

# Radical Hospitality

## I Forgot Their Name

Frankton – 12/27/15

Scripture: 1 Peter 4.8-11 Be Hospitable (NIV)

Proposition: Every Attendee, Every Day

This is kind of a different Sunday – this Sunday between Christmas and New Year's. You don't want to start anything new because it's not New Year's yet. You also have this Christmas hang-over – coming down from the Christmas candy high. So today we're not going to go too deeply into anything. But I am going to talk about something I think is very important for God's church. It just doesn't take a lot of brain power to figure it out or to do it. Today we are going to talk about being hospitable.

Let's define hospitality. [SLIDE] Hospitality is something we offer to make others feel welcome, or to feel like a part of the group or to feel comfortable. A hand shake with a smile, a cup of coffee, and directions to the restroom are all acts of hospitality. But at this church, we believe in practicing Radical Hospitality. Radical Hospitality is extending hospitality above and beyond what would be considered normal hospitality.

Now, there's a difference between hospitality and friendship (some may say fellowship). I want us to be a church that practices both hospitality and friendship. I think of friendship as loving the people you know. That shows in church on Sunday morning. You see, when we gather together or as we are leaving, this is a noisy church. That's good. It means we are talking with each other. We have sought out our church friends and we are gabbing away. It means we like each other. I repeat, that's good. However, it's not necessarily being hospitable. Being hospitable is intentionally reaching out to those we don't know and making them feel welcome. That's being hospitable. [SLIDE] Friendship focuses a church internally – more towards each other. [SLIDE] Hospitality focuses a church outwardly – more toward those new folks who come in to our building. A church needs to be both hospitable and friendly.

There are a lot of you who are very friendly. Yet you may not be hospitable. You may shy away from greeting the stranger in our midst. There are a lot of reasons for that. One may be that you are an introvert. So, it takes a lot for you to screw up the courage to go and introduce yourself to someone you don't know or don't know very well. I understand that. Some of you may shy away from introducing yourself to a new person because you have that disease that we all seem to have: problems remembering people's names. We all get to the point of wanting to call someone by name and then we realize: [SLIDE] "I Forgot Their Name." Yes, you are like an overwhelming majority of people who can't seem to remember people's names until you've heard it several times. And then it's still iffy. We're going to talk about some things today that can help you overcome that fear. We're going to spend the rest of our time on introductions, and I'm going to get some help up here with me to show you a few things to help with the "I Forgot Their Name" problem.

So I need a volunteer. [get one] We're going to pretend we don't know each other and you are a guest at our church for the very first time. Ok, folks, what should I do? (pause) Right, I should go over and introduce myself. So I do "Hi. My name is Gary." What is the other person most

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likely to do? Right. Offer his/her hand and say, “Hi. My name is \_\_\_\_.” So you’ve just heard their name. If you didn’t quite get it, don’t be afraid to ask for some clarification. Even if you think you understood, ask for clarification; it will help you remember. Say something like, [SLIDE] “I’m sorry, I’m terrible with names; would you please help me with your name again.” Own up to your shortcoming right away. Chances are they will understand because they have the same problem. So they’ll answer back with their name. So now you have heard their name twice in just about 10 seconds. Your next line is something like this, “Nice to meet you, NAME. Glad to have you at our church this morning.” So now you’ve heard their name twice and you’ve said their name once. Don’t let this give you false hope. Just because you’ve gotten this far, don’t think you’re in the clear because you will forget their name again, I promise.

Let me highlight something. I used a phrase that is pretty important when meeting people and, in turn, introducing people to others. The phrase is something like: [SLIDE] “would you please help me with your name again.” Most people want to be called by their correct name. Most people understand the problem of remembering names – because they also have that same problem. Overall, people want to help other people out. So when you ask them for help with their name, they’re on board, they hear you. They know where you are coming from. So make sure you use the word “help” when meeting someone and introducing them to someone else.

We’re going to take a sidebar here for a minute. Some of you might be worried about approaching a person who is new to you, but they may not be new to the church. You’re just not familiar with them because they may attend the other service than you do. I know we have many opportunities to meet each other, but I understand that you may not remember folks you don’t see regularly. And, I know you don’t want to offend anyone by assuming they are new when they’ve been coming here for a while. Listen to me, this is pretty simple. If you are pretty new here yourself, start by saying, [SLIDE] “Hi. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I’m pretty new here and I don’t know all the faces and names yet. Would you please help me with your name?” Starting a conversation with those words can help alleviate some of your concerns. Also, if you’ve been coming for quite a while you could start by saying, [SLIDE] “Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_. We’ve had some new folks coming lately and I don’t know them all yet. Would you please help me with your name?” They’ll probably tell you their name and if they’re new, they’ll probably let you know. If they have been here a long time as well, then just laugh it off that two people who have been attending a church this size don’t know each other.

Back to our main stream of thought. Once you’ve had the initial name exchanges, you might ask, what brought them here. Or you can begin to uncover some things about them by asking something about them. For instance, “Where do you live? What do you do? Do you have any kids/grandkids?” The idea is to find out just a little piece of information that you can use to link them with someone in the church. For instance, you go up to a person and do the initial name exchange then you ask, “What do you do for a living?” and they answer, “I’m a teacher.” Always answer, “That’s great.” Then in your mind, make a connection to someone here at church who in that same area or has that same affinity. You could say, “We have several teachers and retired teachers in the congregation. Do you know Jenny Hoss, or Jenna Betz, or Bobbie Welker or Jeannie Mills.” Fill in the name there.

If they say they do know them, then if possible take them over and get those two together. If they say they don’t know them, then if possible get those two together. We’re making connections

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here. That's how we build God's community – through relationships and we can't have relationships without having connections. So get those two together.

Here's the fun part. You go up to the person you're going to introduce them to and say what? Normally you would say, Hi, \_\_\_\_\_. This is ..." and you're going to draw a blank because why? You already forgot their name." It's been all of about two minutes, you've heard their name twice and spoken it once, and you've already forgotten their name. Don't worry! You're normal. Instead of the "Hi, this is..." and that dreadful pause, here's a better way for that introduction to. You walk over to the intended person and say, [SLIDE] "Hi \_\_\_\_\_, I'd like to introduce you to someone I just met." Then turn to the guest and say, [SLIDE] "I'm sorry, I'm dreadful with names. Could you help me with your name again please?" They will answer then you can make the introduction. Own up to forgetting their name. Make light of it. Chances are the new person also has a case of "I Forgot Their Name" and forgotten your name as well.

So I've spent a lot of time talking about introductions and maybe some of you are wondering why. Our scripture reminds us [SLIDE] *to love each other deeply* and also to *offer hospitality to one another without grumbling*. [8] For us to continue toward becoming the church that God wants us to be, for us to continue to be successful at *Building God's Community*, we must continue to be hospitable to our community. We must continue to reach out to our community, Frankton and it surrounding area. We must continue to make folks feel welcome when they come through our doors – whether it's on a Sunday morning at worship, or on a Thursday evening feeding a school organization, or whether it's a Saturday as we serve a tenderloin dinner.