

More than Enough

A Bible Study series
on God's hospitality



GROUP NOTES

More than enough

The Welcome and Generosity of God

This series explores the radical hospitality and abundant generosity of God as seen throughout the Bible. Its aim is to show us God's welcome is not stingy or selective; it is lavish, surprising, and meant to be mirrored in the way we live.

Week 1: The God who Hosts

Text: Genesis 18:1–15

Theme: God initiates hospitality.

Main point: God's welcome is personal and for his purposes; his promises are more than enough.

It challenges us to expect God to show up in surprising places.

Week 2: The Table is Ready

Text: Psalm 23

Theme: God's generosity is constant.

Main point: God prepares a table in our darkest valleys and his provision never runs dry.

It challenges us to recognise God's provision is personal, persistent, and more than enough.

Week 3: The Guest List is Surprising

Text: Luke 14:7–24

Theme: God's generosity includes those the world leaves out.

Main point: God's welcome is radically inclusive.

It challenges us to widen our tables and consider who we will invite.

Week 4: The Lifestyle which Manifests

Text: Romans 12:9–21

Theme: God's generosity transforms how we live in community.

Main point: Lives touched by God's welcome overflow into sacrificial acts of hospitality.

It challenges us to allow God's abundant grace to spill over into real, practical love for others.

Week 5: The Stranger is Christ

Text: Matthew 25:31–46

Theme: Welcoming the vulnerable is welcoming Christ.

Main point: When we give to the least, we give to the King.

It challenges us to look for Jesus in the places and people you're tempted to overlook.

Week 6: The Feast to Come

Texts: Isaiah 25:6–9 & Revelation 19:6–9

Theme: God's ultimate welcome is eternal, joyful, and victorious.

Main point: One day, we will feast at the table of the King and every tear will be wiped away.

It challenges us to live today like we're already invited.

Series Overview

This series of studies is all about God – his character and, in particular, his hospitality. We will delve more deeply into his nature, spend time reflecting on his gracious love and discovering how it is shown in his generosity toward us. The title – More than Enough – is the hint that we will discover what he offers is abundance and more than we could ask or imagine.

The concept of extending hospitality to strangers is a prominent theme in both the Old and New Testaments. Spending time exploring its meaning and significance is not just about taking a lesson in Ancient Near-Eastern culture but rather giving ourselves the opportunity to shine a light on our own attitudes and practices and to open the door to enriching and deepening the relationships we have with others.

Each week will focus on a different passage of scripture. However, we will begin to notice some recurring themes, so when this happens be sure to point them out and take a moment to reflect on what that teaches us. Not only will it help any of the group who may have missed the earlier session, but it will also help us grasp a deeper understanding of the true nature of God's hospitality and welcome.

One of the things we will notice is biblical hospitality's characteristic of the interplay between being guest and host.

God in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New are pictured as being both guest and host. In the same way God calls his people (and Jesus his followers) to be not only recipients of his extravagant generosity and gracious provision, but also those whose way of life and very identity is to show it to others in the same measure. We can therefore expect to be challenged as we consider to what extent we offer practical help and the welcome of God to those to whom we open our space.

For each of the six weeks' studies, there is an outline of the evening and set of leaders' notes. The evening will begin with prayer and end with praying for one another and our concerns as usual, so the outline is for the time in between. The introduction for each session is included in the Leaders' Notes for the one who is leading to read out. They also contain some background information, which may be helpful for the leader to be aware of during the discussion. The prayer time in the session has a focus on issues raised during our discussion and our response to the insights we have received.

May our prayer be that the way God loves, welcomes and shares himself with us will be reflected in how we welcome, befriend and care for strangers in the hope that they may be brought into the life of God.

● Week 1: The God Who Hosts

Theme: God's welcome is open and generous, offering more than we could ask or imagine.

🔍 Opening question

What's the most memorable act of welcome or hospitality you've ever received? What aspect of it left the deepest impression on you?

👋 Introduction

Our series begins with a story in which welcoming strangers turns into an encounter with God. In the ancient world, hospitality wasn't optional; it was the done thing. In the harsh desert climate, offering food, water, and shelter to a stranger could mean the difference between life and death. So when three unknown visitors appear, Abraham runs to meet them despite his age and offers them the best he has. The writer to the Hebrews has this story in mind as he instructs his hearers:

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:2)

So let's explore together how ready we are to welcome God in the unexpected, how might we be surprised by God's promises and how might we demonstrate the kind of hospitality which becomes the place where heaven and earth meet.

Read together

Read Genesis 18:1–15

Discussion

- 🔍 What do you notice about Abraham’s reaction to the three visitors? What does this say about hospitality in his culture?
- 🔍 How does Abraham reflect generosity in the way he prepares for the guests?
- 🔍 Why do you think God chooses to reveal the promise of a child in the middle of a shared meal?
- 🔍 Sarah laughs at the idea that she could still bear a child – can you understand her reaction?
- 🔍 What does this passage reveal about God’s character - especially in terms of his welcome, generosity, and promise?

Going deeper

- 🔍 Do you set limits on the level of generosity you show to others?
- 🔍 Where do you sense God is calling you to extend a generous (and costly) welcome to others?

Prayer

Pray for people and places that need to experience God’s generosity and promise.

Express your own response

Practice this week

Offer a generous welcome to someone this week - through a meal, a conversation, or an unexpected kindness. As you do, pray that you’ll recognize the presence of God in that moment.

■ Background Notes

Hospitality in the ancient Near East was not optional - it was a sacred duty. Travellers were vulnerable so offering them food, rest, and protection without requiring anything in return was expected of any honourable household.

Abraham's urgency, lack of suspicion and preparation of a lavish meal all reflect this cultural norm of extravagant hospitality.

To offer hospitality was to take a risk – of physical danger (e.g. attack, theft, disease), of being challenged (by new ideas, beliefs, customs) and, as a consequence, being changed and of having less left for himself but he trusts the outcome to God.

The guests were not ordinary travellers - they were divine messengers. In Middle Eastern culture, appearances can be deceiving; a seemingly unimportant stranger could be a person of great standing so showing hospitality was regarded as a way of honouring God (see Hebrews 13:2). It was all about extending honour and welcome to anyone, because you never knew who they truly were or what role they might play in God's purposes.

Sarah's laughter reflects the tension between God's promise and human impossibility. A barren woman bearing a child was not only a personal miracle but also had significance for the whole community - God was doing something new.

● Week 2: The Table is Ready

Theme: God's generous hospitality provides peace, protection, and abundance even in the midst of struggle.

? Opening question

When you picture a table prepared “just for you,” what comes to mind? Who would be there? What would it feel like?

👉 Introduction

Psalm 23 is one of the most beloved passages in all of scripture. We often think of it as a psalm of comfort, with its quiet green pastures and still waters. But in the middle of it, the imagery shifts. God is no longer the shepherd out in the fields – he is the host at a table. And this table isn't in peaceful countryside, it's in the presence of enemies.

In the ancient world, sharing a meal was a public statement of relationship. A host was bound to protect their guest. Sitting at someone's table was a declaration of peace.

This psalm tells us that God sets a place for us even when life feels hostile or uncertain, when we're struggling and conflicted, when we are unable to rest and when his peace feels elusive. God's generosity overflows. The cup runs over. His abundant welcome far outweighs any threats that we face.

📖 Read together

Read Psalm 23

💬 Discussion

🔍 What does “*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*” suggest to us about God's hospitality?

🔍 What does this psalm say about God's care for our physical and emotional needs?

🔍 What does the banquet scene and the image of God as the host add to that of him being a shepherd?

🔍 How do the words *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”* expand your understanding of hospitality?

🔍 When you think of an overflowing cup, what do you think of? In what ways have you experienced God’s overflowing provision in your life?

Going deeper

🔍 In a culture that often focusses on scarcity, what does it look like to trust in God's abundance?

🔍 How might you create space for others to *“lie down in green pastures”* or experience the overflow of God's welcome?

Prayer

Pray for people and places that need to experience God’s peace, protection and abundance.

Express your own response to the way God has been speaking to you through this passage.

Practice this week

Prepare a meal and spread it out on your table with this psalm in your mind. As you eat, reflect on how God is your shepherd and generous host. If possible, invite someone to join you whom you wouldn’t usually include.

■ Background Notes

Psalms 23 draws from shepherd imagery, a deeply familiar metaphor in ancient Israel. Shepherds were providers, guides, and protectors - roles associated with both God and kings.

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" evokes hospitality as a royal act. Kings in the ancient world often expressed their protection and favour through banquets.

The oil and the overflowing cup point to abundance and anointing, signs of God's blessing and joy. These gestures were part of honouring guests - anointing the head, refreshing them, and ensuring satisfaction.

Dwelling in *"the house of the Lord"* suggests belonging in God's presence, a place where enemies do not prevail and God's care is constant.

"For ever" – God's hospitality does not only include offering food, rest and protection but also the promise of an ongoing relationship.

● Week 3: The Guest List is Surprising

Theme: God's generous welcome includes the overlooked, the excluded and the unworthy.

🔍 Opening question

Have you ever been left out of something important or unexpectedly invited in? How did it feel?

👋 Introduction

Today, we're invited to look at our own tables, whether that's in a literal sense or a metaphorical one, and ask: Who's missing? Who are we leaving out? And the kind of questions which challenge us to consider whether we are willing to open the door to people we might not expect to come.

In Jesus' day, meals were about far more than food - they were about honour, status, and belonging. Who you ate with said something about your place in society. And Jesus had a way of turning that upside down.

In today's story, he tells of a banquet where the carefully chosen guests turn down their invitations. So the host flings the doors wide open in a most surprising way.

📖 Read together

Luke 14:7–24

💬 Discussion

❓ Why does Jesus criticise the way people choose seats at a banquet?

🔍 What surprises you about who ends up at the banquet in the parable?

🔍 How does this story challenge common assumptions about who "deserves" a seat at the table?

🔍 In what ways do the excuses the invited guests give mirror common distractions in our lives?

🔍 In what ways can the church today reflect God's radical, inclusive invitation?

Going deeper

🔍 Who are the "poor, crippled, blind, and lame" in our communities today?

🔍 What might it look like for our church to create space for people who others would leave out at our table?

Prayer

Pray for people and places that are overlooked, excluded and regarded as unworthy.

Express your own response to the way God has been speaking to you through this passage.

Practice this week

Practise open-hearted hospitality: invite someone outside your usual circle into a conversation, a meal, or your space—no strings attached.

■ Background Notes

In first-century Jewish culture, banquets were highly structured by status. Where you sat and who you invited said a lot about your honour and your social rank.

Jesus challenges this system by teaching humility and inclusion. He redefines greatness not by who you can impress, but by who you are willing to include.

The parable of the Great Banquet reflects messianic expectations. Jews anticipated a future feast with God, but Jesus subverts the expectation by showing that many who assume they are included will reject the invitation.

The invitation to “*the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame*” reflects Isaiah 35 and 61 - signs of the kingdom and the kinds of people Jesus consistently welcomed.

Rejecting an invitation in this culture was a serious offence. The excuses of the invited guests reflect misplaced priorities and reveal hearts closed to God’s generous welcome.

● Week 4: The Lifestyle which Manifests

Theme: God's generosity transforms the way we love and serve others.

🔍 Opening question

Who in your life models a lifestyle of sincere, overflowing love - even when it's hard?

👋 Introduction

Today, we're going to be thinking about the life of our church and our own personal lifestyles. As we have just been acknowledging, God's welcome is wide, so if we belong to him, and his Spirit is living in our hearts and directing our lives, our welcome should be wide too. This passage challenges us to think about the kinds of actions that diminish our welcome and the kinds that expand it.

The church in Rome was a mix of cultures, languages, and traditions - Jewish believers, Gentile believers, people from all walks of life learning to follow Jesus together. That was messy. And so Paul writes them this list of instructions to help them understand what a Christ-like lifestyle looks like. It's an invitation to make room in our lives for others, especially those who are different from us.

📖 Read together

Romans 12:9–21

💬 Discussion

🔍 Which of Paul's instructions stands out or challenges you most? Why?

🔍 How do verses 13 and 20 reflect God’s call to generous hospitality?

🔍 What does Paul’s connecting sincere love, blessing enemies and hospitality reveal about God’s character?

🔍 Why do you think Paul puts such an emphasis on *how* we love others, rather than just telling us to “love people”?

🔍 What can get in the way of our living with this kind of abundant love in our relationships with others?

Going deeper

🔍 What does “overcoming evil with good” look like in the real conflict, disagreements and injustices you have faced?

🔍 The hospitality Paul describes is not just about opening our homes or sharing our tables, it’s about opening our lives. What would it look like for you to manifest God’s welcome in a way that is costly?

Prayer

Pray for people and places that need to experience God’s transforming love.

Express your own response to the way God has been speaking to you through this passage.

Practice this week

Do one act of “overflowing” generosity this week. It could be toward a neighbour, stranger, or someone who’s difficult to love.

■ Background Notes

Romans 12 is part of Paul's appeal for a new kind of community, marked by love, humility, and peace - especially important in the diverse Roman church with its Jewish and Gentile believers.

"Genuine love" (v9) reflects the Greek term *agape* - a self-giving, unconditional love that was not typical in Roman social ethics, which were often transactional.

"Contribute to the needs of the saints" and *"practise hospitality"* (v. 13) reflect the early church's household-based gatherings, where sharing meals and resources was essential for survival and solidarity.

Roman society operated by honour/shame dynamics, where enemies were to be crushed. Paul's call to *"bless those who persecute you"* and to *"overcome evil with good"* was a counter-cultural ethic rooted in the cross.

Hospitality (*philoxenia*) was not just friendly reception - it was love of the stranger, deeply tied to Christian witness and mission in a hostile world.

● Week 5: The Stranger is Christ

Theme: When we welcome others in need, we are actually welcoming Jesus.

🔍 Opening question

Have you ever had a moment where someone unexpected turned out to be a great gift or teacher in your life?

👋 Introduction

Today, we're exploring another aspect of welcoming strangers and discovering yet another challenge to the breadth of our welcome and whether there are people we exclude from it. We're asking the question of whether encountering people in need transforms the way we live.

Our reading contains one of the most challenging and profound teachings of Jesus. Jesus is speaking about ultimate things - the final judgment – but not in terms of cosmic events or abstract principles. He frames it in terms of ordinary human encounters and gives us a completely different picture of what it looks like to come face to face with Jesus.

📖 Read together

Matthew 25:31–46

💬 Discussion

❓ What surprises you most about how Jesus separates the sheep and the goats?

❓ Why do you think both groups are unaware that they were serving or ignoring Jesus?

🔍 How does this challenge our understanding of “spiritual” versus “practical” service?

🔍 What groups of people in your area are most vulnerable, isolated, or overlooked?

🔍 What would it look like to serve them as if they were Jesus himself?

Going deeper

🔍 God’s hospitality involves meeting people in their need and showing generosity, which is costly. What are the barriers that keep us from offering that kind of welcome and how can they be overcome?

🔍 How do we shift from seeing service as obligation to seeing it as sacred encounter with Christ?

Prayer

Pray for people and places in need to receive the kind of welcome and loving care that we would show to Jesus himself.

Express your own response to the way God has been speaking to you through this passage.

Practice this week

Choose one act of compassion or service toward someone in need this week. Reflect afterward: What did you learn? Where did you see Jesus?

■ Background Notes

In Jesus' day, hospitality was a moral and religious obligation, especially to strangers, widows, orphans, and the marginalised. However, the law primarily emphasised care within Israel; extending care beyond these boundaries was radical.

The Greek term *tōn elachistōn* (the least) likely refers to the most vulnerable members of the community – people without resources or social protection. This highlights the face that God's kingdom operates through justice and mercy rather than status or wealth.

Jesus' depiction of himself as the judge reflects Old Testament imagery of God as the ultimate righteous judge (Daniel 7; Isaiah 66:18–19). However, he speaks of judgment in terms of relationship – something based on concrete acts of mercy and not ritual compliance.

Jesus identifies himself with the suffering and marginalised. In Matthew 25, God's presence is hidden in the very people society often ignores, subverting expectations and calling followers to active compassion.

The implication in the text is that our faith is inseparable from our actions. Encountering God is not only a spiritual experience, it happens through tangible acts of generosity, kindness, and justice.

● Week 6: The Feast to Come

Theme: God's final act of hospitality is an eternal feast where death is defeated and joy overflows.

🔗 Opening question

What's the best celebration or meal you've ever been part of?
What made it special?

👋 Introduction

Today we are looking ahead into the future. The Bible begins with a garden and ends with a feast. We're going to look at two passages – an Old Testament one from Isaiah which describes a lavish banquet for all peoples and a New Testament one from Revelation which describes a banquet it calls the wedding supper of the Lamb - a joyful union between Christ and His people.

In the ancient world, a banquet wasn't just a party, it was a symbol of victory, peace, and belonging. These passages remind us that history is headed towards the most lavish banquet imaginable and offer us the challenge that comes with recognising that every time we welcome, share, and make room for everyone to come, we are rehearsing for that day. God's is a table big enough for everyone who says yes to his invitation; a table on which there is more than enough for all.

📖 Read together

Isaiah 25:6–9 and Revelation 19:6–9

💬 Discussion

🗉 What images stand out to you in these two visions of the future?

❓ What does it mean for death to be “swallowed up forever” at God’s banquet?

❓ How does God’s future feast give us hope and shape how we live today?

❓ In what ways is our current hospitality a glimpse of this coming joy?

❓ Who in your life still needs to know that they’re invited to this eternal celebration?

Going deeper

❓ God’s hospitality in the new creation is not just about the abundance of food and the flourishing of all life, it’s also about the end of death and grief and pain. How does that deepen your sense of what it means for God to “make room” for us?

❓ What would it look like for us to begin living now as if we were already guests of that banquet and citizens of that home?

Prayer

Pray for people and places in need of hope of a better future.

Express your own response to the way God has been speaking to you through this passage.

Practice this week

Plan a celebratory meal or gathering this week. Make it intentionally welcoming. Set an empty chair and pray for those not yet at the table.

Background Notes

Isaiah 25 speaks of a future messianic banquet, common in prophetic literature, where God would defeat evil and death, and welcome all nations to a shared feast. This would have been a radical vision in a world of ethnic and tribal division.

The promise to *“swallow up death forever”* would have resonated deeply with a people surrounded by war, exile, and mortality and indicated that God’s hospitality extends into eternity.

Revelation 19 picks up this image in the New Testament, describing the wedding supper of the Lamb. First-century weddings involved days-long feasts, where the entire village participated.

The *“bride”* (the Church) wearing white robes symbolises righteousness which is received as a gift rather than being earned. This again reflects God's generosity.

Revelation was written to persecuted believers under Roman rule. The imagery of a coming celebration and justice would have been a powerful encouragement to endure and hope.

Further Reading

Other Old Testament instances of exemplary hospitality to strangers:

Genesis 19: Lot towards God's messengers.

Genesis 24:10-61: Laban towards Abraham's servant.

Joshua 2:1-21: Rahab towards the Israelite spies.

Judges 4:17-22; 5:24-30: Jael towards Sisera.

1 Kings 17:8-16: the widow of Zarephath towards Elijah.

2 Kings 4:8-36: the Shunammite woman towards Elisha.

Hospitality in the New Testament

As a guest Jesus was a stranger dependant on the hospitality of others (e.g. Luke 9:58, 10:38).

He was the guest in many, varied homes and at numerous meals (Matt 9:10, Mark 1:29, Luke 4:38-39, 5:9-32, 7:36-39, 8:1-3, 9:1-6, 10:3-12,38, 11:37).

As a host he fed the 5000 (Mark 6:30-44) and the disciples at the Last Supper (Luke 22:7-38).

Jesus regularly challenged the exclusive practices of the well-to-do which were a denial of God's all-embracing welcome (Luke 5:27-32, 7:36-50, 19:1-10).

He also told parables about hospitality being given and refused e.g. the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

In what ways do these reinforce and in what ways do these add to the passages we have looked at in our studies?

What others have said about hospitality

Arthur Sutherland:

In the light of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and return, Christian hospitality is the intentional, responsible, and caring act of welcoming

or visiting, in either public or private places, those who are strangers, enemies or distressed, without regard for reciprocation.¹

Amy Oden

Gospel hospitality calls us beyond friendliness to share the solid food that blesses our lives. Gospel hospitality welcomes strangers not just into the church, but into God's life. Always, always, it is God's welcome that we offer.²

Paul Wadell

Christian hospitality is a matter of welcoming, caring for, and befriending the stranger, the poor and needy, the homeless and destitute, the unloved and the unlikable, the weird and the strange, in gratitude to God and in imitation of Christ.³

Henri Nouwen

Hospitality means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines.⁴

Why not try and put into single sentence what you would say was at the heart of Christian hospitality as a result of studying this series.

¹ Sutherland, A., *I was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Abingdon Press: Nashville, 2006) pxiii

² Oden, A.G., *God's welcome: hospitality for a gospel-hungry world* (The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, 2008) p12

³ Wadell, P.J., 'Toward a Welcoming Congregation' in Kruschwitz, R.B. (ed), *Hospitality* (Baylor University, Waco, 2007) p13

⁴ Nouwen, H., *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Fount Paperbacks, London, 1990) p49

