

Extra Shot | Hospitality as Being a Good Guest | Larry McGuire

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Larry McGuire, Unknown

Blake Smith 00:32

Hey, Project Zion Podcast listeners. This is Blake Smith, and I want to welcome you to another episode in the Extra Shot series on hospitality. Recently, the Council of Presidents of Seventy led a two-day session on hospitality in the Central Mission Center. The council has been gracious enough to allow us to air these presentations for you, our listeners. This episode is titled, "Hospitality as Being a Good Guest," and was led by President of Seventy, Larry McGuire.

Larry McGuire 01:04

I'm Larry from, I live in Mesa, Arizona now, and glad that we have this opportunity to kind of join together and share a little bit. My responsibilities. For those of you that might not know, I'm a president of seventy, and I'm serving in the southern United States, which is Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, all the way over to the Carolinas and all of Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, parts of Arkansas and New Mexico. It's wonderful there. And I'm now the Mission Center president for Southern California, which is Santa Barbara, to St George, Utah, to Las Vegas, to Tecate, Mexico. And then president of seventy for Eurasia and Nepal. So, I live in multiple time zones. So, if I'm confused, it's because I think I'm in another time zone. No, maybe that's just like, No, that's how Larry is. And for those of you that are online, you do not need to post anything in the chat about because I know, gosh, yes, yeah, it's, it's happening, though. So, where I live in Mesa in the east valley of Mesa in Phoenix, and there's a small area next to me that's called Apache Junction. Apache Junction is probably more comfortable in thinking about the wild, wild west and kind of some of the things that they are about in their particular city. But in the strip mall in this wild, wild west town, is a Mediterranean restaurant that I love to go to, called Cafe Mex, right next to what I call the cowboy breakfast place, where everybody carries a gun to come to breakfast. So, I don't. This is what's next to it. And you walk into their restaurant in Cafe Mex, and this is what you see, "Come gather at our table." And this notion that we're going to be talking about is hospitality as guests, is a reframing of not the practice of hospitality, but an understanding of the larger application and ways in which we can live into hospitality, that it's not always just us giving and offering, but actually it is this mutuality of also becoming a guest, sometimes even in our own home. And what does that mean when we are welcoming others in? So, this is a little bit about what Joelle had shared with me about some of the expectations for this time together, because I have had the blessing and the gift to serve in multiple ways in the world. I've been president of seventy in Africa

and in Europe, uh, across the United States, now in India and Nepal. So, I've got some understanding of some of the practices that are happening in different parts of the world. So, what has been my experience? It's not just the act of offering something. We offer in our own safe spaces, but how do we now begin to understand in every element, walk and experience of life, we are offering this notion of offering and receiving hospitality. And then also, this notion of deferring, you know, to the context where you're not assuming we know what's best, or the need to be in charge. If you've ever traveled internationally, beyond the boundaries of especially in the Western and English-speaking world, if you've gone to other places of non-English speaking world, you will hear at some point in time, I can tell they're just another bossy American because of some of the postures and the ways in which some people have tried to make their way through other parts of the world. So, this is kind of giving us an understanding that we're not just going to, like for me now, going to India in the fall and thinking they set their table and receive me the same way that I set my table and received them. First of all, I've had to learn to eat with my fingers, which is kind of an interesting journey for me, but we'll talk about that another time. So, in the book of Leviticus, you hear portions of the Hebrew text quite often used to kind of beat people up. Well, let's reframe it a little bit. And in the book of Leviticus, the 19th chapter, this is what it is said there, "when a stranger sojourns with you in your land, when they travel with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God." When you are traveling in your land and there's someone who is not part of your culture, don't treat them as the stranger they are, someone who is traveling with you. You need to pay attention to who they are. Jim Wallace, who's the founder of Sojourners, which is an organization out of Washington DC, who's actually spoken at the Community of Christ World Conference a couple of times when he was in seminary, he was a little bit cranky, and he took his Bible, which was about that thick in seminary, and every breath to the widow, to the orphan, to the alien, to the poor, every reference in the Bible, he cut it out of the Bible, and when he was all done, after cutting it all out, his Bible went from that thick to that thick. You see in the biblical text, the reference to the widow, the poor, the orphan, the immigrant, the alien among you, is a massive statement in all the biblical text. And what he was trying to prove was, if we don't pay attention to what really is important to God, there's not a whole lot left. But in the biblical text, it's the widow, the orphan, the alien, the widow, the poor that are among us. So this is kind of this reminder of what it looks like for us in the realm of hospitality, and how we're going to pay attention. Some of you might be familiar with the mission prayer, and that, the notion of the mission prayer, we release that, and then we've, in the last couple of years, we've released a field guide for living the rhythm of a mission prayer for individuals, gathered communities, small groups, to begin to talk about what does it look like to live that rhythm daily, and the rhythm of public prayer is awakened, risk, and bless. Awaken to God's presence in your life and God's movement around you. Be awakened to that, pay attention to it. And as you are more awakened to God's presence and movement around you, you're invited then to risk, risk new conversations, risk new relationships, risk a new opportunity. And as you are doing that to offer blessing and to receive blessing. Mutuality. So, Christine Paul (sp?) is basically saying, when we welcome and respect, we allow guests to be gracious, we value their contributions and invite them to share. This is part of the mutuality of hospitality. It's not just us doing for but it's also us receiving from. And so the notion of hospitality as guest is kind of beginning to push us to understand the notion of offering and receiving hospitality. So, the faith practice project then talks about what it's an act of making space for the guest of to visit [...] and then extending the privilege of that as family. Now, I did a funeral one time for a woman in Northern Iowa, and in meeting with her

family, I said, Give me two or three things to think about that your mother used to say or do all the children and the grandchildren said, mom or grandma always said, If I can just get their feet under my table, we'll be friends. Think about, if I can just get their feet under my table, we'll be friends. What does that look like? Now for us to understand this welcoming offering, friendship and hospitality, so we are now going to take a look at a passage of Scripture, someone who'd be willing to read Luke 10 for us. Yes, please.

Unknown 10:46

After this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on papers to each town and place where he himself intended to go, he said to them, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are new, Therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way, see, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, "peace to this house." And if a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on that person. But if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move from about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town, and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there and say to them, "the kingdom of God has come near to you." But whenever you enter a town, and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, "even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this, the kingdom of God has come here. I tell you, on that day, it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

Larry McGuire 12:12

Thank you. So what did you hear? What stood out to you? Was there something that you know, kind of surprised you, or you've got a question about in this particular passage. Anybody have something they heard that kind of caught their attention? Yes?

Unknown 12:31

I was thinking about what it would be like to be one of those people who got sent out with no [...] for them. And Jesus was asking them to trust that they would be taken care of. And thinking back to trust is a hard thing to do.

Larry McGuire 12:53

So, we need to spend some time with Luke 10, because it is a reframing that kind of helps me understand this notion of hospitality as guest. And so, this notion of Luke 10 just to help us, for you to understand why I say the reframing is this... from Luke 10 all the way the end of the Gospel of Luke Jesus is helping the disciples understand that the expectations they had about what God was going to do because of Jesus was not what's going to happen, and to change their expectations through the rest of the Gospel of Luke. Then when you get into Acts of the Apostles, which we believe was compiled by the same author of Luke, the author basically says what you heard Jesus teach and model with the disciples. Now you, in this time after his death, you are to be the ones who are going to model it. You're going to be doing it that as this gathered community, known as followers of the way, eventually known as Christian, you will now have to take what has been handed on to you and make it happen. And this is about changing the expectations. Now, this notion of the Lord of the harvest praying for more workers seems a little bit odd, and yet it's this notion constantly coming up for Jesus. There are lots of people

that can be involved in this, but you need to be paying attention and [...] in places where Jesus has sent. So, it's not about our agenda. It's about following what God is doing. And notice there are some other things that we'll point out here in the next few minutes slides that kind of help us unpack this notion of what hospitality as guest is. So, here's some realities that we deal with, but also very relevant in the time of Jesus and this particular passage. We are living in very distracting and disorienting times. They were living in disorienting and distracting times, trying to figure out what their place was as good Jewish leaders and followers and people in a time of this tremendous dominance of Rome, and the punishment and all the things that were going on in the world at that particular time. And so, we can relate to that, because many of us are trying to get our bearings. Okay, what, what really is going on here? Because things are constantly changing, on evolving and unraveling. Then this notion that Jesus says, remain in the same house. Don't go about from house to house, but remain there. And it's basically then saying, Don't be distracted from God's purposes. So, walking down the street in that day, if Joseph saw his sixth cousin five times removed, he was expected, in culture to go to their house and stay with them [...] he's saying, I'm ready. And so he's basically saying, You don't have to follow what the culture is doing. I'm sending you this way to this place, so don't be distracted. And that this kingdom of God is for the whole community. So, this is one of the ideas of kind of living into what it means to go without purse, bag and sandals, and staying this notion of being empty handed. I'll give you a second to look at that. Any thoughts about this statement about what it means to be empty handed, or this expectation of being empty handed? That notion of assuming we already know what they need, is one of the big roadblocks, and it's something we're going to have to deconstruct in order to build trust. So, I really appreciate that insight, but this notion of approaching empty handed, you know, that kind of feels a little weird to me, because growing up on a farm in Michigan, every place we went, you're like, you always had a casserole or something you took with you, but that was in that time and that culture. I'm generationally experienced, so it's a little older now. These times are different, but this notion, also that your life is such a mess we've got what it mean, what we can do to fix you, and then we'll move on, that is not what this is about. So, what does he say? The first thing you do is speak peace or Shalom, and if it's safe, guess what they're going to say back to you, shalom. If it's not safe, if they don't save Shalom, but they say Pax Romana, the piece of Rome, you know it's not safe. They don't believe what you believe. So, you leave, but before you leave, don't even take the dust on your feet with you. Leave all of that nonsense behind. Shake it off and leave it. Now this statement, even the dust of our feet, we shake we, you know, shake off and protest against you. Rome, we are not following what you want us to do. So, if they say, Pax Romana, leave. But Jesus says, also say, The kingdom of God has come near. Just a little notion to help them understand the real, you know, impact what they're doing. I have tried in the last several years, when I go to someone's home to visit or to stay, those kinds of things, I try to remember the first thing I say when I get to the home is, peace be with this house, just as my way to remind me that's something that I'm supposed to model. Peace be with this house, and most of the time it's safe. Now, sometimes it's not, but that's okay. I usually don't wipe the dust off my feet in love, but I just realized that this is going to be a more challenging conversation. And then it's this, eat, what is set before you. Drink what is set before you, you know, given to you. Notice, he does not say, keep kosher. He does not say that at all. He says, Eat what is set before you. And then he says, for the labor deserves to be paid. Your payment is hospitality. Your payment is not in monetary things. Your payment for following Jesus in this context, is the hospitality of others, not you, but the hospitality of others. I found it interesting in my first visit in India, in my first visit in Nepal, many times when we go to a home, the village will be here to welcome us, and the home we're going to be going into. First, they

give us a gift, like a plate or something in a bowl, and we carry it into the home and leave it at the door of the family, but they've given us the gift they don't want you to come without receiving and offering a gift, as part of their culture, wonderful tradition. Thankfully, they don't ask us to dance when we go there. So that's part of what Jesus says in Luke 10, you're not going to be in control. You are going to go into the village and you're going to sit and eat and listen, pay attention and receive their hospitality. It's not about your agenda. But this notion of learning to be with, present to and among. This is contrary to much of the Western world. The context would be this. We see that there's a situation in a particular neighborhood, or whatever we we go as good, faithful people and say, we're going to go fix this. And part of what we're saying is, your life is such a mess, we're just going to get you straightened out, and then we're going to move on next. But that doesn't really change the situation at all. Now, this is not about natural disasters like have happened in the in the south. And what you know, the bishopric announced today about support for those who are the in the hurricane and floods, because that's a different scenario. But generally, in the neighborhoods where we live, or the places where we gather in worship, or in our places where we work, there are lots of things where we are just doing things for people, and there's no being with and that's last night when Joey mentioned to it those of you that were there about my idea that we have to learn to be neighbors and not just property owners. And many of the places where we gather for worship, we are property owners, and we wonder why nobody bothers to pay attention. We're not neighbors. We don't have a relationship whatsoever. And if we do, it's usually we've got a yard sale that's all great, or rummage you know, those kinds of things. But there's no real relationship that develops. And as a result of that, we still stay property owners. But I believe our future is to be neighbors again, which is at the DNA of who we are as Community of Christ. And that's why the rhythm of the mission prayer and some of the other resources are getting us back into that thinking. So, what does it mean to learn to be with and present to? Now, you probably, in your walk of life and ministry, have better relationship with somebody. And you just think it will just be one visit. But we're taking away when we say, this is what you have to do. We're taking away some very like to be able to say, that's not what I can do. So much of our work. The people are just one decision away from every losing everything. They get a lot of control about everything. Sociologists tell us that when any group of people gather in [...], especially around communities of faith, every time people come together, at least 50% of that gathering are in some form of crisis. We don't know it, because we don't trust each other to talk about it. We're not neighbors. So, what does it look like for us to be able to say this is what's going on, sitting at a table, listening to the stories, understanding the rhythm of their life, awaken, risk, and bless. All these things come converging together for us to just be a neighbor. So, as I said, I share in India, Nepal. Last December, Apostle Art Smith and I were in Nepal, and this, we were down in the southern end of Nepal, which is more of a farming area called Bharatnagar. We've got a wonderful congregation in the city of Bharatnagar. And then they planted another church about 20 kilometers away. But about five years ago, in part of Bharatnagar, the major rivers flooded and wiped out a group of homes that were all members of Community of Christ. Washed them all the way they had nothing. And then, because, like the oblation fund and your World Mission tithes, we were able to rebuild their homes again. And so, when we were there for an ordination service of our pastor there to the office of seventy, they wanted to host us in their home to say thank you for what they had received from the church, and people, you, from around the world. So, we went there, and it was kind of funny, they had Christmas lights up, strewn all over the place, and everybody had come out, and they were singing and dancing and drumming and welcoming us, and, you know, they wanted us to see their, the place that had been rebuilt. And we're, we're very grateful. This family, this is a father and his daughter,

and then his wife and another child, and then a grandfather and a grandmother were in this home that welcomed us into the home. The home is probably about as big from this chair in here to the wall to there, that's their home for the five of them to live in. And we were standing kind in the, what I would call the foyer area in their home, just chatting. Siraj was interpreting for us. And after a few minutes of laughing and saying thank you and those kinds of things, the father and his wife and then the grandmother and grandfather all chimed in. They were [...] back and forth. And I was like, Oh, this is, this is un, this is unweaving in a hurry. We're in trouble here. Because I don't speak Nepalese, and Siraj was just kind of standing there smiling. So, I thought, Well, maybe it's not quite that bad. I thought it was like, Oh, look at the size of that guy. We don't have enough food for him, you know, but so anyway, we're they're talking, and so on and so forth. And then the table is just full of food. And I could see into their kitchen, dining room area, and I saw the grandmother and grandfather. And then everybody began to take all the food off the table, put it down on the floor, kind of off to the side. And then the father and grandfather and their son picked up the table that was there in their dining and again, carried out toward us, and then into the room to the right, which was their bedroom. And I said, What is going on? And Shiraz had a smile on his face, and he said, Brother Larry, they're afraid that you will hit your head when you go in there to eat, and so they are moving the table into their bedroom, where they know you won't hit your head, so you can sit down at the table and eat. Now, if I would have known what they were doing, I would have said, Oh no, no, no, no, no, I'll be fine. I'll sit on the floor. I'll do anything, because don't go out of your way for me, I don't want to be that American that you have to feel like I can do all that for but what if I would have done that? I would have denied that... their gift to me, we are so grateful for you coming, we will move the table for you to be our guest, and for me to be humble, not always understanding what was going on, and receive the hospitality of their table was a profound gift that I will never, ever forget that experience. She wanted her picture taken with me and dad, kind of photobombed it there in the back, and heard one that had her stuffed animals that were kind of back there in the back. This notion of hospitality as guests is basically saying to us, would you trust that God has already made provisions for what's going to happen, that you don't have to be in control, that you are honoring what God is doing there in that place. Now, after 15 days of rice and curry and all gravy, I get a little tired, and I will admit I'm looking for fried eggs, bacon, toast and all the kind of things that I like every place we go, every single home we go to, they cannot serve us fast enough to say thank you for coming, and welcome to our home. But the table was moved so that they knew that I would be comfortable. Jane Richardson wrote a poem, and the This poem is called, "And the Table Will Be Wide." So, if you wanted to download it, you can do that. And the table will be wide, and the welcome will be wide, and the arms will open wide to gather us in. And our hearts will open wide to receive. And we will come as children who trust there is enough, and we will come unhindered and free, and our aching will be met with bread, and our sorrow will be met with wine. And we will open our hands to the feast without shame, and we will turn toward each other without fear, and we will give up our appetite for despair, and we will taste and know of delight, and we will become bread for a hungry world, and we will become drink for those who thirst and the blessed will become the blessing. And everywhere will be the feast.