ Brandner, “Hosts and Guests,” 95-96; Gowler, “Love the Alien,” 9-10; Freet, *New Look at Hospitality*, 47; Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 17-31; Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” 335.

⁶⁹ Longkumer, “Hospitality as a Paradigm,” 3; also Fleming, “Spiritual Generosity,” 52; Brandner, “Hosts and Guests,” 95-96; Joon-Sik Park, “Hospitality as Context for Evangelism,” *Missiology* 30, no. 3 (July 2002): 386.

excluded forever from the kingdom. It seems that God's hospitality is universally offered but is not unconditional, to relate it back to the previous discussion.

This perspective on God's hospitality—that is, God as One who casts out His disorderly guests—is not greatly discussed or developed, perhaps because it is neither pleasant nor popular to consider. When thinking of God as the ultimate hospitable Host, believers must beware the perennial tendency to create a God according to their personal preference. A God who welcomes everyone unconditionally may be presented as the ideal or the reality by some writers, but such is not the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture. The God of the Bible lays down clear conditions of repentance and faith. The responsibility of God's invited guests, and what happens to those who ultimately refuse His offer of hospitality, is something that could bear more attention. One should not forget that Jesus' oft-cited parable of the great banquet in Luke 14 concludes with the words, "None of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet" (Luke 14:24, ESV). The triune God of Scripture is the ultimate foundation of loving relationship, but not all are ultimately brought into that love. The God of hospitality does eventually shut the door on those unwilling to enter according to His conditions.

The Challenge of Jesus' Hospitality/Table Fellowship

Another theme in the literature of biblical hospitality is the portrayal of Jesus in the Gospels as both guest and host in table fellowship, especially with the undesirables and outcasts of society. By associating with "sinners" in the context of meals, Jesus extends the offer of God's fellowship and hospitality to all who repent.⁷⁰ These meals—seen both in historical reality and in

⁷⁰ Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 16.

His parables—prefigure the eschatological Messianic banquet.⁷¹ Jesus comes as a stranger and guest into this world, seeking those who will offer him hospitality.⁷² Welcoming Jesus is welcoming salvation itself.⁷³ The stranger—Jesus—turns out to be the ultimate Host of God’s gracious hospitality.⁷⁴ Those who welcome Him as guest are consequently welcomed by God.

Gowler pointed out, “The most common recipients of the hospitality that Jesus extends are the poor and the oppressed, including social outcasts such as tax collectors and sinners.”⁷⁵ Barreto described these “sinners” as people who “do not belong. It matters very little what they may have done in their past. It matters very little what their behavior is. It’s their identity that matters. When we see ‘sinners,’ we do not see neighbors, friends, siblings, or fellow guests at a table; we see a body to exclude.”⁷⁶ Jesus associated with such people and positively changed their identities through table fellowship.⁷⁷

This theme is seen as a challenge to modern Christianity to rid itself of prejudices and follow the example of Jesus’ inclusiveness.⁷⁸ Interpreting Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well through the lens of hospitality, Bolden highlighted the way Jesus crossed historical, religious, and cultural boundaries.⁷⁹ Longkumer pointed out that differences,

⁷¹ Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 18, 139-140; Hershberger, *Christian View of Hospitality*, 130; Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” 333-335.

⁷² Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 61, 88; Jipp, *Divine Visitations*, 203; Hershberger, *Christian View of Hospitality*, 27; Longkumer, “Hospitality as a Paradigm,” 4; Francisco Lozada, Jr., “Johannine (Ambivalent) Hospitality: Explorations for Today,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 77, no. 4 (October 2023): 338.

⁷³ Jipp, *Divine Visitations*, 178-180; Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” 333.

⁷⁴ Park, “Hospitality as Context,” 386; Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 71, 88, 117, 167; Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” 332.

⁷⁵ Gowler, “Love the Alien,” 9.

⁷⁶ Barreto, “Gospel on the Move,” 180.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 176, 180-181.

⁷⁸ Walczak, “Conditions of Christian Hospitality,” 91-92.

⁷⁹ Bolden, “Hospitality at Community Wells,” 528-529.

individualism, and privatization are hindrances to biblical hospitality, but that Christians must follow the example of Jesus and live out “a very different set of values in relationship. We are according dignity to others; we are breaking social boundaries; we are including those who are so often excluded; we are engaging in transformation.”⁸⁰ The example of Jesus’ table fellowship is part of the reason many authors urge the Church to push the boundaries of hospitality toward unlimited/unconditional hospitality.

Public Policy: Migrants

Finally, it should be noted that in light of current events, many recent authors apply the topic of Christian hospitality to the issue of immigration. Almost all the authors who comment on this are pushing for more accepting, compassionate policies toward migrants, especially those who are poor, dispossessed, or in danger. This focus does not seem directly applicable to the project envisioned for FCBC.

In regard to migrants, authors highlight the many commands in the Old Testament to treat the stranger or foreigner with justice and to provide for and protect them.⁸¹ Abraham’s example of unconditional hospitality urges the acceptance of migrants regardless of status.⁸² The status of God’s people as foreigners and exiles in this world should give them solidarity with literal foreigners and exiles.⁸³ Jesus Himself was a refugee when His family fled to Egypt, and this should give us sympathy for modern-day refugees.⁸⁴ Jesus’ welcome toward the undesirables of

⁸⁰ Longkumer, “Hospitality as a Paradigm,” 2-4.

⁸¹ Houston, *Love the Stranger*, 71-77; Gowler, “Love the Alien,” 6-7; Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 127, 137-140.

⁸² Kearney, “Hospitality: Possible or Impossible?,” 182-183; Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 129-133; Houston, *Love the Stranger*, 149-150.

⁸³ Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 127; Houston, *Love the Stranger*, 145-147; Gowler, “Love the Alien,” 6-7.

⁸⁴ Houston, *Love the Stranger*, 134-136.

society encourages the Church to lean toward welcome rather than exclusion.⁸⁵ At the same time, it is recognized that some boundaries must exist (i.e., it is legitimate for a nation to have borders and to control them), for without boundaries, the very ability to show hospitality is ultimately lost.⁸⁶ One cannot invite others “in” if there is no distinguishable place into which they may come. The ability to exercise hospitality is dependent on the existence of some form of boundary.

Conclusion

The literature review shows the tension between conditional versus unconditional hospitality as a major paradigm in the discussion of hospitality. Many authors push toward the ideal of unconditional hospitality while recognizing that some rules and boundaries are necessary to practice hospitality in the real world. The hospitality of God is presented as the ultimate basis, pattern, and goal of Christian hospitality. God’s hospitality is reflected both in Israel’s history and the ministry of Jesus Christ. The boundary-crossing nature of biblical hospitality is seen in the table fellowship of Jesus with “sinners,” and this is presented as a challenge for the modern Church. Finally, the public policy issue of how to deal with and feel about migrants is often related to the discussion of biblical hospitality.

Worth noting is that the instances in which Scripture discourages or explicitly prohibits hospitality are rarely discussed in any depth. There are times when God or biblical writers forbid accepting or welcoming a certain person or kinds of people in hospitality. This is noted occasionally by modern authors, but the reason for this is not often developed. In addition,

⁸⁵ Barreto, “Gospel on the Move,” 186; Gowler, “Love the Alien,” 9-10.

⁸⁶ Benson, “Xenos”; Walczak, “Conditions of Christian Hospitality,” 95-97; Reaves, *Safeguarding the Stranger*, 146-147.

examples of exclusion that Scripture intends to portray as positive tend to be ignored or even presented as negative in contradiction to the text's intent. The passages of Scripture that lean away from unconditional hospitality could be examined in more detail.

This section was a review of current literature about biblical hospitality. In the next section, the theological foundation for the thesis project relating to biblical hospitality is laid. It focuses on biblical theology, examples, and commands related to hospitality.

Theological Foundations

The theological foundations for this thesis project will be laid in three layers. The first layer is a general biblical theology of hospitality. This is the broadest layer on which everything else is built. The next layer consists of biblical examples of hospitality, both positive and negative, and how those who practice or do not practice hospitality to strangers are viewed in Scripture. The final layer shows the direct biblical commands and expectation for believers to show hospitality to each other and to outsiders. Love of strangers and of fellow believers through showing hospitality is not optional in Scripture.

Biblical Theology of Hospitality

The theme of hospitality is woven through the fabric of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. It begins in the creation account. God created a safe, inviting place (the garden of Eden) into which He as the host invited humanity. Humans were the strangers, created by God to share His generous hospitality. Freet said, "According to the rules of hospitality, God fulfills the role of 'host' while humanity is invited through the creative work of God into the role of 'guest.'"⁸⁷ Part of the reason God created humanity last was that He was preparing His home for

⁸⁷ Freet, *New Look at Hospitality*, 10.

them to enter, including the food He would give them.⁸⁸ Providing food is one of the understood requirements of hospitality. As the Psalmist reflected on the week of creation, he said, “You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man’s heart” (Ps 104:14-15, ESV). The first things God provided humanity were food (Gen 1:29) and a day of rest (Gen 2:1-3). This was generous hospitality in God’s dwelling place. That the garden of Eden may be thought of as God’s home is justified by studies showing that Eden was the archetypal temple of God, and thus the place of His presence and dwelling.⁸⁹ In the rebellion of humanity, God’s hospitality was rejected, and the curse—consisting in the removal of elements of hospitality (e.g., scarcity of food instead of abundance; hard labor instead of rest; danger instead of safety)—was the result.⁹⁰

This pattern was repeated in the history of the nation of Israel. God repeatedly provided food and a place of safety and rest for His people, whether in Egypt, the wilderness, or the Promised Land.⁹¹ God took the enslaved Hebrews, who had largely forgotten about Him, and rescued them from danger, bringing them into covenant with Him at Sinai. He brought them into a promised land where he fed them (it was a land flowing with milk and honey) and provided safety and rest. The sacrifices he instituted may even be seen as a kind of fellowship meal

⁸⁸ Freet, *New Look at Hospitality*, 10-11; also Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” 329, 331.

⁸⁹ James M. Hamilton, *Typology: Understanding the Bible’s Promise-Shaped Patterns* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2022), 224-232; Greg Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 79-80; T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 15-30.

⁹⁰ Freet, *New Look at Hospitality*, 12-13.

⁹¹ Rodney K. Duke, “Hospitality,” *BTDB*, 360; C. D. Pohl, “Hospitality,” *NDBT*, 562; Freet, *New Look at Hospitality*, 13-16; Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” 331.

between Israel and God.⁹² He reminded them, however, that they were “strangers and sojourners” in a land that belonged to Him (Lev 25:23, ESV). They were His guests in the land. In their victory song over the Egyptian army, they declared, “You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode” (Exod 15:13, ESV). The Psalmist appealed to God’s hospitality as the basis for receiving mercy in Psalm 39:12, “Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers” (ESV). Because God is righteous, the Psalmist can expect Him to be hospitable to His guests.

The Israelites failed to be good guests in God’s land, however, and the result was that they were ejected like Adam and Eve from Eden. They were excluded from the place of God’s hospitable presence (represented in the Jerusalem Temple,⁹³ which God allowed to be destroyed) and consigned to exile. This is part of a major theme of the Bible, namely, how sinful mankind and a holy God can dwell together. Redemptive history shows repeatedly the problem of God being the divine Host to rebellious humanity. He desires to welcome humanity into His home to dwell with Him. He will provide all the safety, nourishment, cleansing, and rest they need. They prove again and again, however, that they are unruly guests who will only abuse His gifts and profane and damage the home He provides. The result is always exclusion of some kind.

The ultimate proof of Man’s inability to accept God’s hospitality on His terms was their violation of hospitality toward God’s Son. The Gospel of John especially develops this theme. In John’s Gospel, Jesus is described in almost every chapter as the One who came from or was sent from heaven/the Father and will return to heaven/the Father (John 1:2, 9, 14; 3:12-13, 17, 19, 31;

⁹² Duke, “Hospitality,” 360.

⁹³ Alexander, *From Eden*, 43-44.

4:34; 5:24, 37-38, 43; 6:29-38, 57-58, 61-62; 7:33; 8:14, 16, 18, 29, 42; 9:33, 39; 10:36; 11:27, 42; 12:8, 44-46, 49; 13:1, 20; 14:2-4, 12, 28; 15:21; 16:5, 17, 27-28, 30; 17:3-5, 8, 13, 18, 21, 23, 25; 18:37; 20:17, 21).⁹⁴ As Jesus says in John 16:28, “I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father” (ESV). Where Jesus came from and where he was going are also frequently misunderstood or debated by the confused and the unbelieving in John’s Gospel (John 6:41-44; 7:27-28, 41-43, 52; 8:14, 21-23; 9:16, 29; 13:36-37; 14:5; 16:17-18; 19:9).⁹⁵

Jesus is the divine visitor from heaven.⁹⁶ The question is, “Will humanity welcome Him hospitably? Or will humanity reject Him?” This dynamic is summarized in John’s prologue: “The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:9-12, ESV). All who welcome the divine stranger from heaven as God’s saving Son will themselves be welcomed into God’s home, not just as guests, but as family. Jesus promised in John 14:23, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (ESV). The exile and estrangement of humanity ends when Jesus is welcomed and shown hospitality in one’s heart. Just as Jesus was welcomed to the wedding in Cana as a guest but ended up fulfilling the role of the host by providing wine (John 2), so Jesus will become the divine host for all who welcome Him as guest.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 81.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 61, 88; Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 80; Duke, “Hospitality,” 360.

⁹⁷ Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 82; Lozada, “Johannine (Ambivalent) Hospitality,” 339.

In Luke's Gospel, even at Jesus' birth, He found a lack of hospitality as "there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7, ESV). When He spoke in his hometown of Nazareth, His childhood neighbors "rose up and drove him out of town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff" (Luke 4:29, ESV). Trying to murder someone is the ultimate inhospitality.

Jesus, in contrast, came on the scene as the One who offers God's hospitable welcome to humanity, and this eschatological welcome is, especially in Luke's Gospel, prefigured by the table fellowship Jesus shared with sinners.⁹⁸ Jesus showed great mercy and kindness toward the outsiders of society by sharing meals with them. In John's Gospel, the welcome of Jesus through believing in Him shows a person's reception of the salvation that comes from Him as the Son of God. In Luke's Gospel, the welcome of Jesus that brings salvation is displayed physically through instances of actual table fellowship; for example, He allowed Himself to be the guest of Levi, a hated tax collector, even calling him to be His disciple (Luke 5:27-29). Jesus told his disciples that their receiving God's kingdom will result in eschatological table fellowship with Christ: "I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:29-30, ESV). The table fellowship theme in Luke climaxes with the institution of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:7-23), which looks forward to the eternal banquet of fellowship with Christ and His people.⁹⁹

His sharing meals with unacceptable people made Jesus notorious among the self-righteous (Luke 7:34). The religious leaders grumbled about this sharing of hospitality between

⁹⁸ Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 20. Robert Karris's observation about Luke's Gospel has been repeated often: "In Luke's Gospel Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal." Robert J. Karris, *Eating Your Way Through Luke's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2006), 14.

⁹⁹ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, "Luke," in *Luke-Acts*, vol. 10, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman, III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 151; Byrne, *The Hospitality of God*, 61, 88.

one who was supposed to be holy and disreputable sinners (Luke 5:30). The negative reaction to His accepting hospitality from a disreputable woman while a guest at a Pharisee's house led Jesus to commend the woman while condemning the Pharisee for his violation of hospitality customs (Luke 7).¹⁰⁰ Her hospitable attitude toward Jesus proved her love and resulted in forgiveness and salvation from Jesus, whereas the religious leaders again ended up grumbling and missed out on forgiveness (Luke 7:47-50). Literal hospitality toward the man Jesus corresponded to forgiveness, while inhospitality toward Him corresponded to condemnation.

This dynamic extends even to Jesus' disciples. In Luke 9, Jesus said to his disciples, "Wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them" (Luke 9:5, ESV). Refusing to welcome Jesus' disciples in hospitality is a refusal of the One they proclaim. How one responds to the messengers of the gospel reflects one's stance toward God Himself. Those who reject God's offer of hospitality in the gospel will ultimately be excluded from His eternal home. To reject God's messengers is to reject the gospel message they carry.

In addition, those who do not practice hospitality toward other humans (especially the poor and needy) will be exposed as unbelievers who will be cursed and excluded from eternal life. In Matthew 25, Jesus based the final judgment on whether or not people fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, and helped the sick and imprisoned. In doing or not doing these things, people have done or not done them for Jesus Himself. In this passage, it is not the commission of evil by which people are judged, but the failure to do good, particularly related to issues of hospitality.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Liefeld and Pao, "Luke," 151.

¹⁰¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 637-638.

James may have had Jesus' statement in Matthew 25 in mind when he gave an example of the futility of faith without works in James 2:15-16.¹⁰² He pictured an inadequately clothed, half-starving believer showing up at a person's door and receiving only verbal blessing rather than actual physical help. This failure of action is said to represent a useless, non-saving kind of faith (James 2:14-26). While commentators do not commonly make the connection, in James 2 it is precisely a failure of hospitality that demonstrates spurious, non-justifying faith. Showing biblical hospitality is therefore explicitly related to one's spiritual status and salvation.

The eternal hospitality of God is reflected in the descriptions of heaven and the eternal state. Jesus said in John 14:2-3, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (ESV). The coming of Christ is described in terms of a host going out to greet his guests to escort them with honor to his home.

Jesus also described the kingdom of God in terms of a great banquet from which the reluctant will be excluded, but the outcasts of society welcomed (Luke 14:15-24; Matt 22:1-10). In Matthew 9:15 and Luke 5:34, Jesus compared his disciples to wedding guests. The joyous banquet symbolism is repeated in Revelation 19 where those who share in the marriage feast between the Lamb and His bride are blessed (Rev 19:7-9). This imagery picturing eternal life as a joyous feast is God's fulfillment of prophetic descriptions found in passages like Isaiah 25:6-8, in which God's providing a rich eschatological feast for His people corresponds with the

¹⁰² Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 125.

abolishing of death itself.¹⁰³ God will welcome believers into new heavens and a new earth where “he will dwell with them” (Rev 21:1-3, ESV), providing “the water of life without payment” (Rev 21:6, ESV), and making available the tree of life that brings healing (Rev 22:2). All who hear and are thirsty are invited to “come” and experience God’s eternal table fellowship (Rev 22:17, ESV), but those who persist in sinful rebellion will be excluded (Rev 21:8, 27; 22:15). God’s eternal hospitality is offered to all who will come.

This brief overview of a biblical theology of hospitality shows the vital importance of the subject and necessity of its practice. From beginning to end, God is the gracious Host seeking to welcome humanity into His eternal hospitality through which He will provide eternal safety, rest, nourishment, refreshment, cleansing, companionship, and ultimately a familial relationship. Redemptive history—particularly that of Israel—shows the persistent struggle of humanity to accept the welcome of God on His terms because of their inherent rebelliousness. Jesus came as the stranger from heaven, seeking those who would welcome Him hospitably. He also embodied the hospitality of God through His table fellowship with outcasts. He pointed forward through His meals and through the Lord’s Supper to the rich banquet promised to those who will come in faith. All who welcome Him are welcomed by God, and this situation will be reflected in their own willingness to show hospitality to strangers.

These kinds of biblical teachings led early Christians like Clement of Rome (late 1st century AD) to recognize the spiritual necessity of hospitality. He wrote that Rahab was commended for her “faith and hospitality” (*1 Clem* 12.1), that Lot was saved from destruction because of his “hospitality and godliness” (*1 Clem* 11.1), and that Abraham received his

¹⁰³ Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, The NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 450.

promised son “because of his faith and hospitality” (*I Clem* 10.7).¹⁰⁴ Clement wrote this to the church in Corinth which continued to manifest disunity and division. According to Clement, part of the solution to disunity in the church was a recapturing of the necessity of biblical hospitality. Clement’s writings seem to indicate that hospitality was a major paradigm in the early church. It should be reemphasized by the modern church.

For this thesis project, an understanding of the biblical theology of hospitality will help members of FCBC accept the importance and necessity of showing hospitality. Rather than simply being a nice but optional thing to do, they will see that it is a perspective that describes the heart of God’s redemptive plan. Their desire to treat others the way they have been treated by God will extend to showing hospitality to people in the community. They will see that doing so is a reflection of their standing with God. This will be a powerful motivation for them to eagerly participate in the research.

Biblical Examples of Hospitality

The Bible is full of examples and references to hospitality and table fellowship themes, both positive and negative. As noted above, these begin with God’s hospitality toward Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Several important instances of hospitality or inhospitality in the Bible will be highlighted.

Genesis 18-19 are foundational in showing the contrast between hospitality and inhospitality, how important it is to God, and how it reveals the righteousness or wickedness of people.¹⁰⁵ In Genesis 18, Abraham eagerly and unconditionally welcomed three strangers with

¹⁰⁴ Paul A. Hartog, “Abraham and the Rhetoric of Hospitality and Foreignness in Hebrews and *I Clement*,” *Science et Esprit* 72 (2020): 285; Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 3-5.

¹⁰⁵ F. S. Kassa, “A Home For All: The Story of the Inversion of Hospitality in Genesis 19,” *In die Skriflig* 53 (2019): 3, accessed November 8, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v53i1.2493>.

food, drink, shelter, and rest (Gen 18:2-8). The result was a reaffirmation of God's promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah. Abraham proved himself to be a great host who showed hospitality to strangers. The contrast to Abraham's righteous hospitality is then seen in the events concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁰⁶ Lot, like Abraham, showed hospitality to two of the messengers (angels) who came to Sodom from Abraham's place; however, Lot was unable to protect his guests and violated his responsibility as a father by offering to give up his daughters to gang rape.¹⁰⁷ He was a well-intentioned bungler of hospitality, but was delivered nonetheless.¹⁰⁸ Not so for the people of Sodom. Their sin has historically been identified with homosexuality and violence, but in the context of Scripture, their sexual violence was also (and perhaps primarily) evidence of their wicked inhospitality to strangers, in contrast to Abraham and Lot.¹⁰⁹ Just as the hospitable welcoming of Jesus demonstrates one's spiritual state, so the response to the visiting strangers in Genesis 18-19 demonstrated or reflected the people's righteousness or unrighteousness.

When Abraham's servant went back to his master's homeland to find a wife for Isaac, he asked the Lord that the woman who showed hospitality by volunteering to give water not only to him but also to his camels would be the woman of God's choice (Gen 24:12-14). Rebekah immediately approached and did so, also offering to welcome the servant into her family's home for hospitality (Gen 24:23-25). Again, this impulse toward hospitality on the part of Rebekah and

¹⁰⁶ Andrew E. Steinmann, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, ed. David G. Firth (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 191; Kassa, "A Home For All," 3.

¹⁰⁷ Steinmann, *Genesis*, 198; Kassa, "A Home For All," 4; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin, vol. 1, Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 233; Eliana Ah-Rum Ku, "The Hermeneutics of Hospitality for Epistemic Justice," *Religions* 14, no. 2 (2023): 133-35.

¹⁰⁸ B. K. Waltke and C. J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 274.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Abraham: The Story of a Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 132ff.

her family is seen as highly commendable and reflects God's intention to include Rebekah in his covenant plan.

The book of Judges records a dark time in Israel's history. One hospitality story in particular is highly reminiscent of the incident in Sodom. In Judges 19-21, the story is told of a traveling Levite and his concubine. Late in the day, he chose to bypass a Gentile city in order to stay the night among Israelites where he believed he would be safer. Sadly, this proved to be false. A man of Gibeah did invite him into his home for hospitality, but the townsfolk came and demanded access to the male guest. The language is very similar to that of Genesis 19: "*Bring them out to us, that we may know them*" (Gen 19:5, ESV); "*Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him*" (Judg 19:22, ESV). Also, "No, *my brothers, do not act so wickedly, since this man has come into my house*" (Judg 19:23, ESV); "I beg you, *my brothers, do not act so wickedly*" (Gen 19:7, ESV). Just like in Sodom, women were offered to the mob in place of the man (Gen 19:8; cf. Judg 19:24). This time, however, the concubine was actually thrust out and abused all night, dying of her injuries. The result was that all the tribes of Israel rose up against the tribe of Benjamin (the perpetrators) and almost annihilated the entire tribe. A tribe of Israel was almost made extinct because of an extreme violation of hospitality almost identical to that of the Sodomites, showing how wicked God's people had become during this time period.

In the New Testament, Jesus requested hospitality from Zacchaeus, a disreputable tax collector. Zacchaeus "received him joyfully" (Luke 19:6, ESV), and the result was that Jesus proclaimed, "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:9, ESV). The Pharisees grumbled that Jesus would identify positively with a "sinner," but Jesus declared Zacchaeus to be "a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9, ESV). Like Abraham, Zacchaeus showed hospitality to the

Lord. Hospitality to Jesus transformed Zacchaeus' identity from a "sinner" excluded from the covenant community to a "son" who was declared by Jesus to be part of the covenant community.¹¹⁰ This incident illustrates the transformative power of hospitality. One's identity can be changed by it. It also shows the importance of believers not only acting as hosts, but also accepting hospitality as guests of unbelievers.

In Acts 10, it was through hospitality that God propelled the gospel offer into the Gentile world and established the unity of Jew and Gentile in the church.¹¹¹ God showed the Apostle Peter a vision (three times) in which Peter was invited to eat food that would be considered unclean according to Jewish law. When Peter objected, God told him the food had been made clean (Acts 10:9-16). The result of the incident was that when the messengers of Cornelius (presumably Gentiles) came to Peter's door, "he invited them in to be his guests" (Acts 10:23, ESV). God was beginning the work of joining Gentiles and Jews together in one body, and He did so through divinely sanctioned acts of hospitality.

Peter then agreed to go and receive the hospitality of Cornelius in his home, a shocking thing for a righteous Jewish man to do. Peter said, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean" (Acts 10:28, ESV). The New Covenant formation of the church, the people of God consisting of all who have faith in Jesus, demanded a change in the Old Covenant law. When Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius and his household, God sent the Holy Spirit upon them to prove that Gentiles were now to be included among God's people through faith (Acts 10:44-47). After their reception of the gospel, "they asked [Peter] to remain

¹¹⁰ Barreto, "Gospel on the Move," 181.

¹¹¹ Park, "Hospitality as Context," 388.

for some days,” which Peter did (Acts 10:48, ESV). The sharing of hospitality between Jews and Gentiles in response to God’s revelation and power was the first sign and practice of the unity of the church. This unity was not just theoretical, theological, or spiritual in nature, but was fleshed out explicitly through the practice of reciprocal hospitality.

The Apostle John dealt with an issue of hospitality in Third John. He condemned the arrogant Diotrephes “who likes to put himself first” (3 John 9, ESV). Diotrephes rejected Apostolic authority and talked “wicked nonsense” against them (3 John 9-10, ESV). The height of his wickedness, however, was that “not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church” (3 John 10, ESV).¹¹² Diotrephes’ breach of hospitality toward traveling Christians and his forbidding other believers to practice it was considered outrageous. He is associated with evil, not good (3 John 11).¹¹³

The way Scripture portrays these examples of hospitality and inhospitality shows again its importance. Those who refused to show hospitality to strangers or to fellow believers were strongly condemned and characterized as unrighteous or evil. Those who did show hospitality to strangers and fellow believers were blessed and proven to be righteous. In light of this, the members of FCBC must see that this practice is not optional for believers. Welcoming people from the community, welcoming each other, and sharing table fellowship is an important biblical way of demonstrating one’s faith and righteousness. In addition, if members are concerned about the status of those in the community (“outsiders”; “sinners”; “not like us”), they can learn that

¹¹² Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 320.

¹¹³ Constantine R. Campbell, *1, 2, & 3 John*, The Story of God Bible Commentary, eds. Tremper Longman, III and Scot McKnight (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 228; Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 321.

one's identity and relationship can be transformed through the practice of hospitality. Strangers can become guests, friends, and even part of God's covenant family.

Biblical Commands for Hospitality

Finally, biblical commands for and against hospitality will be noted. Israel was commanded repeatedly in the Old Covenant law to treat strangers, foreigners, and sojourners with kindness and not to mistreat them (Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:10, 33-34; 23:22; Deut 10:19). Pohl notes, "In the ancient Near East only Israel had explicit legislation protecting, and providing for, the resident alien."¹¹⁴ There were, however, times when Israel was to reject and fight against foreigners, specifically when they threatened the existence of God's people or their fidelity to Yahweh (Exod 17:8-16; 34:10-16; Deut 7:1-6; 18:9-14; Josh 23:12-13; 24:14-24).¹¹⁵ This shows that there are legitimate biblical boundaries to hospitality. It cannot be completely unconditional.

In the New Testament, Paul said in Romans 12:13, "Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality" (ESV). The hospitality mentioned here could be a way of contributing to the needs of traveling Christians and Christian ministers.¹¹⁶ In other words, care for not only the saints you know, but those you do not. The verb translated "seek" indicates that believers should take the initiative in practicing hospitality, not simply wait for a situation to occur.¹¹⁷ This command comes in the context of Paul's instruction to not be conformed to the pattern of the world, but to be transformed by the renewal of one's mind (Rom 12:1-2). Even if

¹¹⁴ Pohl, "Hospitality," 562.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 562.

¹¹⁶ Colin G. Cruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 478; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 666; Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 780.

¹¹⁷ Cruse, *Romans*, 478; Schreiner, *Romans*, 666; Moo, *Romans*, 780.

the world is suspicious of and inhospitable to strangers, believers must be welcoming and hospitable. This kind of proactive hospitality may be counter-cultural, but reflects the priorities and transforming power of Christ in the believers' lives.

In 1 Corinthians 11 and Romans 14, Paul dealt with issues of Christians in Corinth and Rome being inhospitable toward each other in their gatherings, which customarily included table fellowship.¹¹⁸ In both cases, the disunity over table fellowship and eating together was a serious betrayal of the gospel, just as the Apostle Peter's sudden refusal to eat with Gentiles was in Galatians 2:14: "their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel" (ESV). In Corinth, Paul characterized the failure of hospitality as despising the church of God (1 Cor 11:22), and in Rome he commanded the opposing groups fighting over food, "Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him" (Rom 14:3, ESV). In other words, the hospitable welcome toward fellow believers displayed through table fellowship that preserves and pictures the unity of the church is a reflection of God's hospitable welcome toward all his people. The believer dare not reject one whom God has welcomed. Paul concludes the section by switching the welcoming reference from God (the Father) to Jesus Christ: "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom 15:7, ESV). How can one despise a guest of God and Christ? It would be an insult to God and a failure to glorify Him. Hospitality toward other members of the church is a necessary theological affirmation of the gospel of God's/Christ's welcome of sinners. Lack of hospitality toward fellow believers is therefore a denial of the gospel.

¹¹⁸ Leendert Brouwer, "Mission and Hospitality: A Literary Ethnography of the Pauline Churches" (ThD diss., University of South Africa, 2015), 86.

The Apostle Paul also included the necessity for showing hospitality in his qualifications for widows who should be supported by the churches. Widows should first be cared for by their own family (1 Tim 5:4, 8). If, however, a widow has no family to care for her, the church may do so, but only if she meets certain spiritual qualifications; specifically, “having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work” (1 Tim 5:10, ESV). One may see how important and essential the Apostle considered showing hospitality to be. A widow who was not known to be hospitable was not eligible to be cared for by the church. She disqualified herself by lack of hospitality.

Note that, according to Paul, elders/pastors also disqualified themselves if they were not known to be hospitable men (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8). This indicates that practicing hospitality is something to which all Christians should aspire, for the qualifications for elders and for the widows mentioned above are spiritual quality traits that every mature believer should have.¹¹⁹ These traits are not for super-Christians or church leaders only; rather, they are the expected qualities that any spiritually mature believer should display. Elders lead by example (1 Pet 5:3), and an important part of that example is being hospitable to strangers and other believers.

The author of Hebrews gave the following instruction: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb 13:2, ESV). The love for strangers (*philoxenia*) in Hebrews 13:2 is the counterpart to the love of the brothers (*philadelphia*) mentioned in the previous verse.¹²⁰ Not only should believers show love for one

¹¹⁹ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 486; Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary, ed. W. Ward Gasque (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 81.

¹²⁰ Walczak, “Conditions of Christian Hospitality,” 92.

another, but also for outsiders. The reason given is that the stranger may actually be an angel or messenger/representative of God. Most commentators think this refers primarily to Abraham's hospitable reception of the three men in Genesis 18.¹²¹ They turned out to be angels, representatives of the Lord. One might also remember the terrible fate of the residents of Sodom when they confirmed their wickedness by violating hospitality toward these angels. Strangers are often met with fear and suspicion, but this Scripture exhorts believers to consider the possibility that strangers may impart great blessing to the host.¹²²

The Apostle Peter commanded, "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Pet 4:9, ESV). The context points to the "end of all things" being "at hand," to the need for Christians to sincerely love one another, and to the use of God's gifts to "serve one another" (1 Pet 4:7-11, ESV). That the end of all things being at hand is presented as a motivation for hospitality highlights how important hospitality is. Peter explicitly said this hospitality was to be exercised toward "one another," meaning fellow believers. This does not, however, erase the focus of hospitality on outsiders. The believers who are to be welcomed into one's home are not just local Christians, but include those who are traveling from abroad and would thus also be strangers or outsiders.¹²³

The social context of the recipients of Peter's letter was one of hostility, so Peter was emphasizing that "the church is to be that alternate society where Christians find a place when shunned by unbelievers who live by different values. In a hostile world, the church is to be a

¹²¹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 507; Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 268.

¹²² O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 507; Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 268.

¹²³ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, eds. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 280; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2003), 213.

place of safety and well-being for its members.”¹²⁴ Where the culture shows hostility to believers, the church shows hospitality to one another. In a hostile and dangerous world, the homes of believers should be a network of safe spaces for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Apostle John had both positive and negative things to say about hospitality in Second and Third John. In 2 John 9, the Apostle warned the church about traveling teachers who were actually “deceivers . . . who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh” (ESV). He exhorted the church to remain firm in the apostolic teaching about Christ. In regard to these traveling false teachers, the normal standard of hospitality was to be reversed: “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting” (2 John 10, ESV).¹²⁵ Indeed, if one welcomes such a false teacher and gives him aid, one “takes part in his wicked works” (2 John 11, ESV). John’s concern was not that hospitality could only be shown to those who are perfectly aligned theologically, or even to true believers only, but that the church must not help those who are actively working toward its own destruction through spreading denial of the gospel message.¹²⁶ The conventions and ramifications of first century hospitality were thus to be used not only to further and propagate the gospel, but to limit the spread of gospel-denying heresy in the churches that typically met in private homes.¹²⁷

This is essentially the same standard applied to Israel in the Old Testament. While resident or traveling strangers were to be protected and cared for, foreigners who threatened the very existence of Israel or who sought to actively lead people toward idolatry were not to be

¹²⁴ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 281.

¹²⁵ Lorencin, “Hospitality,” 150.

¹²⁶ Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 271-273.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 271-272.

welcomed but resisted. In the same way, while the normal stance of New Covenant believers should be welcoming toward strangers, those who would threaten the very existence of the church through active, anti-gospel false teaching are to be barred from hospitality.

An example of this is found in Jesus' rebuke of the church in Thyatira in Revelation 2. Jesus commends the church for a number of positive traits, then says, "But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols" (Rev 2:20, ESV). The church is explicitly condemned for tolerance in their midst of a false teacher whose teachings would lead to the destruction of the fidelity and thus existence of the church. They are not to be hospitable toward such a person, but to exclude her. Christian hospitality is not unconditional, but requires gospel-centered discernment.¹²⁸

In Third John, the Apostle gave the opposite instruction to Gaius because the traveling Christian teachers had been endorsed by the Apostle himself.¹²⁹ He commended Gaius for his "efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are" (3 John 5, ESV). He encouraged him to exercise proper hospitality toward them by sending them "on their journey in a manner worthy of God" (3 John 6, ESV). To send them on in a manner "worthy of God" means either a manner pleasing to God, a manner that reflects God's own hospitality, or even as if they were hosting God Himself, since these missionaries represent Him and bear His truth.¹³⁰ These traveling Christians "have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles" (3 John 7, ESV). In other words, they were preaching the true gospel and relying on Christian hospitality as they traveled. John then pointed out the "evil" of Diotrephes who styled himself as a powerful patron

¹²⁸ Walczak, "Conditions of Christian Hospitality," 96.

¹²⁹ *Jobes, 1, 2, & 3 John*, 303.

¹³⁰ *Campbell, 1, 2, & 3 John*, 218; *Jobes, 1, 2, & 3 John*, 303.

rather than a serving host.¹³¹ Diotrephes' pride, fear, and greed led him to isolation and rejection of hospitality.

The commands of Scripture in regard to hospitality clearly demonstrate the necessity of its practice for FCBC. Biblical hospitality should be intentional, proactive, universal, and eager. While there are instances in which gospel-centered discernment should lead the church to refuse aid to false teachers, the general stance of believers should be one of openness and hopefulness toward outsiders rather than suspicion and enmity. Members of the church must seek to obey these commands and overcome the obstacles that hinder them from doing so.

This section laid the theological foundation of the thesis project relating to biblical hospitality. The importance and necessity for Christian hospitality was emphasized through a biblical theology of hospitality, biblical examples of hospitality, and biblical commands for hospitality. In the next section, the theoretical foundations of the hospitality project will be presented.

Theoretical Foundations

Having reviewed the theological foundations for this project, the focus will now turn to theories for practicing biblical hospitality. When it comes to the church putting biblical hospitality into practice, most theories focus on welcoming outsiders or visitors to the church premises. The church facilities are seen as the "home" to which strangers are invited. The focus is on an event or the regular gathering of the church. The question is usually, "How do we welcome outsiders to our events and make them feel at home?" A corporate hospitality model is the focus.

¹³¹ Lorencin, "Hospitality," 148, 152.

For example, recent doctoral projects that reference or focus on the theme of hospitality include the following: 1) How to welcome people on the autism spectrum to church gatherings.¹³² 2) How a Trinitarian theology of hospitality can be fleshed out at a local church by a Welcoming Ministry Team.¹³³ 3) How a theology of “gospel hospitality” can help bring greater unity and cooperation among a denomination’s leaders.¹³⁴ 4) How a local church can be more welcoming to people from the LGBTQ community in the church’s gatherings.¹³⁵ 5) How Presbyterian churches in Toronto can be more welcoming of culturally diverse groups.¹³⁶ 6) How a local church can be more welcoming toward those who have been incarcerated.¹³⁷ None of these studies were focused on Christians hosting people from the community in their homes. Many more such doctoral studies could be noted, all of which relate to the church giving a *corporate* welcome to visitors or members of specific subcultures.

These studies tend to spiritualize or communalize hospitality and apply it in terms of a more welcoming, loving, and inclusive attitude in corporate gatherings. Meals may be included, but these are community meals rather than meals at a family’s residence. By focusing hospitality on the communal gathering of the church, the historical practice of hospitality in private

¹³² Susan Q. Claytor, “Hospitality to Individuals on the Autism Spectrum and Their Families” (DMin thesis, Lancaster Theological Seminary, 2021).

¹³³ Stephen Kwang Hoon Lee, “A Plumline: Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Theology and Practice of Trinitarian Hospitality in Colonial Beach United Methodist Church” (DMin thesis, Regent University, 2020).

¹³⁴ Pamela Rene Rivera, “Gospel Hospitality: A Foundational Pillar for Unifying Clergy and Laity as a Collaborative Community” (DMin thesis, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2022).

¹³⁵ Antonio L. Torrence, “Transforming Strategic Leaders within an Afro-Caribbean Congregation to Become Agents of Radical Inclusive Christian Hospitality Towards the LGBTQ Community through Preaching” (DMin thesis, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, 2019).

¹³⁶ Lisa M. Davidson, “Living in a World of ‘Riotous Difference’: Canadian Multiculturalism and Christian Hospitality within the Presbyterian Church in Toronto (Tkaronto)” (PhD diss., University of Toronto (Canada), 2019).

¹³⁷ Errol Cooper, “Christian Hospitality in the Age of Mass Incarceration: A Way Forward at First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens” (DMin thesis, Drew University, 2014).

residences remains largely unaddressed. The author was unable to find any action research at the doctoral level that related directly to inviting outsiders into the personal homes of Christians, other than a number related to housing refugees, reflecting the migrant issue noted in the literature review.¹³⁸

From one perspective, focusing on the communal gathering of the church body makes biblical sense because the early church met primarily in private residences.¹³⁹ Every gathering of the body was therefore a family hospitality event, with the head of the household welcoming the group of believers into his or her home (Rom 16:15; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2). What has changed is that most churches in the United States (which is the cultural context of this project) now meet in a non-residential setting. Most American churches have gathering spaces that are not associated with the private home. When the Apostle Paul addressed the gathering of the churches, he probably assumed a setting in which hospitality in the home was occurring. For example, 1 Corinthians 11 and Romans 14 seem to assume the gathering of the believers is occurring in hospitable homes where table fellowship is a central part of the activity. This is one reason why divisions over food and the issue of welcoming one another were so important to Paul. When American believers today gather communally at their church facilities, however, most only occasionally share meals together, and the literal aspects of welcoming a person to one's private home are not prominent.

It seems desirable that believers would recapture the importance and necessity of using their actual homes for the sake of gospel-centered hospitality, rather than seeing hospitality as something only applicable to the communal gathering, which is now usually not a home setting.

¹³⁸ The author suspects that some doctoral action research related to biblical home hospitality must have been done, but he was unable to locate such studies. At the very least, dealing with this aspect of hospitality is rare.

¹³⁹ Brouwer, "Mission and Hospitality," 86.

The hospitality required of elders and widows by the Apostle Paul must have been hospitality in their homes, since church buildings did not yet exist at that point in church history. The command in Hebrews 13 to show hospitality points to Abraham's as the example, and Abraham's hospitality was enacted in his private dwelling-place. The hospitality envisioned by the Apostle John in Second and Third John is hospitality toward traveling Christian preachers in the private homes of believers. Applying the biblical mandate of hospitality to the communal gathering of the church is legitimate and important, but biblical home hospitality is a neglected area of doctoral research projects.

When the focus of hospitality is on the church gathering, it will affect only those who are willing or likely to come to a church event at church facilities. Many people in the community may not be interested in participating in an overtly "religious" event, no matter how welcoming the congregation is.¹⁴⁰ By practicing hospitality in their homes, members of FCBC can avoid the potential hurdle that religious association is for some people in the community. People who may be turned off by an association with church may be willing to get to know their neighbors in an informal home setting. For this reason, the theory of communal hospitality at church gatherings was set aside, and this project focused on biblical hospitality in the private homes of church members.

While home hospitality seems to be largely absent from Christian doctoral action research, there are a number of more popular level books that discuss how biblical hospitality can be practiced by Christian families in their homes. In *The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World*, Rosaria Butterfield describes her own experience and practice of home hospitality. As a radical, anti-Christian,

¹⁴⁰ Consider the Barna study cited on page 2 of Chapter 1 (footnote 4).

lesbian feminist, she was won to faith in Christ not through formal church meetings, but by being regularly included in the home life of some faithful, loving Christians. As a believer, her own home life is now characterized by a habit of hospitality. Her practical theory is the messy process of getting to know her neighbors and getting involved in their lives, while opening the doors of her home to them regularly for meals. Practically speaking, this means using an app called “Nextdoor” to communicate with people in the neighborhood and always having extra food ready for potential visitors. It means hanging out in the front yard instead of just inside the house so as to talk to neighbors, and finding out what is going on in their lives with the goal of building relationships and showing the love of Jesus in practical ways. It means intentionally budgeting money and time for hospitality, and both hosting and attending parties in the neighborhood. It means including neighbors in one’s daily activities rather than merely entertaining guests. This kind of hospitable lifestyle can turn strangers into neighbors, and neighbors into spiritual family.¹⁴¹

In *The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door*, Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon lay out a strategy for seeking to be a good neighbor. They suggest making a square chart with nine squares (3x3) which they call a “block map.”¹⁴² The center square is one’s own house. In the eight squares surrounding the center square, they challenge the readers to identify by name their eight closest neighbors. They also challenge the reader to write down some facts they know about these neighbors. This exercise often reveals one’s lack of effort in getting to know one’s actual neighbors.¹⁴³ They encourage Christians to make the effort to fill in this chart by getting to know the names and interests of their neighbors. Like

¹⁴¹ Butterfield, *House Key*, 14.

¹⁴² Pathak and Runyon, *Art of Neighboring*, 83.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 36-38.

Butterfield, they also recommend spending more time outside for the chance to encounter neighbors. They suggest the use of block parties to get to know neighbors and build relationships. They include ideas like baking or cooking something for one's neighbors and delivering it to them, playing community sports, or watching sports or other shows together with neighbors. They recommend not only being givers, but also being willing to receive from one's neighbors by asking for help when one needs it. Good neighboring can result in a stranger becoming an acquaintance, and an acquaintance entering into a real relationship.¹⁴⁴ While the communal block party is emphasized in their method, spending time with neighbors in homes is also encouraged.

In *The Simplest Way to Change the World: Biblical Hospitality as a Way of Life*, Dustin Willis and Brandon Clements lay out the potential and plan for biblical hospitality.¹⁴⁵ When implementing hospitality in one's home, they recommend the following: 1) Include other believers when you invite over unbelieving neighbors so they can see Christian community and how believers interact; 2) Create a system for keeping track of neighbors and planning for hospitality; 3) Keep it simple: the goal is relationship, not food or entertainment; 4) Intentionally budget for hospitality; 5) Start with people you already know and branch out from there; 6) Look for opportunities in your normal activities; 7) Focus on actual neighbors who live close to you; 8) Take the initiative to meet new people; 9) Spend more time outside; 10) Make one night per week "neighbor night" where the focus is on hospitality; 11) Invite neighbors over to watch TV

¹⁴⁴ Pathak and Runyon, *Art of Neighboring*, 75.

¹⁴⁵ Willis and Clements, *Simplest Way*, 9.

shows, sports, or to have play dates with kids.¹⁴⁶ These kinds of activities and many others can be used to generate weekly, monthly, and yearly rhythms of hospitality with one's community.¹⁴⁷

In *B.L.E.S.S.: 5 Everyday Ways to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World*, Dave and Jon Ferguson lay out five simple activities that can be habitually practiced in order to extend God's blessings to one's neighborhood. These are conveyed by the acrostic B.L.E.S.S., which represents Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat, Serve, and Story.¹⁴⁸ The chapters dealing with each of these activities describe how Jesus is the exemplar of each practice, address the obstacles that might hinder believers from implementing them, and present a practical tool to help enact them.

The tool for "Begin with Prayer" is the block map from *The Art of Neighboring* described above.¹⁴⁹ Believers are encouraged to get to know their closest neighbors primarily for the purpose of praying for them. The tool for "Listen" is a list of questions to ask about one's neighbors in order to get to know them better and enhance one's prayer and service for them.¹⁵⁰ The tool for "Eat" is a weekly meal calendar that consists of a grid showing all the meals one will have in a week.¹⁵¹ The reader is challenged to include others in the meals one is already planning to have. Scheduling a special event is not required. The point is to include people in one's everyday life, not to host special entertainment events. The tool for "Serve" is the acrostic RPMS which is intended to help the reader consider four areas of potential service to one's neighbors. These areas of service are relational, physical, mental, and spiritual needs.¹⁵² The

¹⁴⁶ Willis and Clements, *Simplest Way*, 86-101.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 103-117.

¹⁴⁸ Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson, *B.L.E.S.S.: 5 Everyday Ways to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World* (Washington, D.C.: Salem, 2021), xii, 26-27.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 70-73.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 109-111.

authors also encourage believers to consider ways believers could allow their neighbors to serve them, including being hosted for meals.¹⁵³ Being served is just as relationally important as serving. Finally, the tool for “Story” is a template for helping believers think, plan, and write their salvation testimony.¹⁵⁴ The three parts of one’s spiritual journey include describing what one’s life was like before meeting Jesus, how one came to meet Jesus, and what one’s life has been like since meeting Jesus.

All four of the above books are based on the theological foundations of biblical hospitality. They mention concepts like God’s hospitality being represented in the believer’s hospitality,¹⁵⁵ the fluidity of the host/guest relationship,¹⁵⁶ and the example of Jesus’ table fellowship.¹⁵⁷ The results that flow out of this biblical view of hospitality are good. The authors of these works report success in building community both with the church and with unbelieving neighbors. According to the experience of these authors, intentional biblical hospitality in private homes does help build relationships and can result in the transformation of strangers into friends, into spiritual family.

Some of the practical theories that were adopted for this thesis project include the following: 1) Teach and preach about biblical hospitality in church. 2) Lead participants through a small-group study on biblical hospitality. 3) Make a written record of neighbors—their names and basic information. This will help participants have specific people to pray for and approach. This list could be expanded to include local people with whom participants already have some

¹⁵³ Ferguson and Ferguson, *B.L.E.S.S.*: 84, 96, 101.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 127-129.

¹⁵⁵ Willis and Clements, *Simplest Way*, 37-43.

¹⁵⁶ Butterfield, *House Key*, 12, 36-37; Pathak and Runyon, *Art of Neighboring*, 119-128; Ferguson and Ferguson, *B.L.E.S.S.*, 84, 96, 101.

¹⁵⁷ Butterfield, *House Key*, 13, 82-86; Pathak and Runyon, *Art of Neighboring*, 127-128; Ferguson and Ferguson, *B.L.E.S.S.*, 79-83.

acquaintance, but who may not live as close. 4) Make a specific plan for hospitality. It should be regular and intentional. 5) Invite not only people from the community into the home, but a person/family from the church, also. 6) Have some kind of table fellowship together with those invited. During this time, participants should in some way convey to community members that they are Christians. Participants will also be provided with relationship-building questions. 7) If possible, accept any reciprocal offers of hospitality from community members so as to interact not only as a good host, but also a good guest. It is anticipated that following this theory of home hospitality will increase the intentional interaction between members of FCBC and people in the community.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed current scholarly literature about biblical hospitality, laid theological foundations for the thesis project, and described theories of how to put biblical hospitality into practice. Some themes were common. These include 1) The concept of God Himself being the ultimate originator and example of hospitality; 2) The idea that believers should therefore also be hospitable to outsiders and each other; 3) The need to push the boundaries of hospitality toward unconditionality while still discerning appropriate regulations; 4) Jesus as the ultimate example and offer of God's hospitality to humanity; 5) The way Jesus' practice of table fellowship toward the disreputable is a challenge for the church; 6) The importance of the guest/host relationship not being rigid but fluid; 7) The biblical necessity for Christians to practice intentional hospitality.

It is thought that learning these principles and putting them into practice will help the members of FCBC address the problem of a lack of intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between church members and the broader community. The purpose of this thesis project

is to develop and implement a program of home hospitality that will encourage and help the church members to practice biblical hospitality. The thesis of this project is that if such a program is developed and enacted by the church, intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between church members and the community will increase. Practicing home hospitality will ultimately be of great spiritual value to the church. A Barna study found that showing mission-motivated hospitality to people who are not close friends and family members was one of the most common characteristics of “spiritually vibrant” homes.¹⁵⁸ This information supports addressing the identified problem through a program of biblical home hospitality.

The next chapter explains in detail the biblical hospitality intervention design for FCBC. The implementation of the program of home hospitality is also described. This is the methodology for the project.

¹⁵⁸ Don Everts, *The Spiritually Vibrant Home: The Power of Messy Prayers, Loud Tables, and Open Doors* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), ix.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe in detail the intervention design developed for the program of home hospitality at FCBC. The practical process of what is planned will be given, answering the questions of how, who, where, when, and with what the intervention will be accomplished. This methodology framework follows the suggestion of Ernest Stringer as presented in his book, *Action Research*.¹ His first two categories of why (the goal) and what (the objective) will not be addressed here since they have already been described in the problem and purpose statements of Chapter 1, and in the foundations laid in Chapter 2. The goal of this project is to increase intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between members of FCBC and people in the local community. The objective is to do this by developing and implementing a program of home hospitality for FCBC. This chapter describes the tasks, people, places, timelines, and resources needed to accomplish the purpose of the action research.

Intervention Design

The intervention design represents the plan that was developed for the home hospitality program. What the researcher actually did will be described in the next section on the intervention implementation. This section represents what the researcher planned and intended to do. It was written before the project was begun. In general, this plan was followed successfully and on schedule, with a few modifications noted in the implementation section.

¹ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), 169-170.

Intervention Tasks: How?

Prior to beginning any of these tasks, the researcher will secure IRB and faculty mentor approval (see final page of thesis for IRB approval). He will also seek to secure agreement to participate from an outside evaluator. Tasks to be performed for this intervention include the following:

1. Give a “Hospitality Program Information Letter” to members of FCBC (See Appendix A). This letter will describe the situation regarding this Doctor of Ministry action research project. Members will be informed of what is going on, what will be asked of them, and why. This should generate discussion and questions among church members and prepare them mentally for what is coming. This letter will be informal in tone and is intended to help members become familiar with the idea of what is coming so they can imagine themselves participating.

2. Mail a “Participant Recruitment Letter” to all member households of FCBC (see Appendix B). This recruitment letter will be based on a template provided by the Institutional Review Board of Liberty University.² This will help fulfill the IRB’s requirements and further inform potential participants about the study.

3. Members of FCBC who meet the criteria of the purposive sample and are willing to participate in the intervention will be asked to fill in a “Hospitality Sign-Up Form” (see Appendix C). This will produce the participant sample group. It will include a consent form to be read and signed by participants. This consent form is from a template provided by Liberty University’s IRB.

4. Give a “Preliminary Hospitality Questionnaire” (Q1) to participants who have signed the consent form (see Appendix D). This questionnaire is intended to gather information

² IRB templates are found at <https://www.liberty.edu/graduate/institutional-review-board/> (accessed December 2, 2022).

regarding participants' level of intentional interaction with people in the local community prior to enacting the intervention. It will also gather data regarding their practice and understanding of home hospitality. This data will be used as a basis of comparison to the "Post-Intervention Hospitality Questionnaire" (Q2) in order to discover what changes have occurred during the intervention. This comparison will accomplish a longitudinal survey of participants.

5. Preach four Sunday sermons about biblical hospitality to the congregation of FCBC (see Appendix E). The first sermon will relate to God's hospitality as a biblical perspective on redemption and the purpose of God. The second will emphasize the importance of biblical hospitality by showing biblical examples of how God's people have practiced hospitality. The third sermon will focus on God's hospitality as seen in Jesus the stranger from heaven, the guest to be received, and the host of God's eternal banquet. The last sermon will look specifically at the commands of hospitality in Scripture and give some practical advice. The purpose of these sermons is to increase the congregation's knowledge of, understanding of, and passion for biblical hospitality.

6. A four-week small group study will be taught in Sunday School classes (called discipleship groups) at FCBC (see Appendix F). This small group study will correspond in timing and subject matter to the sermons being preached on Sundays in the worship service. In other words, the first small group study will be based on the first sermon, the second on the second sermon, etc. The small group study will include questions for group discussion to encourage interaction. In order to prepare the other three small group teachers for this part of the project, the primary researcher will meet with them before the project to familiarize them with the material.

7. Participants will be given a “Hospitality Plan Form” to help them formulate a specific, intentional plan of hospitality for themselves/their family (see Appendix G). This form will contain options regarding *to whom* and *how frequently* they intend to practice hospitality. Offering the participants some limited options that they choose themselves is intended to increase buy-in and participation on their part. This form will enable participants to understand precisely what they are committing to for the intervention. It will also help them make a list of potential guests.

8. Distribute a “Hospitality Notebook” (HNb) to participants (see Appendix H). This is intended to help them keep accurate records of their practice of home hospitality during the intervention. They will record whom they invite, what the response to the invitation was, whether or not the home hospitality actually took place, where, when, and with whom it took place, and a journal of their thoughts about what they just experienced. These hospitality notebooks are a unique feature of this study and will provide quantitative and qualitative data. This record will yield some quantitative data, such as 1) How many times did participants invite people in the community for hospitality? 2) How many invitations were accepted or rejected? 3) How many people in the community were shown hospitality? 4) How frequently was hospitality shown? The record will also yield qualitative data from the journaling of participants’ thoughts and responses to their experience.

The first page of this record will describe some of the biblical principles of hospitality and include some suggested questions or topics of conversation to help participants have meaningful interaction with their guests. The purpose of this page is to help participants be *intentional* about their interaction with the community, since intentionality is referenced in both the problem statement and the thesis of the project.

9. Participants will practice biblical hospitality. They will make contact with people in the local community with whom they are not well acquainted and invite them to their homes for table fellowship. If their home is not available, they will be given the option to get together with people at a park or restaurant. They will use some of the suggested questions and topics in the HNb to have intentional interaction with their guests. Specifically, the “intentional” aspect is to build deeper relationships with their guests so that biblical hospitality can accomplish its transformative purpose. They will receive guests into their personal homes and provide conversation and physical nourishment. They will keep a record of their hospitality events in the HNb.

To provide a visual representation of the church’s hospitality efforts and encourage participation during the project, an empty ten-gallon aquarium will be set up in the foyer of the church sanctuary during the months the project is active. When participants invite someone to a hospitality event (whether they accept the invitation or not), participants will be encouraged to put a white ping-pong ball into the aquarium. When they host a hospitality event, they may put an orange ball into the aquarium. If they talk about something spiritual, biblical, or religious with their guests at a hospitality event, they may put a blue ball into the aquarium. In this way, the church will be able to see at a glance the progress and participation that is occurring. It is intended that this will provoke discussion and give encouragement. The aquarium activity will be announced regularly from the pulpit and a sign will be posted above the aquarium (see Appendix I).

10. Administer a “Post-Intervention Hospitality Questionnaire” (Q2; see Appendix J). This questionnaire will include some of the same questions as Q1 in order to measure any changes. It will also include some additional questions to allow qualitative evaluation of the

intervention by participants; that is, the participants themselves will offer their own evaluation of how the intervention has affected them, their understanding/practice of hospitality, and their intentional interaction with people from the community.

11. Interview ten individual participants (see Appendix K for questions). Having ten interviewees should yield a satisfactory amount of qualitative data. The interviews will be recorded and the recordings stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office.

12. Send information to an outside evaluator. An expert outside evaluator (yet-to-be-determined) will receive copies of the before-and-after questionnaires, the sermon notes and small group study notes, the hospitality notebooks, and chapters one through three of this project thesis report. They will not receive transcripts or recordings of the ten participant interviews as this may put too much burden on the outside evaluator in regard to time required for evaluation. He or she will be asked to provide their own independent analysis of the intervention and its results. Their evaluation will be returned in writing to the primary researcher. This will create triangulation of research when combined with the perspectives of the researcher and the participants.³

13. The researcher will keep a reflective journal during the entire project to bracket out any biases. Journaling his own thoughts, feelings, and evaluations should help reveal personal biases about the project that he can identify and seek to exclude for the sake of integrity and validity. His thoughts will be typed or audio-recorded on his phone, typed on his computer, or written in a physical journal. A final transcript will be made to gather all the thoughts together.

³ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 75-78.

14. Evaluate all materials. Collect and evaluate the HNB's of participants. The data in the notebooks will be collected and evaluated by the researcher. This will yield quantitative data regarding frequency of intentional interaction with the community through the home hospitality program. It will also give qualitative data through the participants' journaling.

Compare the before-and-after questionnaires. Participants' Q1 will be compared with their Q2 in order to evaluate any changes of the frequency of intentional interaction with the community and their practice and understanding of biblical hospitality. This will accomplish a longitudinal survey of participants. Because both questionnaires collect the number of intentional hospitality events participants experienced in a two month period, these two data sets can be compared using socscistatistics.com to run a one-tailed, paired t-test for two dependent means to see if a significant difference occurred.

Evaluate the post-intervention interviews and the independent analysis from the outside expert, especially noting common themes that arise. These interviews and analysis will provide in-depth qualitative data to be incorporated into the report.

A successful outcome for the intervention will be more members engaging in more intentional interaction events through biblical hospitality in their homes. An increase in the number of members practicing hospitality and/or an increase in the frequency of hospitality events will show success. Frequency of intentional interaction can be measured by the before-and-after questionnaires and the hospitality journals. Success will also be seen in the qualitative evaluation of participants' understanding of and commitment to biblical hospitality. Did their understanding of, commitment to, and practice of biblical hospitality increase? Did their intentional interaction with people from the local community increase? Success will be seen in

deepening relationships between church members and people from the local community. Success will be seen in ongoing commitment from church members to practice hospitality.

The numbers in the following sections that deal with *who*, *where*, *when*, and *with what* the intervention will be done all correspond to the fourteen tasks detailed above.

Intervention Persons: Who?

1. The “Hospitality Program Information Letter” will be written and distributed by the primary researcher. The recipients of the letter will be all the members of FCBC who are eighteen years of age or older and who do not live in their parents’ household. The researcher is knowledgeable about the age, member status, and living arrangements of all members of FCBC because he is the senior pastor. If there is any question about eligibility, he can consult church records kept on the computer in the church office.

2. The “Participant Recruitment Letter” (based on an IRB template) will be mailed to all member households of the church by the primary researcher.

3. The “Hospitality Sign-Up Form” will be handed by the primary researcher to active members of the church who indicate willingness to participate in the research project. For this study, an “active” member will be defined as one who attends a church event at least once per month. Qualified participants must not only be active members of the church, but also eighteen years of age or older, and not living in their parents’ household. In other words, an eighteen year old member living on their own would qualify, but an eighteen year old living with their parents would not qualify. The congregation currently consists of 26 active member households and 8 active non-member households. The number of potential households who could participate in the research project is therefore 26 households.

4. Q1 will be formulated by the primary researcher and given to qualifying participants who have signed the “Hospitality Sign-Up Form.” Completed questionnaires will be collected by the researcher.

5. The four Sunday sermons about biblical hospitality will be written and preached by the primary researcher to the whole congregation of FCBC. The total active members and non-members who may hear the preaching is about sixty-five people (as of January, 2023). How many hear the sermons over the course of four weeks depends on who is present. It is anticipated that some will not be present for all four weeks.

6. The four-week small group study about biblical hospitality will be written by the primary researcher. It will be facilitated in adult discipleship groups. There are currently four adult discipleship groups each week. The regular teachers of the groups will facilitate the study and discussion. The primary researcher is one of the teachers of a group. For the project, the researcher’s group will be designated Group 1, with the others as Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4. In April and May 2023, Group 1 averaged nine people, Group 2 averaged nine people, Group 3 averaged five people, and Group 4 averaged three people. Average attendance of adult small groups was thus twenty-six people leading up to the project period. This is the number of adult attendees only and does not include youth and children who are ineligible to participate in the study.

7. The “Hospitality Plan Form” will be written by the researcher and given to eligible members who have completed the “Hospitality Sign-Up Form.” These members are the participant sample for the action research. They will give their completed plan form to the researcher, who will make copies and give the originals to the participants. If a household

consists of a husband and wife, they will complete one plan form together, rather than having separate plan forms.

8. The HNb will be written by the researcher and given to each official participant. Husbands and wives will each receive their own notebook, because although their quantitative data will be identical, their journaling will be independent. The church secretary will assist in the construction of the notebooks. The researcher will communicate with her face-to-face about what to produce.

9. The practicing of biblical hospitality will be done by the confirmed participants in the study. The primary guests they will invite into their homes (or to a park or restaurant) will be people in the local community who are neither family, close friends, nor fellow church attendees at FCBC. Participants may also invite family, close friends, or fellow church attendees to their homes for these hospitality events, but the primary guests must be as described above. The aquarium effort to visually represent the results of the project will be overseen by the primary researcher.

10. Q2 will be written by the primary researcher. He will give the questionnaire to official participants who will record their responses and return them to the researcher.

11. The ten individuals who will be interviewed by the researcher will be a purposive sample based on the change in frequency of hospitality during the intervention. The five individuals who showed the greatest increase in hospitality events and the five individuals who showed the least increase in hospitality events will be interviewed. Some of these will probably be represented by married couples, but they will be interviewed individually, since their thoughts may be different.

12. Who the outside evaluator will be has not yet been determined. The researcher will continue to contact experts on the topic of biblical hospitality to secure an appropriate outside perspective.

13. The reflective journal of the researcher will be written by himself.

14. The final evaluation of all materials will be carried out by the primary researcher.

Intervention Places: Where?

1. The “Hospitality Program Intervention Letter” will be distributed at the church facilities of FCBC. It will be hand-delivered by the researcher to adult discipleship groups. It will be hand-delivered by the researcher to church members present in the church sanctuary for Sunday worship service.

2. The “Participant Recruitment Letter” will be printed and prepared for mailing at the church office. The prepared letters will be mailed from the local Rocky Mount, VA post office.

3. The “Hospitality Sign-Up Form” will be hand-delivered to eligible church members present at the church facilities who indicate a desire to participate in the research study. They may take the form home, and they will return the form to the researcher at the church facilities. Copies of this form will be made in the church office and returned to participants at the church facilities. This form and any other material that includes data from the participants will be stored in a desk in a locked office. Any digital data will be stored in a password-protected computer located in the same locked office.

4. Q1 will be given to eligible participants at the church facilities. They may take the questionnaire home, and they will return the completed questionnaire to the researcher at the church facilities.

5. The four sermons will be preached by the researcher in the sanctuary of the facilities of FCBC. This is where Sunday sermons are normally preached at the church. People can also watch the sermons online at the church's Facebook page. Watching online could occur at any location.

6. The four-week small group study about hospitality will take place at the facilities of FCBC in the usual rooms used by the four adult discipleship groups.

7. The "Hospitality Plan Form" will be hand-delivered to participants at the church facilities. They may take the form home, and will return it to the researcher at the church facilities. Copies of the form will be made in the church office.

8. The HNb will be made in the church office. It will be hand-delivered to participants at the church facilities. It will be used in the homes of participants and returned to the researcher at the church facilities when the time period for hospitality is completed.

9. Hospitality events will occur primarily in the private residences of participants. These are all located in the state of Virginia, most in the county of Franklin, although a few homes may be outside Franklin County. This intervention is intended to focus on people from the local community. By "local community" is meant people who either live in Franklin County, VA or fairly close to the participants' private residence. Participants may also practice hospitality at a local park or restaurant, but they will be encouraged to use their private homes if possible. The aquarium to fill with ping-pong balls that visually represent the hospitality efforts will be placed in the foyer of the church sanctuary in order to be immediately and easily visible to those who attend church.

10. Q2 will be hand-delivered to participants at the church facilities by the researcher. Participants may take the questionnaire home to complete it, and will return it to the researcher at the church facilities.

11. The ten interviews of individual participants will take place at locations approved by the participants. This is to help them be as comfortable as possible in order to facilitate a good interview environment. If the researcher thinks the environment may not be good for interviewing (e.g., too noisy, not private enough, etc.), he may suggest an alternate location to the participant. The church facilities will be available as a possibility for all interviews.

12. Information will be sent to the outside evaluator via email. If documents must be scanned, this will take place at the church office. The location of the outside evaluator is not yet determined.

13. The researcher's reflective journal will be written wherever he happens to be at the time. The final transcript of his journaling will be made in an office at the church facilities.

14. The final evaluation of all materials and data will be done by the researcher in his office at the church facilities.

Intervention Time Line: When?

Week 1 (July 2, 2023)	1. Sunday morning: Distribute "Hospitality Program Information Letter." This will get people thinking, talking, and asking questions about what is coming up. ⁴
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⁴ The numbers in the right column of this table correspond to those used for the tasks described in the previous sections.

<p>Week 2 (July 9, 2023)</p>	<p>1. Sunday morning: Distribute “Hospitality Program Information Letter.” A second week will give people time to absorb information and reach people who were not present at church the first week.</p>
<p>Week 2 (July 10 & 15, 2023)</p>	<p>2. Monday: Mail “Participant Recruitment Letter.” Members should receive this by Wednesday or Thursday of Week 2.</p> <p>6. Saturday: Meet with discipleship group teachers to familiarize them with hospitality material. Give them the small group notes.</p>
<p>Week 3 (July 16, 2023)</p>	<p>3. Sunday morning: Offer “Hospitality Sign-Up Form” to eligible church members. Due July 30th.</p>
<p>Week 4 (July 23, 2023)</p>	<p>3. Sunday morning: Offer “Hospitality Sign-Up Form” to eligible church members. A second week of sign-up opportunity will seek to get as much participation as possible. Due July 30th.</p> <p>4. Distribute “Preliminary Hospitality Questionnaire” (Q1) to eligible members who signed the consent form. This should be completed prior to church services on Sunday, August 6th in order to be unaffected by the teaching.</p>
<p>Week 5 (July 30, 2023)</p>	<p>4. Distribute “Preliminary Hospitality Questionnaire” (Q1) to eligible members who signed the consent form. This should be completed prior to church services on Sunday, August 6th in order to be unaffected by the teaching.</p>

Weeks 6-9 (August, 2023)	5. Sunday mornings in August: Preach four sermons about biblical hospitality.
Weeks 6-9 (August, 2023)	6. Sunday mornings: Sunday School small groups (discipleship groups) participate in four small group studies about biblical hospitality.
Weeks 6-9 (August, 2023)	7. Participants will be given the “Hospitality Plan Form” to commit to the specific plan of hospitality they want to follow.
Weeks 7-9 (August 13-27, 2023)	8. Sunday Mornings: Participants will receive their “Hospitality Notebooks” (HNb’s).
Weeks 10-17 (September – October 28, 2023)	9. Participants will practice biblical hospitality for 8 weeks and record data in their notebooks. The 10 gallon aquarium and colored ping-pong balls will be placed in the foyer of the sanctuary and regularly explained.
Week 18 (October 29, 2023)	10. Participants will receive and complete the “Post-Intervention Hospitality Questionnaire” (Q2). They will have one week to return the questionnaire. They will also give their notebooks to the researcher this week.
Week 19-20 (November 5-18, 2023)	11. The researcher will conduct 10 interviews with individual participants.
Week 19 (November 6, 2023)	12. Monday: The researcher will email materials and data to the outside evaluator. The evaluator should complete and return their evaluation by the end of November, 2023.

Week 21-25 (November 19 – December 15, 2023)	14. The primary researcher will analyze and synthesize all data collected.
All Weeks	13. The primary researcher will keep a journal throughout the whole project.

Intervention Resources: With What?

All office supplies for the project will be provided by the church. Finances for office supplies needed for the project are already part of the church’s approved budget. Any computers, printers, and copiers needed are already owned by the church and are available for the project. The church already owns the ten-gallon aquarium and ping-pong balls that will be used during the project.

The church’s facilities will be used as the site for distributing some of the material for the project, as well as for the preaching and small group activities. The facility is available for this use. No special permission is needed since the primary researcher is also the senior pastor of the church, having the authority to preach on Sundays, direct discipleship group teachers, and distribute literature to attendees.

Participants will be encouraged to use their own private residences for the practice of hospitality. All church members currently have private residences that can be used for hospitality. They will also provide any food or drink necessary for practicing hospitality.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The implementation of the intervention design began on schedule on Sunday, July 2nd with the distribution of the “Hospitality Program Information Letter” (Appendix A). The letter

was distributed by the primary researcher to the four adult discipleship groups at FCBC. His own discipleship group briefly discussed the content of the letter. One couple immediately volunteered to participate. There was little verbal feedback from the other discipleship groups, but they confirmed that everyone present received the letter. A few people who were not present in discipleship groups were given the letter before the morning worship service. The next Sunday (July 9th), the researcher again confirmed that all discipleship group members had received the information letter.

During the worship service, a missionary spoke for about 20 minutes about ministry in China. They⁵ emphasized that ministry must be done differently there because of the illegal nature of proselytizing. In particular, they highlighted that hospitality is the primary method of evangelism and discipleship in China. This had not been discussed with them previously, so it was providential that their emphasis fit so well with the doctoral project on biblical home hospitality. During the discussion and prayer time at the end of the weekly fellowship meal, the researcher pointed out to those present how hospitality is a vital method of ministry in an increasingly hostile culture.

On the following Monday (July 10th), the researcher prepared and mailed the “Participant Recruitment Letter” to all households of eligible participants (Appendix B). Twenty-seven letters were mailed. These households included thirty-six eligible participants. It was expected by the researcher that some of the elderly members might be confused about what was going on. According to the teacher of Group 2, some of the older members in his class struggle to understand things outside the normal routine of church activities they have been doing for fifty years.

⁵ The gender neutral pronoun is used for security reasons.

The meeting with discipleship group teachers was held as scheduled on Saturday, July 15th. All teachers and assistants were present from adult, youth, and children's classes, consisting of nine adults plus the researcher. The researcher explained the study and good discussion was held. The teachers were supportive of the effort to promote biblical hospitality. They were given the notes for four weeks of small group study on biblical hospitality. Several admitted they were nervous about the idea of having people in their homes whom they did not know well, but they were hopeful about the effort. The plan included the adult discipleship groups only, but the youth class and children's class leaders were also eager to participate. It was decided that the youth class could use the notes as written, while the children's teachers would adapt the lesson material to their age group. It was encouraging to see their desire to teach the material to the young people.

Consent forms were placed in discipleship group classes on Sunday, July 16th. The researcher spoke with groups 1 and 4 about the reason for the consent forms. No consent forms were passed out in the worship service. No one returned a consent form that Sunday.

The next Sunday, July 23rd, the researcher made sure discipleship groups had consent forms available. He wanted to speak to Group 2 about the consent forms before class began, but a number of regular people were not present, so the researcher decided to delay doing so. He did speak to those who were at the fellowship lunch about needing consent forms in order to include their information in the study. No one turned in a consent form this Sunday. The researcher felt that he should do more to communicate about the project and the consent forms. He had the initial questionnaire printed for anyone who signed the consent form, but because no one did, no questionnaires were handed out.

In order to communicate more, the researcher sent a text message to 16 eligible members with known cell phones with the following message: “If you received a consent form for my upcoming D.Min project on biblical hospitality, please read it and consider signing up and returning it soon. Everyone can participate in the hospitality focus, but only the data of those who sign the form can be used by me in my final report. So I’m hoping a good number will help out with that. Thanks, Pastor Philip.” Several people replied with positive comments.

On Wednesday of that week the researcher brought copies of the consent form to the evening Bible Study and asked eligible participants if they wanted a form or if they wanted to sign it. Several indicated they had the form and were not yet ready to sign. Four turned in a signed consent form that evening. Husbands and wives signed up individually, because even though they most likely would have the same quantitative data, their qualitative data may differ from each other.

On Sunday, July 30th, the researcher added a bulletin insert that was distributed to everyone present at the church gathering (see Appendix L). This insert was written to communicate about the hospitality effort and to give some specific information about the purpose of the consent form, as some members seemed confused about it.

That morning at church, the researcher spoke with several of the discipleship groups before class began to briefly explain the research project and the purpose of the consent form. He asked if members wanted to sign the form and left copies in their rooms with instructions to put signed copies in the box outside his office if they chose to sign up as an official participant.

By the time all were collected, the researcher had received an additional eleven signed consent forms, bringing the total number of participants to fifteen. These fifteen individuals

represented a total of ten households (some were married couples). On this Sunday (July 30th), Q1 (Appendix D) was distributed to the fifteen official participants.

There were potentially twenty-six eligible member households, so ten actual participating households yielded a participation rate of about 38 percent. The researcher had set ten households as his minimum desired participation for the project (see under “Limitations” in Chapter 1), so this goal was successfully met. The response was very much in line with what the researcher anticipated. These fifteen participants were assigned identification numbers from one to fifteen (P1, P2, etc.).

The researcher decided more communication for the whole church was in order regarding the hospitality effort; therefore, he wrote and distributed another bulletin insert for Sunday, August 6th, which focused on providing information and encouragement regarding the hospitality effort in general (see Appendix M).

On Sunday, August 6th, the researcher collected completed preliminary questionnaires (Q1; Appendix D) from participants. A total of nine had been collected before the end of church activities for the day. Six participants had not yet completed Q1 at church time, so theirs were collected later. Since these six participants heard the first lesson/sermon before completing Q1, their qualitative data may have been influenced by the teaching. This was taken into account in subsequent evaluation. Their quantitative data was unaffected by the teaching and was usable without restriction.

Discipleship groups discussed the first small group lesson before the main worship service. Response in the researcher’s group (Group 1) was positive. The teacher of Group 2 reported that most of the people in his group spoke up about issues of hospitality.

The first sermon about God being a God of hospitality was preached in the worship service. The response during discussion time at the fellowship lunch afterward was overwhelmingly positive. Most people said this was a new perspective on God and the gospel that they had not considered before. Several were challenged and inspired by God's example of gracious welcome exemplified in the gospel.

Discussion turned to the issue of discernment regarding boundaries of hospitality. The issue of unconditional vs. conditional hospitality related in Chapter 2 of this report seemed to be of great interest to members. The researcher had mentioned the legitimacy of boundaries in hospitality, and this was a topic folks were very interested in contemplating, especially those with small children who felt a responsibility for their safety while still having a desire to stretch themselves regarding hospitality in their homes.

Sunday, August 13th, was the second week of teaching and preaching on biblical hospitality. Group 2 was taught by a substitute teacher and attendance was particularly low. The topic this week was "God's Hospitable People," with examples from Abraham, Lot, Sodom, Israel, and the early church. Everything went according to plan. The researcher distributed the "Hospitality Plan Form" to participants (see Appendix G). Some who were not present received it the next week.

The researcher set up a "Hospitality Station" in the back of the sanctuary. This consisted of a table with the hospitality aquarium and colored ping pong balls to place in it, as well as a hospitality library consisting of a number of books about biblical hospitality that were made available for church attendees to check out and return. A sign describing the meaning of the ping pong balls was placed next to the aquarium (see Appendix I). An explanation of the hospitality aquarium was also distributed as a bulletin insert (see Appendix N). The hospitality library was

not part of the intervention design described above, but was added by the researcher as a means of giving church attendees access to good written material about the topic of biblical hospitality. The thirteen available books were chosen and purchased by the researcher (see Appendix O for a list of books in the hospitality library). A sign reading “Biblical Hospitality” was placed on the wall behind the table, along with the text of Hebrews 13:2.

The third Sunday in August saw the teaching and preaching of “The Hospitality of God in Jesus Christ.” The emphasis was on the table fellowship of Jesus in the Gospels, and Jesus as Stranger from Heaven, Guest, and Host. The researcher was unable to get through all the material in his discipleship group, but discussion was good. After the sermon, several members came to the front of the sanctuary to pray together in response. They seemed greatly affected. At the fellowship lunch afterward, folks discussed Jesus’ interaction with Levi and Zacchaeus, as well as the wedding in Cana. People were relaxed and enjoying the discussion.

The final Sunday in August saw the presentation of the fourth small group lesson and sermon about biblical hospitality, with a focus on specific commands in Scripture and what putting them into practice looks like. Again, the response of the core group was very positive. They recognized the obstacles to practicing hospitality in their homes, but also the biblical importance of doing so.

The researcher handed out the hospitality notebooks to official participants (HNb; see Appendix H). The material was presented in half-inch three-ring binders. Each participant was given a binder, even if they were a husband and wife couple. The reason for this was that even though their quantitative data may be identical, their qualitative data should be unique to each individual.

At the fellowship lunch, several members told stories of past hospitality events, some positive and some negative. The positive examples were encouraging. The negative examples led to discussion of what the biblical motivation for hospitality should be. Is it based on how people respond, or do believers do it out of sacrificial love, and for the glory of God?

September and October were the months during which participating members were to actually practice home hospitality and record the results and responses in their HNb's. As September passed, ping pong balls began to accumulate in the aquarium, indicating that some hospitality was being practiced. The researcher also heard accounts of folks inviting and hosting guests in their homes.

The church secretary developed bulletin inserts and posts on the church Facebook page regarding biblical hospitality. These inserts and posts were related to overcoming obstacles to home hospitality, specific prayers regarding hospitality, and ideas for practicing it.

On Saturday, October 28th, the researcher sent a text to participants reminding them to start turning in their HNb's. At church the next day, the researcher distributed the "Post-Intervention Hospitality Questionnaire" (Q2), to all participants (see Appendix J). They were asked to complete and return it by the next Sunday.

The HNb's and Q2's were collected on Sunday, November 5th. A few came in a little late, but all were collected except for one notebook and post-intervention questionnaire. Participant 9 had a medical emergency and was in the hospital, unable to complete the questionnaire or turn in the materials.

Interviews with participants were conducted at the church premises. They were audio-recorded on the researcher's cell phone to ensure accuracy of reporting. The researcher asked several scripted questions and reviewed the participants' questionnaires and notebooks, asking

for elaboration (see Appendix K). In addition, the researcher asked open questions about the participants' thoughts and responses to the hospitality effort. The researcher sought to let the participants generate and share their own thoughts without asking leading questions.

The interview review of questionnaires and hospitality notebooks involved seeking clarification of any data that was unclear, and asking for elaboration on thoughts expressed. Some of the participating couples had conflicting data, and these interviews served to correct and consolidate the data. Some of the data also conflicted between the questionnaires and the notebooks, and these interviews also served to clarify and confirm the correct numbers. In this way, the interviews were an important triangulation of data for ensuring the accuracy of the information reported.

Once all the material was collected, it was examined in detail by the researcher. Triangulation of data was sought by considering the researcher's personal experience and observations from his project journal, the participants' written material, and the conversational interviews between the researcher and participants. The intervention design called for an expert outside evaluator to analyze the written material of the project in order to provide an additional perspective; however, the researcher was unable to secure an outside expert's assistance. The researcher's faculty mentor indicated that the project and analysis were still solid, even without an outside perspective.

Overall, the researcher was satisfied with the implementation of the intervention design. Almost everything went according to plan, with the only exceptions being that some material was turned in a little late by some participants and some extra communication was added by the researcher. None of this compromised or weakened the project or its analysis or results.

The data collected was analyzed for quantitative and qualitative results. Quantitative data was based on numbers provided by participants in their two questionnaires, their hospitality notebooks, and in the interviews conducted by the researcher. Comparing the numbers between Q1 and Q2/HNb provided some longitudinal perspective. Interviews were important for clarifying and expanding on the participants' written responses. Important quantitative data that was examined included the participation rate of eligible church members, the comparison between given and accepted invitations and how many hospitality events actually occurred, and the comparative numbers of hospitality events before and during the project.

For qualitative analysis, the researcher examined the questionnaires regarding the participants' description of obstacles to hospitality, the practice and purpose of hospitality, the relationship of hospitality to the mission of the church, and the impact the project had on the participants. The various responses were then encoded for aggregation and development of common themes. For example, specific objections were encoded as OB1, OB2, OB3, etc. Descriptions of the practice and purpose of hospitality were encoded as PRAC1, PRAC2, and PURP1, PURP2, etc. In this way, the researcher was able to discover and compare the most common themes that emerged from participation in the project. As these themes emerged, they were discussed with the participants in the interviews for further understanding.

Having reviewed the design and implementation of the project in this chapter, Chapter 4 shows the quantitative and qualitative results of the project.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter contains a description of the results of the thesis project. Participation, the quantitative results, and the qualitative results are described. The changes brought about by the thesis project are highlighted. These changes were found by comparing the preliminary and post-intervention questionnaires, examining participants' data and thoughts from their hospitality notebooks, and interviewing some participants after the project's completion. The results show that the biblical home hospitality project made a significant quantitative and qualitative difference, producing an increase of intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between members of FCBC and people in the community. This chapter shows some of the main themes that emerged.

The researcher deemed it unnecessary and possibly tedious to provide all the raw data in this project thesis report. Instead, some chosen samples of handwritten responses are included in Appendices P, Q, R, and S. These are included to show examples of how participants used the project artifacts provided to them. Included are samples of Q1, some pages from the HNb, and Q2. These samples came from four different participants.

Participation

FCBC had a core group of members who were eager to follow the pastor's leadership. The pastor was also the chief researcher, so he had to be careful not to exert inappropriate pressure on members to participate. It was anticipated that most of the core group would actively

participate in the project to one degree or another. The expectation was that perhaps twelve households would sign up as participants, with ten households being the minimum desired.

The official participation in the study was in line with expectations. Ten households with qualifying participants signed the consent form, consisting of fifteen individuals. The church consists of twenty-six active member households, so the participation rate was about thirty-eight percent of eligible households. These twenty-six households include thirty-eight eligible participants, equaling thirty-nine percent participation when measured by eligible individuals rather than households.

Quantitative Results

Intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel with people in the local community increased in frequency among participants through the practice of biblical home hospitality. The “Preliminary Hospitality Questionnaire” (Q1) revealed that four out of the ten participant households practiced hospitality in the two months prior to the hospitality project “with someone who is not a relative, close friend, or fellow church attendee.” These criteria were based on the delimitations of the project (see Chapter 1) and reflect the desire to reach out to new people, not just family and close friends. During the time period of the hospitality project (September and October, 2023), seven out of the ten participant households reported practicing home hospitality. Home hospitality increased from forty percent participation to seventy percent participation when measured by households.

One factor to be noted, however, is that if the increase is measured by *individual* participants rather than households, the practice of hospitality increased from four out of fifteen participants (twenty-seven percent) in the two months prior to the hospitality project, to eleven out of fifteen participants (seventy-three percent) during the two months of the project. The

difference between measuring by household (forty percent to seventy percent) versus individuals (twenty-seven percent to seventy-three percent) came about because couples who *did not* practice home hospitality in the two months prior to the project *did so* during the project period, whereas singles who stated that they *did* practice home hospitality during the two months prior to the project *did not do so* during the project period.

Having a supportive spouse seemed to make a significant difference in outcome. Couples increased their home hospitality during the project, whereas singles did not. Indeed, of the three participant households that did not practice home hospitality during the project period, two were singles, and one was the only participant who had a non-Christian, non-participating spouse. The only other single participant shared meals with people twice, but did not host anyone at her home. Only one of the households represented by a couple practiced qualifying home hospitality in the two months prior to the project, whereas *all* the couples practiced home hospitality during the project (other than the one exception noted above, who may be thought of as *spiritually* single), an increase from one couple to six couples. Six out of seven participating married-couple households increased home hospitality, whereas zero out of three participating single-person households did so. This issue was discussed with participants in the post-intervention interviews, and all participants agreed that having a supportive spouse made or would make a significant difference.

One could also note that of the sixteen eligible church households that declined to participate in the study, ten were single individuals, meaning sixty-three percent of eligible households who declined were singles. Seven church couples officially participated; six did not. Three church singles officially participated; ten did not. In other words, forty-six percent of eligible church couples did not participate; whereas seventy-seven percent of singles did not

participate. Singles were therefore less likely to sign up for the hospitality project, and less likely to practice biblical home hospitality when they did sign up. The obstacles to practicing home hospitality as a single person emerged as an unforeseen significant issue. Compare, for example, the following charts:

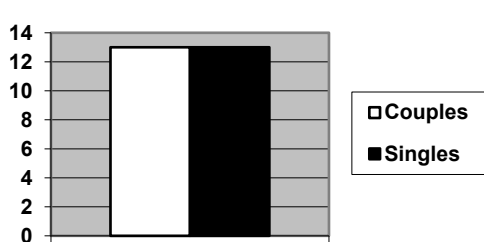


Table 4.1 Eligible Households of FCBC

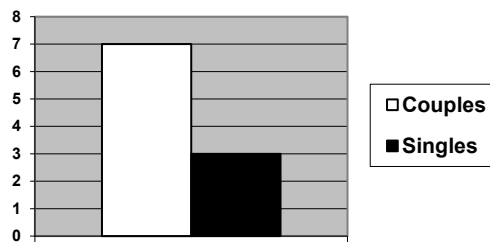


Table 4.2 Participating Households of FCBC

Notice that the same number of couple and single households were eligible to participate in the hospitality project (Table 4.1), yet significantly more couples signed up than singles (Table 4.2). Now consider the following comparison:

Table 4.3 Participating Couples

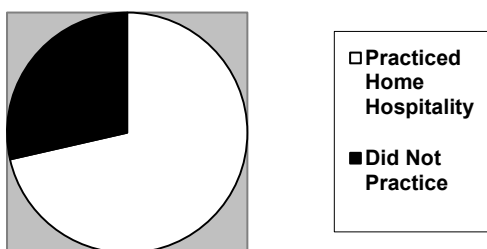
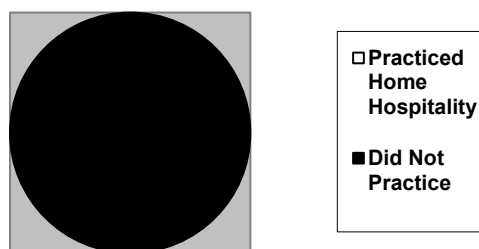


Table 4.4 Participating Singles



Of the couples that participated in the project, most practiced hospitality in their homes during the project period (Table 4.3). Of the singles that signed up for the project, none hosted guests in their home who met the project criteria (Table 4.4).

The following is a table showing some data gleaned from the questionnaires and hospitality notebooks. Discrepancies in the data were resolved through participant interviews. It

represents the most important quantitative data from the two months of the project (September and October, 2023).

Participant Code	# Families Invited	# Accepted	# Actual Events
1 & 2	5	4	4
3	3	3	2
4	0	0	0
5 & 6	5	4	4
7 & 8	6	6	5
9	0	0	0
10	2	2	2
11	0	0	0
12 & 13	2	2	2
14 & 15	1	1	1
Totals:	24	22	20
Previous 2 months:			5

Table 4.5 – Project Period Hospitality Data

To summarize the data, twenty-four invitations were given by participants to qualifying people in the community during the project period. Of these twenty-four invitations, twenty-two were accepted, a ninety-two percent acceptance rate. Of the twenty-two accepted invitations, twenty events actually took place, a ninety-one percent follow-through rate. Extending an invitation to someone who was not a close friend, relative, or fellow church attendee resulted in an eighty-three percent success rate for hosting a hospitality event.

Note that the final row shows the total hospitality events held by participants in the two months *prior* to the hospitality project for longitudinal comparison. Hospitality events increased from five to twenty, a four hundred percent increase. A four-fold increase in biblical home hospitality from the previous two-month period does not seem to necessitate a technical

calculation for its significance, but a socscistatistics.com test for a one-tailed, paired t-test for two dependent means was run to see if a technically significant difference occurred. The result was the following: “The value of t is 2.086825. The value of p is .03326. The result is significant at $p < .05$.” From both an informal and technical standpoint, the hospitality project made a significant difference, at least in the short term. It remains to be seen if the project aids in a more long-term significant change in the church.

Qualitative Results

An increase in biblical understanding of hospitality was projected as a qualitative result of the project. It was thought that a project like this should result in most of the participants showing a deeper and more biblical understanding of hospitality in regard to its theological significance, its relation to the mission of the church, and its importance. Qualitative results were gleaned by examining and reflecting on the questionnaires, notebooks, and interviews. The results are organized primarily following the questions given in Q1 and Q2.

Obstacles to Hospitality

Q1 asked participants what obstacles they thought they must overcome in order to practice home hospitality. Each of the fifteen participants gave various answers which have been summarized and condensed to ten main obstacles. From most mentioned to least mentioned, the primary obstacles identified were the following:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1: Busyness/scheduling issues | (6 times) |
| 2: Lack of motivation/intentionality | (5 times) |
| 3: Messy house/unprepared | (3 times) |
| 4: Personality/introverted | (3 times) |
| 5: Children | (3 times) |
| 6: Neighbors being disinclined | (2 times) |
| 7: Lack of spouse/spousal encouragement | (2 times) |
| 8: Safety concerns | (2 times) |

- 9: Pride (1 time)
 10: Physical space in the home (1 time)

These obstacles could be further summarized as physical issues and non-physical issues. Busy schedules, messy houses, dealing with children, and physical space in the home may be considered physical obstacles. Lack of motivation and intentionality, personality issues or introversion, neighbors not wanting to come over, lack of encouragement from a spouse, safety concerns, and pride may be considered non-physical obstacles. There is overlap and interplay between these physical and non-physical issues which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Q2 asked participants to describe the obstacles they were “able to overcome” during the two months of conducting the biblical home hospitality project. In other words, these answers reflect the participants’ thoughts on obstacles actually overcome rather than merely potential obstacles reflected in Q1. The following list represents their answers:

- 1: No obstacles were overcome; did not practice hospitality (4 times)
 2: No obstacles *needed* to be overcome (3 times)
 3: Physical space in the home (3 times)
 4: Not asking/inertia (2 times)
 5: Busy schedule (2 times)
 6: Getting acquainted/beyond surface level (2 times)
 7: Children (2 times)
 8: Health issues (1 time)
 9: Spiritual warfare (1 time)
 10: Less worried about entertaining (1 time)
 11: Over-thinking the event (1 time)
 12: Being more vulnerable (1 time)

Comparison with the Q1 potential obstacles that participants expected to face shows less overlap than might have been expected with the actual obstacles they overcame listed in Q2. This may have occurred because participants did not have access to Q1 at the end of the project (since they returned it to the researcher prior to the project starting) and thus did not remember the specific obstacles they had listed in Q1. The researcher, therefore, made the following

observations about overcome obstacles by considering Q1 and Q2 in comparison to the actual practice and experience of participants during the hospitality project months, as well as post-intervention interviews:

1) Health issues were more of an obstacle than anticipated by participants. It is listed only once as an obstacle that was overcome, and not listed at all in the obstacles that participants anticipated. In reality, several participants experienced repeated or serious issues with health-related concerns. All the families with children experienced illnesses during the project period that adversely affected their ability to practice home hospitality. Several other participants also experienced health-related obstacles. This highlights an uncertain variable in practicing hospitality that was largely overlooked.

2) Physical issues were generally overcome by participants, while non-physical issues seemed more difficult to overcome. Six out of seven participants who listed busyness of schedule as an obstacle in Q1 did indeed practice home hospitality during the project period, even though they did not list that as an overcome obstacle in Q2. All three participants who listed having a messy house as an obstacle practiced home hospitality. Two out of three who stated that their children were an obstacle to home hospitality practiced it during the project period. On the other hand, those who listed non-physical obstacles like lack of motivation, lack of encouragement from a spouse, or safety fears were less likely to practice home hospitality.

Under the heading of obstacles, it should also be mentioned that only five out of fifteen participants indicated that they grew up in a family that “used the home for hospitality to people who were not relatives or close friends” (Q1, question 5). This means sixty-seven percent had no family background that modeled home hospitality in the case of strangers, neighbors, and casual acquaintances and friends. This lack of positive, generational modeling of home hospitality must

surely be an issue to be considered, and most participants agreed in the post-intervention interviews that their childhood family practice of hospitality (or lack thereof) was formative of their own practice.

Practice of Hospitality

When asked to describe the practice of hospitality—what kind of activities it includes—respondents to Q1 gave the following answers, which have been condensed and summarized by the researcher:

1: Share a meal	(12 times)
2: Invite people into one's home	(9 times)
3: Welcome	(9 times)
4: Get to know/build relationship	(7 times)
5: Serve/provide for needs	(7 times)
6: Live life in common	(4 times)
7: Provide lodging	(3 times)
8: Entertain	(3 times)

These practices might be further summarized as 1) table fellowship, 2) welcoming into one's home, 3) building relationship, and 4) providing for physical needs. These four activities generally encompass most of what participants considered the practices of hospitality prior to the project.

Q2 asked the participants the exact same question about the practice of hospitality at the end of the hospitality effort. The following answers were given:

1: Deepen relationship/friendship/get to know	(11 times)
2: Provide meals/eat together	(9 times)
3: Share resources/meet physical needs	(9 times)
4: Welcome people into one's home	(7 times)
5: Provide shelter/lodging	(4 times)
6: Share testimony/evangelism	(3 times)
7: Spend time together	(2 times)
8: Show love	(2 times)
9: Entertain	(1 time)
10: Goal of glorifying God	(1 time)
11: Treat people with care	(1 time)

12: Expect nothing in return	(1 time)
13: Take risks	(1 time)
14: Obey hospitality command	(1 time)

The answers to the same question were more diverse after the project than beforehand. The participants seemed to have given more thought to the practice of home hospitality and increased their vocabulary for describing it. Nevertheless, some practices remained most prominent, including sharing meals, welcoming into the home, deepening relationships, and providing for physical needs. Comparison shows, however, that relationship-building became more prominent than sharing meals, and meeting physical needs became more prominent than welcoming people into one's home. In addition, the idea of entertaining became less prominent as a part of practicing hospitality, while evangelism became more prominent.

Purpose of Hospitality

The questionnaires also asked about the purpose of biblical hospitality: "What is it for? What are reasons or goals for doing it?" The following list summarizes the primary responses to Q1 given by participants:

1: Deeper connection/relationship/fellowship	(12 times)
2: Sharing the gospel	(7 times)
3: To serve/provide for others in need	(4 times)
4: Christian testimony	(3 times)
5: To make guests feel welcome, safe, encouraged	(3 times)
6: Stretching/changing the host	(3 times)
7: Spiritual change in the guests	(2 times)
8: For the glory of God	(1 time)
9: To model hospitality for children	(1 time)

These purposes could be further summarized under the categories of 1) relationship-building that changes the guests or the hosts, 2) gospel-centered conversation, and 3) providing for physical needs. There was substantial overlap between these purposes and the practices listed above, which also included relationship-building and providing for physical needs. Practice and

purpose seem to be inextricably linked in the minds of many participants. The significant difference between practice and purpose was that *practice* emphasized table fellowship in the home, while *purpose* emphasized evangelism. Both practice and purpose elevated relationship. One might summarize by saying that participants saw biblical home hospitality primarily as *the practice of table fellowship in the home for the purpose of relationship-based evangelism*.

Q2 asked the same question about the purpose of biblical hospitality. The answers can be summarized as follows:

1: Become friends/relationship building	(11 times)
2: Gospel witness	(9 times)
3: Bring people to Christ	(3 times)
4: Provide physical needs	(3 times)
5: Demonstrate love of Christ	(2 times)
6: Show unconditional kindness	(1 time)
7: Encouragement	(1 time)
8: Build trust	(1 time)
9: Glorify the Lord	(1 time)
10: Share testimony	(1 time)
11: Follow Jesus' and biblical examples	(1 time)
12: Model hospitality for children	(1 time)
13: Bless host and guest	(1 time)

While there was more diversity of expression in the Q2 responses, the basic themes were essentially the same. Gospel-centered relationship building was the strong focus of the participants.

Relation to Church Mission

The final qualitative question in Q1 asked how hospitality related “to our church’s mission to glorify God by telling and living the gospel in our neighborhood.” Again, a variety of answers were given which are summarized under the following descriptions:

1: By providing an opportunity for evangelism/testimony/invitation to church	(6 times)
2: By practically demonstrating the gospel/love of Christ or God	(6 times)
3: By building relationship with people outside the church facilities	(5 times)

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 4: By being God/gospel centered | (1 time) |
| 5: By embracing people who come to our church | (1 time) |
| 6: By providing a physical context for fulfilling our mission | (1 time) |

The question about how biblical hospitality related to FCBC's mission was repeated in

Q2. After the hospitality effort, the participants gave the following responses:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1: By providing opportunity for evangelism/testimony/invitation to church | (8 times) |
| 2: By creating opportunity to fulfill our mission | (4 times) |
| 3: By following biblical commands/examples | (2 times) |
| 4: By demonstrating the gospel in action | (2 times) |
| 5: By helping/caring for others | (2 times) |
| 6: By demonstrating genuine care; not just trying to get people to church | (1 time) |
| 7: By demonstrating love and sacrifice | (1 time) |

The primary concepts raised by participants were the opportunity for verbal, gospel-centered witness, the physical reenactment of God's/Christ's love in the gospel, and the centrifugal relational impetus created, i.e., ministry *outside* the walls of the church facilities rather than focusing only on trying to get people to "come to church." Hospitality's relationship to the church's mission could thus be summarized as *the opportunity for building relationships outside the traditional church service that provide a context for sharing the gospel verbally and incarnationally*. Participants' focus reflected the stated mission of the church as "telling" and "living" the gospel in our neighborhood/community. They focused on verbal gospel witness and practical gospel demonstration in their own neighborhoods.

Impact of the Hospitality Project

Q2 added two final questions for participants. These were, 1) "What impact did participating in the hospitality program have on you?" and 2) "How did participating in the hospitality program influence your *intentional* (i.e., for relationship-building) interaction with people in the community?" The use of the words "intentional interaction" in the final question was a direct reference to the problem identified for this thesis project (see Chapter 1). These two

questions were intended to gauge the impact of the project on participants in regard to the problem of a lack of intentional interaction with people in the community. They also gave participants the opportunity to comment on the project's impact on them more generally.

The participants' descriptions of the impact the hospitality project had on them were the most diverse responses given. Only four responses occurred more than once, which were the following:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1: I was encouraged/more aware to actually do it | (9 times) |
| 2: I was not as concerned about the meal/formality | (3 times) |
| 3: I enjoyed it/seeing how happy it made people | (2 times) |
| 4: I was challenged to examine my tendency to be guarded | (2 times) |

The rest of the responses were difficult to categorize, but most related to a change in the actions, awareness, or self-perceptions of the participants. For example, changed actions included breaking the ice with one's neighbors, increased conversation with a spouse about hospitality, making plans to invite non-neighbors over, keeping house better in order to be able to host on shorter notice, and having longer, more meaningful conversations. Changed awareness and self-perception included becoming more comfortable engaging neighbors, thinking about hospitality a lot, being more conscious of and motivated for sharing the gospel, recognizing one's natural tendency to be guarded, shallow, or inhospitable, and seeing people in a new light as potential guests.

Only one participant had negative feedback about the impact of the hospitality project. P2 commented that it was exhausting "having to sit through conversation that sometimes was not relevant to anything." This person wrote, "Seems to me that this world has changed and no one is interested in becoming 'intentional' or friendships [sic]. The world has a cold heart." It is notable that these comments came from a participant who actively participated and was probably the most active in showing hospitality to outsiders prior to the project. This feeling was not

expressed by someone for whom hospitality was a new practice, but from one who has been more regularly hospitable than most other members of FCBC.

Summary of Results

The quantitative data from the hospitality project shows a participation rate of close to forty percent of eligible church members. Volunteering and participating was higher among supportive married couples than among people who were single or did not have a supportive spouse. Hospitality increased four hundred percent during the two months of the project in comparison to the two months prior to the hospitality effort. Invitations of qualifying guests were accepted ninety-two percent of the time and had an eighty-three percent likelihood to result in a hospitality event. Quantitative data confirmed that the project produced a significant change in the practice of biblical home hospitality among participants overall.

Qualitative data showed a strong awareness among participants of the importance of table fellowship, welcoming people into one's home, relationship building, meeting practical needs, and both verbal and incarnational gospel witness. Both physical and mental obstacles were faced, with physical obstacles being more likely to be overcome than non-physical ones. Participants saw the practice of hospitality as emphasizing relationship building and meeting physical needs. The purpose of hospitality emphasized gospel-centered relationship building. Participants expressed the relationship between the hospitality effort and the church's mission with the terms "opportunity" and "demonstration"; that is, biblical hospitality provided an excellent *opportunity* or context for glorifying God by telling and living the gospel in one's community, and it was a visible *demonstration* of the gracious hospitality of God revealed in the gospel. The impact of the hospitality program consisted primarily in positive changes to the actions, awareness, and self-perception of the participants.

While the quantitative data was clear, the qualitative data was less certain. The participants seemed to have a fairly good understanding of the practice and purpose of hospitality prior to beginning the project. Their initial focus was on table fellowship, relationship building, and opportunities for evangelism, and this focus did not significantly change. The areas that saw marked improvement related primarily to overcoming inertia and being less concerned with formality and entertaining. Theologically, participants appreciated learning about the theme of hospitality throughout Scripture. Specifically, positive comments were made about God being a God of hospitality and about the challenge of Jesus' table fellowship.

This chapter presented the data collected during and after the hospitality program that was developed and implemented to address the problem of a lack of intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between members of FCBC and people in the local community. The next chapter provides a synthesis of the meaning and significance of the data, with discussion of how it might apply in other contexts, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter offers some final thoughts and evaluations of the research project. The project was expected to challenge the cultural trend of primarily seeing one's home as a private escape from the stresses of the world. There is a tendency toward isolation and withdrawal in American culture (see Chapter 1) that is inconsistent with the biblical practice of hospitality toward strangers and outsiders. The thesis project challenged Christians to see their homes as an important tool to be used for fulfilling the mission God has given to the church. Believers were challenged to use the homes God gave them for His purpose. Christians should reject the self-centered attitude prevalent in culture and push themselves toward more intentional interaction with neighbors for the sake of the gospel. Biblical home hospitality must be a vital component in church revitalization and Christian outreach in general.

In this chapter, the implications of the research project are described. What lessons were learned? Was the thesis proven? How did the project relate to the current literature and biblical theology of hospitality? Second, some applications are made based on the results of the project. How can the project be applied in other contexts/churches? How can the project be applied in the future at FCBC? Third, some of the research limitations are discussed. What issues were not addressed by the project? Finally, suggestions for further research are made.

Research Implications

FCBC has a long history of employing a primarily attractional model of ministry. Many events and programs were created to attract people from the community to official church events.

One of the negative results was the church gaining a country club reputation among some in the community. There were plenty of outreach programs over the decades, but these focused on getting people to attend church events. Members who were close friends sometimes showed each other hospitality, but this hospitality rarely extended to people in the community who were not close friends. For this reason, the researcher identified a lack of intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between members of FCBC and people in the community as a problem that should be addressed.

In order to address this problem, the researcher developed and implemented a program of biblical home hospitality with the members of FCBC. They were taught about the theology and practice of biblical hospitality both from the pulpit and in small groups. Those who signed up as official participants were encouraged to show hospitality during the months of September and October, 2023, with people who were not family, close friends, or regular attendees of FCBC.

The thesis of the doctoral project was the following: *If a home hospitality program is developed and implemented at FCBC, intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between the church members and the local community will increase.* The quantitative and qualitative data confirmed the validity of the thesis. Almost forty percent of eligible members participated in the project, and home hospitality among participants increased by four-hundred percent from the months prior to the hospitality program. Participant interviews and HNB's showed that relationships were established and deepened by the hospitality experiences. These interactions were indeed intentional, in the sense that participants were mindful of the purposes of building relationship and being sensitive to gospel opportunities.

It was noted in Chapter 1 that American culture displays declining trust in others, declining close friendships, and increasing loneliness. The cultural trend is toward

disengagement of physical interaction with neighbors and increased isolation. This trend was reflected in the negative feedback given by P2, noted in the previous chapter. P2 felt that the world seems “cold” and people are less interested in building friendships or having intentional interactions. This participant has been more active than most others in the church in trying to show hospitality to strangers and acquaintances. As a result, they have experienced more rejections than others in the church; hence the negative feelings.

P2’s experience may point to the need for pre-hospitality relationship building. Inviting a complete stranger into one’s home for a meal is so counter-cultural that it may be perceived as overly strange or uncomfortable for most Americans. While Christians should be willing to practice hospitality to strangers, as instructed in Scripture, it seems culturally preferable to build at least a casual acquaintance before taking the step of practicing biblical home hospitality. Most of the hospitality events hosted by participants were not with complete strangers, but with acquaintances: people with whom participants had sufficient relational trust for them to feel comfortable coming for a meal in a private residence. Church members should be exhorted to meet new people and build relationships and trust outside the home before inviting people into their homes for hospitality. This pre-hospitality relationship building is important for practicing successful home hospitality in our culture. The success rate of eight-three percent for hospitality invitations indicates that acquaintances in the community are open to building deeper relationships.

Connecting this to the theme of unconditional vs. conditional hospitality discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), it seems that biblical home hospitality for Christians is very much conditional rather than unconditional, not necessarily because of the hosts, but because of the guests. Americans are very hesitant to ask for or receive unconditional hospitality. They are

reluctant to be hosted by a stranger. Without the condition of an already-established acquaintance and a certain level of trust, people in the community are unlikely to agree to be welcomed into the homes of believers. While Christians should be encouraged to be more open and welcoming toward outsiders, such efforts may be less fruitful without first building a foundation of relationship outside the home.

Another theme from the literature review was the transformative nature of biblical hospitality. It changes both the hosts and the guests. It turns strangers into friends and friends into family. This was seen in the hospitality project in the overcoming of obstacles and the building of relationships. Hosts reported that they enjoyed the experience and became more comfortable being hospitable with less focus on formality and appearances. They became less concerned with making an impression and more concerned with getting to know their guests. For example, P7 and P8 invited a family over for dinner spur-of-the-moment without any preparation. They had not done anything like that in the past, and it was way out of their comfort zone, yet because of their commitment to what they had learned about biblical hospitality, they pushed themselves to put it into practice. Guests were also transformed in that relationships were built that have future potential. Several participants noted that they have already gotten together with guests a second time or made plans to do so. P12 noted that after a hospitality event they received an invitation from their guest to visit in the guest's home. Strangers are becoming acquaintances, and acquaintances are becoming friends. Hospitality is forming and transforming relationships.

As was just stated, one of the main developments was the way the hospitality project challenged the tendency of participants to have self-imposed standards that act as disincentives to practicing biblical home hospitality. The insistence that one's house has to be at a certain level

of tidiness, or the meal has to be of a certain quality was challenged. Some participants indicated that they were able to focus more on the God-glorifying, gospel-centered purpose of hospitality and become less concerned about the state of their house or the quality of the entertainment. The biblical teaching about hospitality seemed to make an impact in helping church members be less self-focused and more God and guest-focused.

It was thought by the researcher that the project would highlight the importance of pastoral leadership in the practice of biblical hospitality. This was certainly the case for FCBC, since the pastor was the primary researcher. Could this effort be led by a layperson or ministry team? Possibly, but it seems probable that the pastor's support and leadership are desirable and maybe even necessary for this to succeed in a local church context.

The practice of hospitality is a necessary quality for pastors/elders in the church (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8). Christians probably ignore the biblical commands for showing hospitality to strangers because pastors do not model it themselves, nor teach explicitly on the subject. An example in the context of FCBC is the fact that many church members had never seen the inside of the parsonage before the current pastor's tenure. In the past, the parsonage was seen by the church (and the pastors) as the pastor's getaway from the demands of ministry. Members were reportedly not shown hospitality in the pastor's home. This is an unbiblical view and practice by pastors. Pastoral leadership through teaching and modeling biblical home hospitality is necessary for the families that pastors influence. It took pastoral leadership to help participants break free from their natural inertia regarding biblical home hospitality.

Another observation from the hospitality effort was the need for more communication. The project plan included a number of communication artifacts and methods; however, during the actual project, more communication efforts were deemed necessary. While the researcher

clearly understands what is going on, the church members need more communication to grasp the intent of the project, what exactly it entails, and what they are expected to do. Even though this information was given in accordance with the plan, it needed to be given repeatedly in various forms and venues. The researcher added a number of church bulletin inserts about specific aspects of the project to help church members in their understanding. He added the use of text messages to remind members of deadlines and give brief explanations. He visited discipleship groups on Sunday mornings to describe the project and answer questions. These communication efforts were not in the original plan (Chapter 3), but were added because the researcher realized that some members were struggling to understand the project and needed additional or repeated information. Others who seek to lead an effort like this should plan to over-communicate rather than under-communicate.

Health issues unexpectedly appeared as an obstacle to home hospitality. This should have been anticipated but was simply not on the researcher's mind. The participating families with children all experienced sickness in their households during the project period. Some participants deal with ongoing chronic conditions that make home hospitality challenging. In addition, some guests had to cancel because of sickness. One participant suffered a stroke toward the end of the hospitality effort. The researcher could have prepared himself and participants better in regard to the probability of dealing with the frustration of sickness as an impediment to hospitality. Church members must be realistic about practicing home hospitality and being flexible in response to unexpected illnesses. Pastors and church leaders must be gracious in considering the realities of physical limitations.

Examination of the data showed that participants' understanding of biblical hospitality did increase, but perhaps less than was expected. While P6 said, "My definition of hospitality

was broadened . . . a lot,” other participants said their understanding had not really changed. The primary difference the hospitality project made was not so much in theoretical or theological understanding, but in practice. The project helped participants overcome the physical obstacles and inertia that kept them from practicing biblical home hospitality prior to the intervention. The biblical teaching was important for helping the church have a common understanding of hospitality and its purpose, but many members already had a relationship/gospel-focused view of hospitality.

Participants’ descriptions of the practice of hospitality included primarily the following: 1) welcoming people into one’s home, 2) table fellowship, 3) building relationship, and 4) providing for physical needs. Their understanding was consistent with the current literature and biblical/theological emphases. One might summarize by saying that participants saw biblical hospitality primarily as *the practice of table fellowship in the home for the purpose of relationship-based evangelism*.

This definition, which was derived from the participants, is slightly different from the definition used by the researcher in Chapter 1. That definition focused on relationship building but did not explicitly mention evangelism. Participants saw evangelism as a purpose or goal that was explicit in their practice of hospitality. Although “intentional interaction” was the specific focus of this project (since that was what was measured), participants saw sharing the gospel as an important and explicit goal of these interactions.

This is consistent with the pastor’s overall ministry focus and his emphasis on the mission of the church: to glorify God by telling and living the gospel in our community. It shows the importance of pastoral leadership (as noted above) and local church culture. A church that has been trained to see evangelism as the responsibility of every member will include this in their

home hospitality efforts. One caution could be noted, however: members should not see their guests only as evangelism projects, but should also show them the love of Christ regardless of whether or not they ever respond to the gospel positively. Participants definitely saw the relationship between the practice of biblical home hospitality and the mission of the church.

Research Applications

The application of this kind of home hospitality program should be useful for church revitalization and for church outreach in general, not just at FCBC but at other local churches and in other cultures. During the implementation period, a missionary to China spoke at FCBC and noted that personal hospitality is the primary means of evangelism and discipleship in that culture. A friend of the researcher's who ministers in Muslim countries that restrict explicit evangelism and sometimes punish conversions has also said that personal relationship building is the primary means they use to reach people for Christ. These restrictive countries may closely monitor or restrict corporate hospitality efforts (which have been the focus of most DMin projects related to hospitality), but they must allow private interaction between residents to some degree. A project like this that focuses on home hospitality is probably more useful and applicable in cultures where the open practice of Christianity is discouraged. Of course, in the United States and other Western countries, biblical home hospitality can be freely practiced and used to reach and influence people for the sake of Christ's mission. As Western culture becomes more distrustful and isolating, the yearning for human connection cannot be snuffed out, but will become even more significant for connecting with people in the local community. Biblical home hospitality can be an excellent way to draw people in to Christian community.

To be specific, the sermons developed for the project are appropriate for any church, probably in almost any culture. The small-group studies that relate to the sermons can also be

used by other churches. The size of the church should not be a limiting issue since the focus is on home hospitality rather than putting on an event at the church facilities. Indeed, no church facilities or volunteers are necessary for a biblical home hospitality effort. One simply needs a place to invite others, something to share, and the desire to connect with people for the sake of the mission. A small church can do this. A large mega-church can also do this. As long as a congregation has a few people willing to push past the inertia and start inviting people to get together, this biblical home hospitality project can be a useful tool for any church.

Besides the sermons and small-group studies, churches could also adapt or make use of the hospitality notebooks, the aquarium idea, and a church library of hospitality-related works. These things may be limited by the size of the church, however, since making thousands of notebooks or providing a library of physical books for thousands of members may not be practical. One idea shared by a participant was to digitize the hospitality notebook so it could be used on a computer or phone. Churches could also look into sharing books about biblical hospitality digitally. The results of hospitality efforts could also be put online instead of having a physical representation in an aquarium.

The future application of biblical home hospitality for FCBC is being discussed among the members and leadership. Ideas are being developed and shared for making home hospitality part of the DNA of the church culture. To some degree, this is already happening, as seen in the relationships that have already been built between members and people in the community, and in church families inviting each other and church visitors over for meals.

It does not seem like the official home hospitality project itself can be sustained indefinitely; that is, the effort will probably lose traction if the researcher attempts to make the formal features permanent. If he constantly urges people to fill in their hospitality notebooks, put

ping-pong balls in the aquarium, keep track of their hospitality events, read hospitality books, and mentions home hospitality every week, the effort may become burdensome and provoke resentment rather than excitement. The pastor's desire is that biblical home hospitality would happen organically and by the initiative of the members rather than through a formal program.

On the other hand, the focus on biblical home hospitality can be sustained without all the formal aspects of the hospitality program. For example, the pastor continues to highlight the theme of biblical hospitality whenever it occurs in passages of Scripture he is preaching, which it does fairly frequently. This keeps hospitality on the minds of members without it being a formal program. In addition, the monthly calendar that is given to church members includes a reminder about biblical home hospitality, encouraging members to schedule an event and put it on the calendar. When members gather for the weekly fellowship meal after the Sunday worship service, the pastor occasionally talks about hospitality and encourages the members to invite visitors and new people to their homes for a meal. These efforts keep the theme in front of the church without it being a continuous, formal program.

The pastor still plans to have a periodic, intentional, focused, church-wide, pastor-led hospitality effort on an annual basis. He has designated September as hospitality month each year and is encouraging a church-wide focus on biblical home hospitality for that particular month. During this month he will challenge members to host at least one church family and one non-church family in their homes. This can preserve and repeat the impetus created by a unified, concerted effort. Some participants said that having a specific timeframe for practicing biblical home hospitality was part of what motivated them to overcome obstacles and actually do it. Having a hospitality month each year can potentially replicate this motivating factor.

Research Limitations

The specific, local context of FCBC is a limitation of the research conducted. The participants, their relationship to the pastor, their willingness to push beyond their comfort zones and support the effort, and their access to spaces and resources are not necessarily replicable in every church. Churches would need some members willing to follow the leadership of the pastor and participate in such an effort. Members would need access to places and resources with which to show hospitality. FCBC was blessed at this time to have a core group of members who were willing to follow the pastor's teaching and guidance and had access to the resources to do it.

Another limitation of the research is that its success in this instance does not demonstrate that it is sustainable indefinitely in any particular local church, or that it can become part of the DNA of the local church culture. It could be a one-off positive result. A second effort could be less successful, or incorporating it into the culture of the church could ultimately fail.

For FCBC, a good sign in this regard occurred shortly after the hospitality effort concluded. A new family began attending FCBC in late November, 2023, and the researcher mentioned to his wife that they should invite them over for a meal. The next day, however, one of the participant families took the initiative to invite the new family to their home for a meal. P5 indicated that they had never invited someone over so promptly before, and that the hospitality effort was a factor in their doing so. Other church families have also hosted the new attendees. This has resulted in growing relationships, incorporating them into the church community, and moving them toward church membership at FCBC. The researcher has also been informed of other participants who have plans for future hospitality events. It is hoped that biblical home hospitality will become part of FCBC's common practice.

As revealed in Chapter 4, the challenges faced by singles in practicing home hospitality were not addressed by this research project. Church members without a supportive spouse seemed less likely to overcome some of the obstacles to home hospitality than those with a supportive spouse. This research project did not address this issue. Another researcher could look into how to help singles in the church overcome obstacles to biblical home hospitality.

Finally, this research did not address how to establish pre-hospitality relationships that may be important for successful biblical home hospitality. As discussed above, American culture would generally frown on inviting a total stranger to one's home for a meal. This would be considered awkward at best, and bizarre or dangerous at worst. It would be prudent for a church to encourage the establishing of relationships outside the home first, with the intention of building enough trust and rapport for inviting people to one's home. Some of the practical, popular-level hospitality resources mentioned in Chapter 2 give ideas for this, e.g., Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon's *The Art of Neighboring*, Dave and Jon Ferguson's *B.L.E.S.S.*, and Dustin Willis and Brandon Clements's *The Simplest Way to Change the World*.

Further Research

Further research might include the effect of training members on how to share the gospel in a home hospitality setting. Many of the participants understood evangelism to be one of the important purposes of biblical home hospitality. Evangelism training should be happening in any healthy church. It has been done at FCBC in the several years prior to this hospitality effort. The focus of this project was intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel, which meant interaction with the intent of building deeper relationships that potentially lead to gospel opportunities. What was not explicitly addressed was the practice of evangelism in the context of

home hospitality. Another researcher could more explicitly delve into the *how* of evangelism in the context of biblical home hospitality.

Further research should also be conducted on the impact of singleness/lack of spousal support on church members practicing home hospitality, and how a church could try to address this obstacle. What measures or provisions could a church implement to help singles practice hospitality? How can church members come alongside their single members to help them engage in personal hospitality? What teaching, encouragement, resources, options, or help might increase participation of singles in biblical hospitality? A project could be conducted specifically to help singles in the church practice home hospitality.

Another avenue of action research might include the development of digital, online resources for home hospitality. All of the artifacts for this research project were physical. In an increasingly digital, online culture, the development of non-physical hospitality resources would surely be helpful. P5 mentioned that he would have preferred being able to enter the hospitality notebook information in a computer rather than writing it down by hand. Developing computerized resources or a phone app for hospitality is a possible project for someone else.

Final Summary

The problem at FCBC of a lack of intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel between church members and people in the community was addressed by developing and implementing a program of biblical home hospitality with the church. The thesis that this program would increase intentional interaction for the sake of the gospel proved to be correct. Home hospitality with people who were not relatives, close friends, or fellow church members increased from five events in the two months prior to the program to twenty events during the two-month program. Participants were able to overcome obstacles to home hospitality and

showed some increase in their understanding of biblical hospitality. Some indications exist that the increased awareness and practice of hospitality may continue, at least with some of the participants.

Biblical home hospitality is an important and biblically necessary means of church revitalization and evangelism in an increasingly hostile culture. The researcher hopes that other pastors and churches will be encouraged to develop and implement their own plans and processes for fulfilling the will of God in this matter. All churches and Christians must take the following instruction seriously: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb 13:2, ESV).

APPENDIX A
HOSPITALITY PROGRAM INFORMATION LETTER

Biblical Hospitality

Dear Church,

Over the last few years, I've been working on a Doctor of Ministry degree in Church Revitalization from Liberty University. The D.Min degree is intended to be a practical degree in Christian ministry. That means I don't just write a bunch of stuff, I have to actually DO something!

My D.Min project is focused on increasing intentional interaction between members of Furnace Creek and people in the local community. The way I will do this is by developing and implementing a program of home hospitality for our church.

As part of this process, I'll be preaching about biblical hospitality in August, and our adult discipleship groups will also do small group studies based on the sermons. After that I will ask for volunteers to officially sign up for the project of home hospitality. For everyone who signs up, there will be a couple of questionnaires to fill in, and some of you will be interviewed by me at the end of the project. Participation in the project will primarily consist of signing up and inviting people to your homes during the months of September and October, and you will keep a journal about your experience in a Hospitality Notebook that I will provide. For those who participate, your feedback will be an important element in helping me improve this project.

I'll give you more information in the next few weeks. Please ask me any questions you have about this effort, and remember that participation is completely voluntary.

God bless!

Pastor Philip

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

July 10, 2023

Dear Members of FCBC:

As a student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my project is to increase intentional interaction between members of Furnace Creek Baptist Church and people in the local community, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join this project.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, members of FCBC, and not living in their parents' household. Participants, if willing, will be asked to do the following:

1. Complete an initial questionnaire that should take no more than 30 minutes.
2. Complete a guided hospitality plan for your household which should take no more than 15 minutes.
3. Practice occasional home hospitality with people from the local community over the course of eight weeks. You'll decide how often you want to have people over.
4. Keep a record and journal of your hospitality events in a Hospitality Notebook that will be provided to you.
5. After the two months of occasional home hospitality, complete a final questionnaire that should take no more than 30 minutes.
6. Some participants will be asked for in an interview that might take about 1 hour.

Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential. None of your personal information will be revealed in the final report.

Next step: If you are interested in participating, inform me verbally or in writing by Saturday, July 29th and I will provide a consent form for you to read and sign if you want to participate. The consent form contains additional information about my project. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent form and return it to me by Saturday, August 6th.

Sincerely,

Senior Pastor
Furnace Creek Baptist Church



APPENDIX C

HOSPITALITY SIGN-UP FORM (CONSENT FORM)

If you're ready to officially sign up to participate in my Doctor of Ministry project related to biblical hospitality, thanks so much! I'm working on a D.Min degree that focuses on church revitalization. Thanks to God, we've seen new families and more young people and children joining our church in recent years. We're also thankful for those who have kept this church going through some hard times in the past.

This hospitality effort is intended to increase *intentional* interaction between members of Furnace Creek Baptist Church and people in our local community. Everyone is invited to participate, but because this is an official project through Liberty University, eligible participants must carefully read and sign this Consent Form. If you don't, I won't be able to include your data in the project report. Don't feel obligated in any way, but if you want to officially participate, you have to sign the consent form.

Like I said, everyone at our church is invited to engage in the program of hospitality, but only certain people qualify for the official study. The criteria for eligible participants is the following: 1) *18 years old or older*; 2) *A member of FCBC*; 3) *Not living in your parents' household*. If you meet all the criteria and you want to participate, please read and sign the consent form. You must return the signed consent form to me by Saturday, August 6th, 2023.

God bless!

Consent Form

Title of the Project: Biblical Hospitality at FCBC

Principal Investigator: Philip Bramblet, Doctoral Candidate, School of Divinity, Liberty University.

Invitation to be Part of a Project Study

You are invited to participate in a project study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, a member of Furnace Creek Baptist Church, and not living in your parents' household. Taking part in this project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to increase intentional interaction between members of Furnace Creek Baptist Church and people in the local community. This will be addressed by developing and implementing a program of home hospitality at FCBC.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

7. Complete an initial questionnaire that should take no more than 30 minutes.
8. Complete a guided hospitality plan for your household which should take no more than 15 minutes.
9. Practice occasional home hospitality with people from the local community over the course of eight weeks. How often you plan to have people over will be your choice.
10. Keep a record and journal of your hospitality events in a hospitality notebook that will be provided to you.
11. After the eight weeks of occasional home hospitality, complete a final questionnaire that should take no more than 30 minutes.
12. Some participants will be asked for in an interview that might take about 1 hour.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include a greater understanding and appreciation for biblical hospitality, deepening relationships with people in the local community, and experience in the practice of home hospitality.

Benefits to society include a greater sense of connection between people in the local community, and resources that could be used by other pastors/churches for teaching about and practicing hospitality.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Project records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored in a locked office. Digital data will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office. After seven years, all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Audio recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer for seven years and then deleted. The researcher will have access to these recordings.

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?

To participate in the project, you will need to pay for any meals shared with your guests during the eight weeks of practicing home hospitality.

Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?

The researcher serves as senior pastor at Furnace Creek Baptist Church. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Furnace Creek Baptist Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Philip Bramblet. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. David Barnett, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a project participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX D

PRELIMINARY HOSPITALITY QUESTIONNAIRE (Q1)

Hospitality Questionnaire 1

Name: _____ [Your responses will be kept confidential and will not be linked to you by name in any public report. Please answer as honestly and fully as possible. Thank you!]

1. On average, how many times per month do you/your family get together for a meal at your home with other people (*including relatives*)?

2. On average, how many times per month do you/your family get together for a meal at your home with other people who are *not* relatives, close friends, or attendees of your church?

3. When was the last time you invited someone who is not a close friend, relative, or fellow church attendee to your home for a meal? If you don't know, you can say so.

4. How many times in the past two months have you gotten together for a meal at your home, at a restaurant, or at a park with someone who is not a relative, close friend, or fellow church attendee?

5. When you were growing up, would you say that your family used the home for hospitality to people who were not relatives or close friends?

6. What prevents you from welcoming people into your home? What obstacles must be overcome for you to do so?

7. How would you define or describe the *practice* of hospitality? What is it? What kind of activities does it include?

8. How would you define or describe the *purpose* of hospitality? What is it for? What are the intended results?

9. How does hospitality relate to our church's mission to glorify God by telling and living the gospel in our neighborhood?

APPENDIX E

NOTES FOR FOUR SERMONS

Sermon 1: The God of Hospitality

Hospitality: welcoming the stranger for the purpose of transforming their identity

1. The Garden of Eden: The Bible begins with God acting as gracious host to humanity in the garden of Eden. There he provided safety, sustenance, rest, etc. *Genesis 2:5-9, 15-16*. This is the beginning of the biblical theme of hospitality. God, who is self-sufficient and needs nothing and no one, intentionally creates us (the other) so he can welcome us to share the benefits of his existence.
2. The Promised Land: God continued his hospitality toward his people, Israel, both in the wilderness and the Promised Land. In the wilderness, he repeatedly provided food, water, and protection. Even in the Promised Land, the people lived as God's guests. *Leviticus 25:23*.
3. The New Heavens and New Earth: Ultimately God will dwell with his people in his eternal kingdom. We who were enemies are invited through faith in Christ to be God's guests at his eternal banquet. He makes us his family and dwells with us forever. This is the ultimate hospitality. *Ephesians 2:12-13, 19; Revelation 19:9; 21:3-6*.

Sermon 2: God's Hospitable People

1. The Example of Abraham: The father of faith displayed his righteousness by unconditionally caring for three strangers who showed up at his door. His hospitable righteousness is contrasted with the inhospitality of the city of Sodom. *Genesis 18-19*.
2. The Example of Israel: Israel alone of all ancient people groups had laws protecting the sojourner/stranger. God told them that they should care for foreigners/outsideers because they too had once been strangers in a foreign land. *Leviticus 19:33-34*.
3. The Example of the Early Church: The early church practiced hospitality toward traveling evangelists and teachers. *3 John 1:1-11*. They met in private homes as a regular part of their activity. *1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2*. Hospitality was considered a necessary virtue for godly believers. *1 Timothy 5:10; 1 Timothy 3:2*. By the third century they were renowned for their care for the poor, even among pagans. *Emperor Julian's "Letter to Arsacius."*

Sermon 3: The Hospitality of God in Jesus Christ

1. Jesus the Stranger from Heaven: John's gospel especially portrays Jesus as the stranger/visitor from heaven. He was sent from heaven/God and will return. He was not welcomed by his own people, but everyone who did welcome him becomes a child of God. *John 1:9-13; 3:17-19*.
2. Jesus the Guest: Luke's gospel especially shows Jesus as a guest in people's homes. He broke social standards by enjoying table fellowship with disreputable people, inviting them into saving fellowship with himself. *Luke 5:27-32; Luke 19:1-10*.

3. Jesus the Host: When Jesus was hosted by others, he sometimes transitioned from guest to host, showing that he is someone special. *John 2:1-11*. He holds forth the promise of eternal life pictured as an eternal, joyous banquet. *Luke 14:15-24*. The Lord's Supper is a foreshadowing of this. *1 Corinthians 11:26; Revelation 19:9*.

Sermon 4: Practicing Hospitality

1. Hospitality Toward the Saints: Some commands in Scripture relate to the special care we should have for one another as members of God's family. *1 Peter 4:9; Galatians 6:10; Romans 12:13*

2. Hospitality Toward Strangers: Some commands in Scripture relate to the expectation that we display the character of God in welcoming outsiders through hospitality. *Hebrews 13:2; 3 John 1:5-8*

3. Hospitality in Practice: Hospitality should be practiced in some form by all Christians. It involves welcoming strangers into your space to care for them and build transformative relationships. The care we extend should be both physical and spiritual.

Four Movements of Early Christian Hospitality (Amy Oden <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkEnqgF6oFo&t=481s>): 1) Greeting—proactive; moving out into the world. 2) Restoration—meeting basic needs; access to one's social networks. 3) Dwelling together—hanging out; including the stranger in your everyday life; sharing stories; including them in your spiritual practices. 4) Sending forth—providing what is needed to move on. *3 John 1:5-6; Matthew 25:34-46*

APPENDIX F

NOTES FOR FOUR-WEEK SMALL GROUP STUDY

Lesson 1 – The God of Hospitality

The word used for *hospitality* in Scripture literally means “love of strangers.” Biblical hospitality means to provide a safe, welcoming space for strangers in which they can become friends and even family. It’s not about fancy entertainment for those close to us. It’s about love, care, provision, protection, table fellowship, and relationship building with outsiders.

The Garden of Eden. The theme of hospitality is woven through the fabric of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. It begins in the creation account. God created a safe, inviting place (the garden of Eden) into which He as the Host invited humanity. Humans were the outsiders, created by God to share His generous hospitality. Biblical studies show that the later tabernacle and temple were partly representations of the Garden of Eden, the dwelling place of God.

Read **Genesis 1:29** and **2:7-9**. Thinking about Genesis 1 and 2, what kind of things did God provide in His hospitality toward humankind? Think of physical, emotional, and spiritual provision.

The History of Israel. This pattern was repeated in the history of the nation of Israel. God repeatedly provided food and a place of safety and rest for His people, whether in Egypt, the wilderness, or the Promised Land.

Read **Leviticus 25:23**. What relationship does this verse describe Israel having with God in the land of promise? How does this show God’s hospitality?

Read **Psalms 39:12**. Because the Psalmist views himself as God’s guest, what does he hope for from his divine Host?

Heaven and the Eternal Kingdom. The eternal hospitality of God is reflected in the descriptions of heaven and the eternal kingdom. Read the following passages and discuss them in relation to the theme of God’s hospitality in heaven and in His kingdom:

John 14:1-3

Luke 14:15-24

Matthew 22:1-10

Revelation 21:1-4

- How important is it to accept God’s offer of hospitality?
- How could you use God’s hospitality as a concept to describe the gospel to non-Christians?
- What kinds of people might the theme of God’s hospitality connect with most meaningfully?
- What was our own spiritual state when God invited us into his home through Jesus Christ?

Lesson 2 – God’s Hospitable People

Throughout history, God’s people have shown His hospitable character by being hospitable themselves. God invites outsiders and strangers (that’s us) into His eternal home, providing nourishment, relationship, and safety. God’s people have done the same.

The Example of Abraham

Read **Genesis 18:1-8**. The word “lord” in verse 3 is a generic title of respect, like “Sir.” It does not indicate that Abraham knew one of the men was the LORD (Yahweh). Most think that Hebrews 13:2 is a reference to Abraham (he entertained angels unawares). If Abraham did not know the identity of his guests as they approached (i.e., they were strangers), what does this indicate about the nature of biblical hospitality? What blessings did Abraham receive as a result of his hospitality? [consider especially **Genesis 18:9-10, 17**]

Read **Genesis 19:1-11**. How does the hospitality of Lot and the people of Sodom compare or contrast with Abraham’s hospitality? What are the results of Lot’s hospitality (although flawed) vs. Sodom’s *inhospitality*?

The Example of Israel

As far as historians can tell, Israel was the only nation that had laws protecting outsiders and foreigners in ancient times.

Read **Leviticus 19:33-34**. What *two* reasons does God give for why the Israelites should be hospitable toward foreigners and outsiders? How are these reasons for love of strangers?

The Example of the Early Church

The early Christians helped propagate the spread of the Gospel by hosting traveling preachers and church planters in their homes. They habitually showed hospitality to both Christian and non-Christian strangers.

Read **Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2**. In light of these verses, how vital was hospitality to the early church?

Read **3 John 1:5-11**. How did the Apostle John’s spiritual evaluation of Gaius and Diotrephes relate to hospitality?

- How should the example of believers throughout the ages influence our practice of hospitality?
- How do you think the practice of hospitality has changed in our culture over the last decades?
- Are Christians tending to follow the culture or the Bible in regard to hospitality?
- How do these biblical examples of hospitality relate to the character of God?
- How is showing or failing to show hospitality to outsiders related to godliness?

Lesson 3 – The Hospitality of God in Jesus Christ

It is through faith in Jesus Christ that God invites us into his presence as guests and ultimately makes us part of his family. In the Gospels, Jesus is presented as the stranger, the guest, and the host. Each of these roles relates to the theme of hospitality and shows that this theme is an important, biblical way of understanding the gospel.

Jesus the Stranger from Heaven: John’s gospel especially portrays Jesus as the stranger/visitor from heaven. He was sent from heaven/God, and will return to heaven/God. He was generally not welcomed by his own people, but everyone who welcomes him becomes a child of God.

Read **John 16:27-28** and **John 1:9-12**. Discuss how these passages present Jesus as a visiting stranger to humanity and the significance of how people respond to him.

Jesus the Guest: Luke’s gospel especially shows Jesus as a guest in people’s homes. He broke social standards by enjoying table fellowship with disreputable people, inviting them into saving fellowship with himself.

Read **Luke 5:27-32** and **Luke 19:1-10**. What was the social and spiritual significance of Jesus’ table fellowship? How might we apply his actions to ourselves today? Do you tend to identify more with the joyful “sinners” or the irritated “righteous”?

Jesus the Host: When Jesus was hosted by others, he sometimes transitioned from guest to host, showing that he is someone special. He demonstrates that welcoming him as guest (i.e., having faith) results in God welcoming us as guests and transforming us into family.

Read **John 2:1-11**. The bridegroom was the host of the wedding feast, responsible for providing wine for his guests. Jesus takes the place of the bridegroom/host and provides the best wine. This miracle foreshadows the joyful marriage feast that Jesus will host for his bride.

How do the following passages depict Christ and his eternal salvation? **John 3:28-29**; **Mark 2:18-19**; **Matthew 25:1-13**; **Revelation 19:6-9**

- In salvation, how does Jesus transition from guest to host?
- How might showing hospitality to strangers result in our own blessing?
- How can we use table fellowship for spiritual purposes?
- Why are Christians sometimes not considered as welcoming as Jesus is?
- How does the picture of eternity as a wedding feast impact you?

Lesson 4 – Practicing Hospitality

Read **Matthew 25:34-46**. What significance does Jesus place on practices associated with hospitality? What identity should Christians associate with outsiders like the poor, hungry, thirsty, and strangers? How should this affect our attitudes and actions toward others?

Hospitality Toward the Saints

Read and discuss **1 Peter 4:9; Galatians 6:10; Romans 12:13**. What does the context of each passage indicate about hospitality toward fellow believers?

Hospitality Toward Strangers

Read **Hebrews 13:2**. This verse is probably a reference to Abraham in Genesis 18. What is the significance of the possibility of the stranger at your door being an angel?

Hospitality in Practice

Read **3 John 1:5-8** for an example of commendable Christian hospitality.

Historically, Christian hospitality consisted of a welcoming attitude toward outsiders (rather than a suspicious, fearful attitude) and several actions. These actions could be summarized in four movements:

- 1) *Greeting* – the greeting was proactive; seeking the stranger.
- 2) *Restoration* – providing needs (food, shelter, rest, medicine); sharing access to your social networks.
- 3) *Dwelling Together* – providing a temporary place to stay; hanging out; sharing everyday life; sharing life stories; sharing spiritual practices; not just entertaining.
- 4) *Sending Forth* – providing what is needed for the guest move on.

- How is the practice of biblical hospitality different from *entertaining* as understood and practiced in our culture?
- How heavily have we been influenced by our society in regard to our attitude toward strangers and our practice of hospitality?
- If biblical hospitality became part of our way of life, what differences might it make in the church and in our neighborhoods?
- What obstacles must we overcome in order to practice biblical hospitality?

Hopefully, this month-long focus on biblical hospitality has been both a blessing and a challenge. Now let's seek to put what we have learned into practice. What that looks like may be different for every family. The important thing is that we all seek to grow in our obedience to our Lord. Pray that our church would become known for our love for one another and for strangers.

APPENDIX G

PERSONAL HOSPITALITY PLAN

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,
for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Hebrews 13:2

Thank you so much for agreeing to be a participant in my Doctor of Ministry hospitality program! The most important aspect is that it will help us as a church to fulfill our mission of glorifying God by telling and living the Gospel in our neighborhood.

This form is designed to help you make a specific plan for practicing hospitality during the months of September and October, 2023. Please think boldly but realistically about how often and with whom you can practice biblical hospitality.

First, on average how often do you think you can get together over the course of eight weeks with people from the community? [check one box below]

- More than once a week (That’s a lot! But maybe some of you can do it!)
- Once per week (This would be 8 times over two months.)
- Once every other week (This would be 4 times over two months; this should be the minimum for most people.)
- Once per month (Only two times. If this is what you can handle, do it!)

Checking one of these boxes is intended to help you have a goal to aim for. You might end up practicing hospitality more or less than you intended, but having a goal is a good starting point. Real life is messy, so you might have two people or families over one week, and no one the next two weeks, depending on people’s schedules. Just do the best you can.

Now, think about some potential guests you could invite to your home for a meal. Here’s the criteria: *not a relative; not a close friend* (you can decide what “close” means); *not someone who attends Furnace Creek regularly*. You can invite friends, relatives, and church members over, but you must also have someone who meets the above criteria. Whether your guests claim to be Christian or not is not a criteria. List or describe as many potential guests as you can think of on the back of this sheet.

Great! Now you have a list of potential guests and a goal for how often you aim to practice hospitality. Just return this form to me before August 31st so I can make a copy for myself.

Each participating member will be given a Hospitality Notebook to record what you actually did and what you thought about it. Remember, none of your personal information will be revealed in my Doctor of Ministry report. The hospitality program will officially begin Sunday, September 3rd and run for 8 weeks until Saturday, October 28th. Again, thanks so much for your help!

God bless!

APPENDIX H

HOSPITALITY NOTEBOOK (HNb)

Name: _____

Furnace Creek Baptist Church

Hospitality Notebook

“Do Not Neglect to Show Hospitality to Strangers”

Hebrews 13:2

“Seek to show hospitality”

Romans 12:13

Remember: God's hospitality to us is our pattern and motive for our hospitality to others. In Christ, God has invited us into his eternal home. He nourishes us, provides for us, gives us rest, and transforms us from outsiders into family.

Our goal in showing hospitality to people in our community is similar. We will provide a safe and warm space where we will feed them and seek transforming relationship with them. Our ultimate goal is that our guests would become guests of God. Biblical hospitality has the potential to change acquaintances into friends, and friends into family: God's family.¹

This is *not* about your home being spotless, putting out your best dishes, decorating elaborately, or spending hours preparing a lavish meal. Please do not get sucked into the mindset of entertaining or putting on a show. The focus must be primarily on relationship, not the external trappings. Just include people in your normal life.

Try to make your guests comfortable, and focus your attention on them. Here are some topics and questions you can use to have *intentional* interaction with your guests:²

- **Home.** Tell me about your parents. What jobs do/did your parents have? Tell me about your siblings. What do they do? Where do they live? What are they like? What kind of relationship do you have with them?
- **Work.** Tell me about your work. How long have you worked at _____? Is this the place you want to retire from? Are you doing what you dreamed you would do? What would you do, if you could do anything?
- **Children.** Do you have children? What are they like? What do you hope for your kids? If you could give them one thing, what would it be? What fears do you have for them?
- **Music and Entertainment.** What kind of music do you listen to? What books do you read? What television shows do you watch? What is your favorite movie? Why? If you could meet any famous person who would it be?
- **Church and Religion.** What's your religious background? What has been your experience with church? What kind of church did you go to? If someone invited you to church, would you consider going?
- **World Religions.** Do you think all religions are the same? Does one stand out? Which religion do you respect the most/least? If you could meet one religious leader, who is it?
- **Worldview.** Where did humans come from? Do you think there's a God? What do you think is wrong with the world? How do you think the world can be changed? What are you doing to make the world a better place?

[Some of these questions are quite personal, so use your discretion]

¹ Remember that your primary guests should not be relatives, close friends, or fellow attendees of FCBC.

² Some of these topics/question are taken or adapted from <https://davidschrock.com/2015/06/26/eleven-questions-to-facilitate-hospitality-evangelism/>

Hospitality Notebook

Keep a record of who you invited for hospitality (name or description) and what date you gave the invitation, even if they did not accept the invitation or it didn't work out for them to come:

Invited:

_____ Date invited: _____

Accepted invitation

Declined invitation

_____ Date invited: _____

Accepted invitation

Declined invitation

_____ Date invited: _____

Accepted invitation

Declined invitation

_____ Date invited: _____

Accepted invitation

Declined invitation

_____ Date invited: _____

Accepted invitation

Declined invitation

_____ Date invited: _____

Accepted invitation

Declined invitation

_____ Date invited: _____

Accepted invitation

Declined invitation

APPENDIX I
AQUARIUM SIGN

Our Home Hospitality Efforts:

White Ball = You invited someone to a hospitality event (whether they accepted or not).

Orange Ball = You hosted a hospitality event.

Blue Ball = You talked about something spiritual/biblical/religious with your guests.

APPENDIX J

POST-INTERVENTION HOSPITALITY QUESTIONNAIRE (Q2)

Hospitality Questionnaire 2

Name: _____ [Your responses will be kept confidential and will not be linked to you by name in any public report. Please answer as honestly and fully as possible. Thank you!]

Please answer in light of the past two months of participating in the hospitality program:

1. On average, how many times per month do you or your immediate family get together for a meal at your home *with other people, including relatives*?
2. On average, how many times per month do you or your immediate family get together for a meal at your home *with other people who are not relatives, close friends, or attendees of your church*?
3. When was the last time you invited someone who is not a close friend, relative, or fellow church attendee to your home for a meal? If you don't know, you can say so.
4. How many times in the past two months have you gotten together for a meal at your home, at a restaurant, or at a park with someone who is not a relative, close friend, or fellow church attendee?
5. What obstacles or hindrances to hospitality were you able to overcome during this program?
6. How would you define or describe the *practice* of hospitality? What is it? What kind of activities does it include?

7. How would you define or describe the *purpose* of hospitality? What is it for? What are reasons or goals for doing it?

8. How does hospitality relate to our church's mission to glorify God by telling and living the gospel in our neighborhood?

9. What impact did participating in the hospitality program have on you?

10. How did participating in the hospitality program influence your *intentional* (i.e., for relationship-building) interaction with people in the local community?

APPENDIX K

QUESTIONS FOR POST-INTERVENTION INTERVIEWS

1. How has your understanding of hospitality changed over the past few months?
2. How likely do you think the change is to be lasting?
3. In what ways was the hospitality notebook helpful?

How could it be improved?

4. [Review questionnaires asking for elaboration.]

APPENDIX L

CONSENT FORM BULLETIN INSERT

Members of FCBC,

As most of you know, I'm working on my Doctor of Ministry project through Liberty University. This project consists of leading a home hospitality effort with our church in the next few months. We will learn about biblical hospitality in August and be encouraged to practice hospitality in September and October.

In order for me to write my final report about the project, I must receive consent from participating members to use data collected. You are not required at all to sign the consent form in order to participate, but I won't be able to use the data of anyone who does not. If you are willing to let me use your information in my final report (although no *personally identifying* information will be used), please read and sign the consent form today, if possible, so I can give you a questionnaire to fill out that needs to be completed by next Sunday.

Thanks for your help with this project.

God bless,

Pastor Philip

APPENDIX M

HOSPITALITY EFFORT BULLETIN INSERT

Dear Church,

During the month of August, we will emphasize the topic of biblical hospitality. Reaching out to family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, and strangers with hospitality reflects the hospitable nature of God himself, is modeled in the lives of the saints in Scripture and church history, and is explicitly commanded by God. We will learn about the theology, example, and practice of biblical hospitality, and we will all be challenged to stretch ourselves in this area. During the months of September and October, we will seek to practice hospitality in our homes or to share meals with people at a park or restaurant for the sake of building deeper relationships. I know this makes many of you nervous and a little fearful. Some of us can tend to be a bit lazy, also. We will be encouraged to overcome the obstacles, reasons, and excuses that hinder us from being obedient to the biblical commands about hospitality. As the culture is increasingly non-religious, hospitality must become an essential part of the way we reach our community for Christ. Most non-churched people are uninterested in attending a religious service, but they might be willing to come over to your house for lunch or dinner, or to meet at a park or restaurant for a meal or just coffee. It is my prayer that hospitality will become a practice that is woven into the very fabric our church culture. Please join me in the next few months in stretching the boundaries of our relationships to include new people through the practice of biblical hospitality.

God bless,

Pastor Philip

Hebrews 13:2 – “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

APPENDIX N

HOSPITALITY AQUARIUM BULLETIN INSERT

Church family,

You may have noticed the aquarium in the back of the sanctuary and bowls of ping pong balls and wondered, *what's that all about?* That's to give us a visual representation of our hospitality efforts in the months of September and October. We've been learning about biblical hospitality for the last month. Now it's time to stretch ourselves and put it into practice. If you invite someone to get together, you can put a white ball in the aquarium, even if they declined the invitation. If you actually did get together with someone, you can put in an orange ball. And if you got beyond mere chit-chat and talked about something significant (e.g., church, religion, God, Jesus, the gospel, etc.), you can put in a blue ball. We'll be able to actually see our growing hospitality efforts. I hope you'll all participate.

One note: those colorful balls are pretty tempting for little children, so please give them some instruction, if necessary. In addition, when you put a ball in the aquarium, use a marker to put an "X" on the ball, so we can separate them if we need to. And just remember: children are more important than ping-pong balls!

God bless,

Pastor Philip

APPENDIX O

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APPENDIX P

Q1 – PARTICIPANT 8

Hospitality Questionnaire 1

Name: [REDACTED] [Your responses will be kept confidential and will not be linked to you by name in any public report. Please answer as honestly and fully as possible. Thank you!]

1. On average, how many times per month do you or your immediate family get together for a meal at your home *with other people, including relatives?*

this is very new, maybe 3 times in the past year?

2. On average, how many times per month do you or your immediate family get together for a meal at your home *with other people who are not relatives, close friends, or attendees of your church?*

haven't done so.

3. When was the last time you invited someone who is not a close friend, relative, or fellow church attendee to your home for a meal? If you don't know, you can say so.

Never.

4. How many times in the past two months have you gotten together for a meal at your home, at a restaurant, or at a park with someone who is not a relative, close friend, or fellow church attendee?

None.

5. When you were growing up, would you say that your family used the home for hospitality to people who were not relatives or close friends?

No, they did not at all.

6. What prevents you from welcoming people into your home? What obstacles must be overcome for you to do so?

- messy, old, cluttered house
 - don't know how to "do" conversation for hours!
 - protect my children
 - lately, we have been busy with adult children engagements + regular life + need to be together as a family
-

Play dates, park days, picnics, etc
 share a meal at home or restaurant
 Join in your regular day, as if they were part of family

7. How would you define or describe the *practice* of hospitality? What is it? What kind of activities or actions does it include?

It is ^{giving} extending attention towards another that makes them feel welcome, seen, & cared for.

Contributing to group endeavors

- Sharing supplies while out in public → small talk
- Making room for others in public places → eye contact
- asking questions - conversation not about self

8. How would you define or describe the *purpose* of hospitality? What is it for? What are reasons or goals for doing it?

to make person feel welcome, seen, safe
 make pathways for relationship,
 to "be a light" for God
 learning where they are in life + relationship with God

mentoring young men + women

- be able to share Gospel
- discipleship possibilities
- model this for our children as well

9. How does hospitality relate to our church's mission to glorify God by telling and living the gospel in our neighborhood?

While people see a church building, they don't see the people. We must be the Church + connect with them. This happens outside church walls, most often.

APPENDIX Q

INVITATION PAGE OF HN6 – PARTICIPANT 6

Hospitality Notebook

Keep a record of who you invited for hospitality (name or description) and what date you gave the invitation, even if they did not accept the invitation or it didn't work out for them to come:

Invited:

<u>Betty + Wayne</u> [REDACTED]	Date invited: <u>Sep 10</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted invitation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Declined invitation	
<u>Jake + Savannah</u> [REDACTED]	Date invited: <u>Aug 15</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted invitation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Declined invitation	
<u>Michelle + Chuck</u> [REDACTED]	Date invited: <u>Oct 19</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted invitation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Declined invitation	
<u>Erinn</u> [REDACTED]	Date invited: <u>Oct 19</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted invitation	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Declined invitation	
<u>Owen</u> [REDACTED]	Date invited: <u>Sep 30</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted invitation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Declined invitation	
_____	Date invited: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted invitation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Declined invitation	
_____	Date invited: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted invitation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Declined invitation	
_____	Date invited: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted invitation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Declined invitation	

APPENDIX R

HNb – PARTICIPANT 12

Hospitality Notebook

I/We had [redacted] and [redacted] (a mother and daughter)
 (Name/Description of Guests)

At our home
 ("Home" or describe other location)

On 10/29
 (Date)

At this event, how many guests total were there who met the project criteria? 2
 [not relatives, close friends, or fellow attendees of FCBC]

What are some things you learned about your guests? (use back of page if necessary) The mother, [redacted], used to teach with me ([redacted]). Her daughter, [redacted], is a young adult. We were pleased to find out that talking about God was easy, brief but well accepted. We talked about their plans for future housing and reminisce about a friend we both worked with who passed away 1 1/2 years ago.

Why was the event better, worse, or about the same as you expected? _____

The visit was better than I expected because, even though they hadn't been to our house for over ten years, they were comfortable and spent much of the time outside in the gazebo with us just talking.

Hospitality Notebook

I/We had (neighbor)
(Name/Description of Guests)

At our home
("Home" or describe other location)

On 10/30
(Date)

At this event, how many guests total were there who met the project criteria? 1
[not relatives, close friends, or fellow attendees of FCBC]

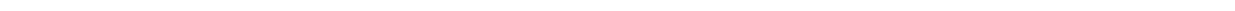
What are some things you learned about your guests? (use back of page if necessary) We don't know much about
even though he has lived across the street
from us for about 5 years. We had a
nice visit with him and learned
more about what he had done before
retiring.

Why was the event better, worse, or about the same as you expected?
We didn't know what to expect,
but figured he would be friendly,
which he was. We actually knew
him already, but only around the
yard where he works.

What ideas do you have for how you could practice hospitality differently or better the next time? _____

We could invite the Christian neighbors who live next to [redacted] the next time we have [redacted] over. That could be a reason to have him over again. He knows the neighbor fairly well.

What other responses, thoughts, or information about this hospitality event do you want to share or record? _____



APPENDIX S

Q2 – PARTICIPANT 14

Hospitality Questionnaire 2

Name: [REDACTED] [Your responses will be kept confidential and will not be linked to you by name in any public report. Please answer as honestly and fully as possible. Thank you!]

Please answer in light of the past two months of participating in the hospitality program:

1. On average, how many times per month do you or your immediate family get together for a meal at your home with other people, including relatives? *Once a month. This has declined since having ~~had~~ we are in the process of returning the layout of our home back to what it was,*
2. On average, how many times per month do you or your immediate family get together for a meal at your home with other people who are not relatives, close friends, or attendees of your church? *Q* *allowing us to feel more comfortable hosting.*
3. When was the last time you invited someone who is not a close friend, relative, or fellow church attendee to your home for a meal? If you don't know, you can say so. *Beginning of October.*
4. How many times in the past two months have you gotten together for a meal at your home, at a restaurant, or at a park with someone who is not a relative, close friend, or fellow church attendee? *One time*
5. What obstacles or hindrances to hospitality were you able to overcome during this program? *Intentionally looking for opportunities to show hospitality has helped me overcome begin to overcome my tendency to keep relationships at a surface level. I have been able to seek deeper connections with others. This program has encouraged me to be more vulnerable by not only opening up my home, but also myself, when things aren't "perfect". This has also forced us to take a look being more open to at what we would consider blockers and either eliminate or get over them (example: rearranging our home in a way that makes us comfortable hosting)*
6. How would you define or describe the practice of hospitality? What is it? What kind of activities or actions does it include? *The practice of hospitality is the act of warmly welcoming others into your life. This includes the act of physically gathering, but also includes having an open heart towards those around you.*

7. How would you define or describe the *purpose* of hospitality? What is it for? What are reasons or goals for doing it?

The purpose of hospitality is to foster relationships and allow for more opportunities to ^{better} share the gospel.

8. How does hospitality relate to our church's mission to glorify God by telling and living the gospel in our neighborhood?

Hospitality allows us to better complete our church's mission. If we, as a congregation, show hospitality to our neighborhood we will have more opportunities to tell and live the Gospel.

9. What impact did participating in the hospitality program have on you?

Participating forced me to look at my interactions at others, especially my tendency to be guarded. I was challenged to be more engaging, and intentionally seeking valuable interactions with others. This helped me in my interaction with strangers, but also in helping foster deeper connection with existing friendships.

10. How did participating in the hospitality program influence your *intentional* (i.e., for relationship-building) interaction with people in the local community?

Having the goal of inviting people over by a certain deadline caused me to be actively looking for people I could engage with on a deeper level. Even with those who I wasn't considering to invite into my home, I still wanted to make sure I was connecting with on more than a surface level. I was much more mindful that I was representing my church, my family, and Christ.

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IRB APPROVAL LETTER

February 20, 2023

Philip Bramblet
David Barnett

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY22-23-1110 Biblical Hospitality at FCBC

Dear Philip Bramblet and David Barnett,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your project is not considered human subjects research because it will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. **If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.**

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office