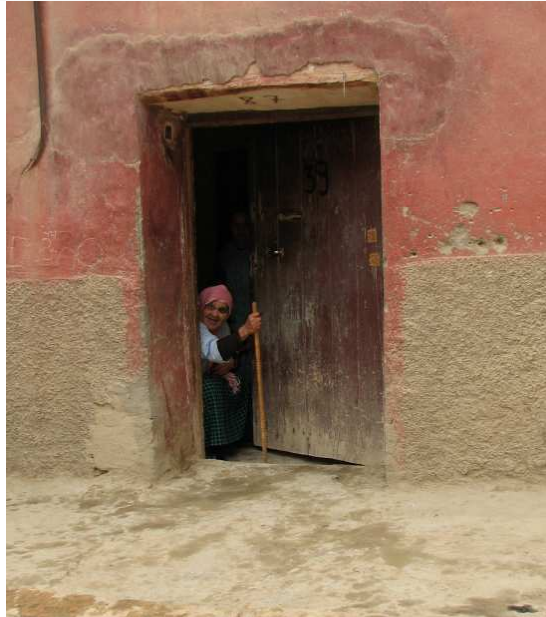


Unlocking real life stories of urban people  
Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ  
Releasing life changing skills and confidence



# U n h i n g i n g H O s p i t a l i t y

A fresh look at an ancient practice



## **What is Unlock?**

Unlock, by various names, has been around for over 30 years trying to help (mainly) urban Christians to understand and share their faith appropriately. We are especially concerned with communication in a traditional tabloid (non-book) culture. As well as maintaining our team of workers, we publish a variety of resources and can provide training for group leaders.

Our approach is to take people's own experience and/or context as the 'text'. Everyone can speak with authority about their own experience or context. These texts are already 'stored' in their, or their community's, memory. They do not have to be learned, they are already familiar. But they can be explored, compared to other 'texts' like in the Bible, critiqued, and learning drawn from them, which can be applied.

In other words, we can learn about our faith simply by:

1. sharing stories from our own everyday experience and
2. relating them to the stories in the Bible and
3. deciding what to do about it
4. then taking action and
5. sharing stories of the actions we have taken and so on . . . .

Our life experience matters; our stories; our joys and sorrows - The Bible has plenty to say - more than we'll ever know - about our lives if we know how to read it and apply it...if we know how to UNLOCK it!

## **Why "unhinging hospitality"?**

In our current unhinged society of terrorism, materialism, individualism and loss of community, it seems that hospitality is on the decline. Though there is more stuff to be had, it seems there is less inclination to share it. Though much money is spent protecting homes and governments spend millions on preventing terrorist attacks, it seems people are becoming increasingly scared and suspicious. And though most people (in the UK at least) live only metres away from their neighbours, many are as lonely and isolated as ever.

It would seem then that down to earth hospitality is urgently needed. If we are to unHING anything, it's the view that it's a cosy ministry best suited to well-off women with time on their hands. Each one of us can be a host. Each one of us has no doubt been a guest. And each one of us can bring our own experience of welcoming or being the stranger.



**This material aims to:**

Let people ponder on the possibilities, the potential and the outworking of hospitality as a practice towards themselves, their neighbours and those they have yet to meet in their streets and cities. It is particularly suited for a small group who are not in a traditional church setting.

**This material will not:**

Provide black and white answers to how we should respond to Biblical texts. It is best used as a guide to help on the journey of exploring possible solutions through telling stories, relating them to the Bible and responding to them individually and together.

**How to use this material:**

There are six sessions in this course, each building from the previous one. They include games, video clips, music, practical exercises, questions, stories, texts, discussions, responses and actions. The hope is that as a group works through each one, trust and confidence will be built to enable them, as individuals and together, to rise to the increasing challenges each session will present. This could be anything from just being in a room with other people to reading or praying aloud to leading parts of the session.



### **Ground rules for participants:**

The first session should set out some "ground rules" for the discussions, to let people know what will happen in them and how they are expected to contribute. Decide these together so everyone can have a sense of ownership as to how the group is run. Some examples are as follows:

*\* Everyone will contribute as much or as little of their personal stories that they are comfortable with.*

*\* Everything said during these evenings will stay within the group and be treated as confidential, whether it's someone's personal story or opinion.*

*\* People can opt out of exercises, without having to give a reason for it.*

*\* Most discussions will be "unfinished" and be interrupted after short periods of time. This is as it should be, since the aim is to start discussions, not finish them.*

*\* There are no "right" or "wrong" answers or opinions, and those who perhaps have more in-depth knowledge of the Bible should feel free to contribute to the discussions with "facts" provided they know that those comments are not more valid than other opinions expressed in the group.*



The text of the Bible studies in the course is taken from the Good News Bible  
(British Usage edition),  
published by the Bible Societies and Collins,  
American Bible Society 1966, 1971, 1976; used by permission.

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# The traditional method of Bible study

The majority of bible studies start with a text

“There was once a man..”



And moves onto an analysis of the text and the deduction of general principles.

“The good Samaritan helped his neighbour...”

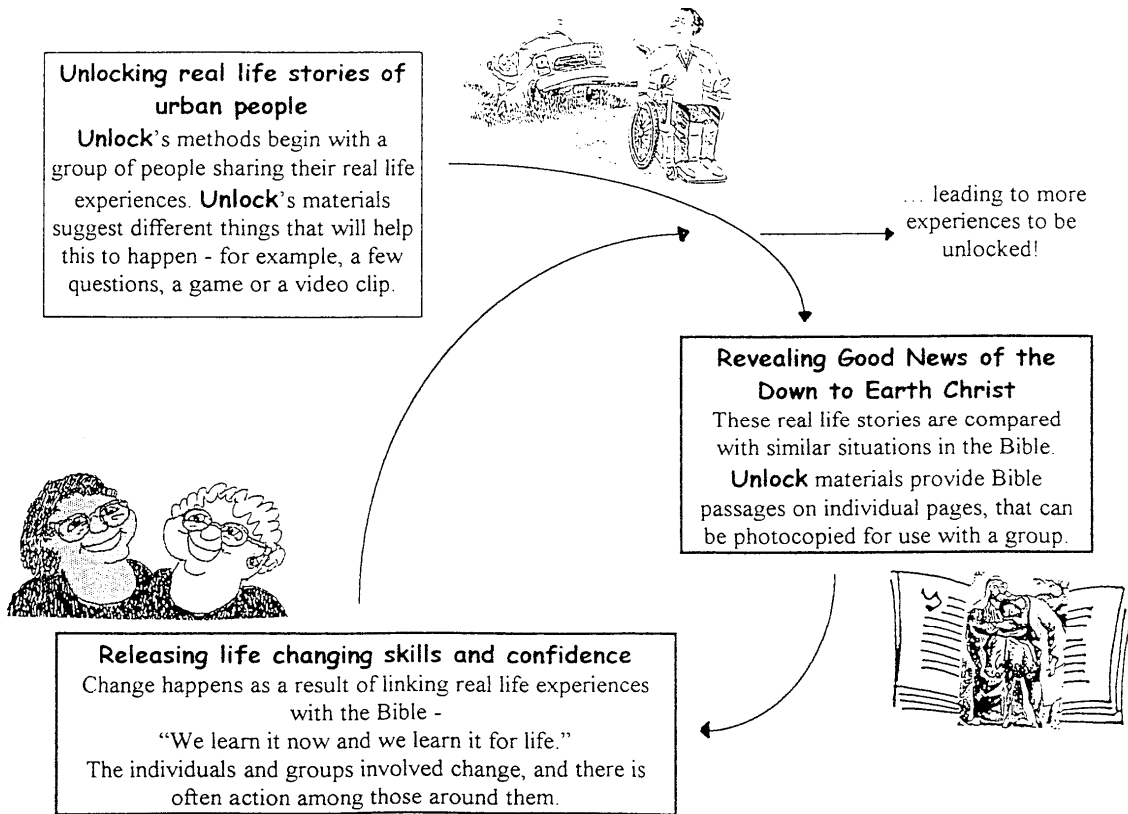


Finally, there is encouragement to apply this to life

“We must help others.”

This style provides a framework, within which the person can store the information in his/her mind, in note form or on disc) for retrieval when it is needed. This requires a way of thinking and communicating which is based on book and lecture methods of learning; it is not the appropriate method for a vast number of people.

## Unlock’s method of Bible study



## Session 1 - Introduction



### **Suggestion:**

Set out the room in a relaxed and informal style. Welcome people warmly when they arrive and offer drinks and biscuits/cakes.

### **Video:**

"Be our guest" from Walt Disney's "Beauty and the Beast"

Link = <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ov4tE7XRTUA>

*(Start by playing the clip. As the group watch, put pictures like those below around the room either on the floor or blu-tacked on the walls).*

### **Question:**

"Be our guest" was the signature song for Disney's film version of "Beauty and the Beast" and later was used for the advertising campaign for its hotels. The view of hospitality it presents is one of entertainment, of giving the guests a good time and of chasing away the blues. Is this your view of hospitality? Which pictures if any, come closest to your view and why?



Posh dinner parties?



A relaxed meal with friends?



An open door?



Giving water to a stranger?



**Discussion:**

"Beauty and the beast" is a story that helps children confront their natural fear of strangers and difference. Yet as children many of us were taught not to talk to strangers and for many of us, this rule can still hold true. What is it about strangers that make us afraid?

Consider this cartoon. Do you think it is true of society today?



This image was obtained from [www.libertynews.com](http://www.libertynews.com) who failed to respond to our requests for permission.

- Have you ever felt like a stranger and needed help? Did it come? If yes, how? If not, why not?
- Have you ever ignored a stranger when you knew they needed help?
- Have you ever helped someone knowing it would be a risk to your reputation and possibly your safety?

Take a look at the original story of the Good Samaritan (see handout) and discuss in the light of your answers.

## **The Parable of the Good Samaritan - Luke 10: 25-37**

*The Good News Translation*

**25** A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus.

"Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to receive eternal life?"

**26** Jesus answered him, "What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?"

**27** The man answered, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind'; and 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' "

**28** "You are right," Jesus replied; "do this and you will live."

**29** But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?"

**30** Jesus answered, "There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. **31** It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by on the other side. **32** In the same way a Levite also came there, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan who was travelling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. **34** He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. "Take care of him," he told the innkeeper, "and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.' "

**36** And Jesus concluded, "In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour toward the man attacked by the robbers?"

**37** The teacher of the Law answered, "The one who was kind to him."

Jesus replied, "You go, then, and do the same."





## So what exactly is hospitality?

Interestingly, the root word for hospitality is *hostis* - a Latin word which actually means stranger or enemy. From this we get *hospitem* which means guest or host and from this English gets hospital, host, hostel, hotel, hospitality. Hospitals were originally called hospices to welcome pilgrims travelling to shrines or the Holy Land. Later the term was used for charities looking after the elderly and disabled and later still for charities educating children before it gained its current meaning.

Hospitality in its essence then is all about making strangers into guests, making people feel that they matter. It's as ancient as civilisation and as modern as a lonely heart. It's a gift and a responsibility. And it's the second great commandment: "Love your neighbour as yourself".

### *Befriending the stranger in ourselves.*

How important do you think it is to love ourselves? Do you think that if we love ourselves then we can be more open and loving towards others? Think of a way you can make a fuss of yourself this week.

### *Angels in disguise*



Do you find this concept/reality heartening, scary or slightly weird? Do you have any stories that relate to this? They could be personal or ones that you've heard.

*Keep at it*



*"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling". 1 Pet 4:9*



**Response:**

Like anything, hospitality can be trying and testing but gets better with practise. So look for ways to keep at it and encourage each other along the way. Note down 2 things you could be doing from now until the next session. Be prepared to share back on your experiences!

## Session 2 - Old Testament Hospitality



### **Suggestion:**

Set out the room like a nomad's tent. Seat people in a circle on cushions on the floor (if able) and wash their hands before serving mint tea and dates. Use this time to share back anything significant that may have happened in terms of hospitality towards self and others since the last session.



**Background music:** Arabic or Bedouin style

### **Games:**

Nomads love to tell stories so start the session telling a story going round the circle:

#### ***Fortunately/Unfortunately***

One person starts by saying "Fortunately (*eg: it was a sunny day when Jack set off to work*)" and the next saying "Unfortunately (*eg: Jack suffered from a rare skin disease and was rapidly turning green before he reached the end of this road*)", the next "fortunately", the next "unfortunately" and so on.

#### ***Pass the object***

An ordinary object (*eg: glass, pen, mobile phone*) is used as the link for each part of the story. The first person starts by introducing the object and its role in the story. When he/she has finished talking they pass it on to the next person who must mention it in their part of the story. When they have finished, they pass it on to the next person and so on.

## Ancient Traditions of Hospitality:



In the ancient Near East, hospitality was the process of "receiving" outsiders and changing them from strangers to guests. It was unthinkable to allow a stranger to pass by:



### **Job 31:32 (The Message)**

"Didn't those who worked for me say,  
'He fed us well. There were always  
second helpings'?  
And no stranger ever had to spend a night  
in the street;  
my doors were always open to travellers."

God is portrayed in the scriptures as identifying with the fallen and broken. He revealed Himself as God of the outsider when He got involved in the lives of the Israelites in Egypt. By freeing them from their oppression he showed his commitment to the vulnerable and hurting. This concern and compassion then became the example that God urged them to follow through His covenants with them.

The Israelites themselves were portrayed as travellers or tenants on land that God had given them and their tenancy was linked to their obedience to God. The way the stranger, the widow and the orphan were treated was an indication of how obedient the Israelites were to His law. This commitment to justice and defending the weak was something repeated time and time again by the prophets. God does not just want lip service; He requires us to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Him (Micah 6:8) and so the stranger provides the opportunity to reflect His heart for the downtrodden and oppressed.



### Questions:

- Have you ever had someone turn up unexpectedly that you had to look after? How did you respond? Were they hard work or a delight?
- Have you ever turned up at someone's unexpectedly and received hospitality? Did you feel like a welcomed guest or a nuisance?
- Have you ever had an unexpected benefit when you've looked after someone who's just turned up?

### Story: Abraham and the three strangers

Read the story in the handout and discuss the following:



When the three strangers turned up by Abraham's tent mysteriously and unexpectedly, he welcomed them like any Near East host would, addressing them with honour and respect. You can sense Abraham's joy and excitement in welcoming the guests, obviously counting it a privilege to be serving and looking after them. Imagine his surprise then when the strangers told him and Sarah that they'd be parents within the year. Out of doing something very ordinary, something extraordinary happened that would transform their lives forever.

Given our answers to the previous questions, what can we learn from this story in relation to our own experience?

## Abraham and the three strangers -Genesis 18: 1-16

*The Good News Translation*

**1** The Lord appeared to Abraham at the sacred trees of Mamre. As Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the hottest part of the day, **2** he looked up and saw three men standing there. As soon as he saw them, he ran out to meet them. Bowing down with his face touching the ground, **3** he said, "Sirs, please do not pass by my home without stopping; I am here to serve you. **4** Let me bring some water for you to wash your feet; you can rest here beneath this tree. **5** I will also bring a bit of food; it will give you strength to continue your journey. You have honoured me by coming to my home, so let me serve you."

They replied, "Thank you; we accept." **6** Abraham hurried into the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick, take a sack of your best flour, and bake some bread." **7** Then he ran to the herd and picked out a calf that was tender and fat, and gave it to a servant, who hurried to get it ready. **8** He took some cream, some milk, and the meat, and set the food before the men. There under the tree he served them himself, and they ate. **9** Then they asked him, "Where is your wife Sarah?"

"She is there in the tent," he answered. **10** One of them said, "Nine months from now I will come back, and your wife Sarah will have a son."

Sarah was behind him, at the door of the tent, listening. **11** Abraham and Sarah were very old, and Sarah had stopped having her monthly periods. **12** So Sarah laughed to herself and said, "Now that I am old and worn out, can I still enjoy sex? And besides, my husband is old too." **13** Then the Lord asked Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Can I really have a child when I am so old?' **14** Is anything too hard for the Lord? As I said, nine months from now I will return, and Sarah will have a son." **15** Because Sarah was afraid, she denied it. "I didn't laugh," she said.

"Yes, you did," he replied. "You laughed."

**16** Then the men left and went to a place where they could look down at Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on their way.





## Response:

Do you know anyone you could describe as a modern day Abraham in terms of their hospitality?

Read the following story as an example:

### Eyrun's story



Eyrun lives in Iceland with her son, Salomon in a place called Hvollsvolur. It's a town in the south just off the main road that rings the whole of Iceland. Because her home is a good stopping off point she gets loads of travellers dropping in. Often bad weather can disrupt journeys too and she often has people staying over. Icelanders take great pride in their hospitality and Eyrun is no exception. Like Abraham and Sarah in the story, she welcomes her guests (friends, foreigners and strangers) with warmth and enthusiasm taking great care to make sure they are well fed and rested.

Now in her mid-30s, Eyrun has moved over 40 times and describes herself as a nomad. She knows what it means to feel rootless so has a great deal of insight into what it means to be a stranger. She's also someone who's had her heart broken many times and often talks of how Jesus took her stone heart and made it soft and how he keeps doing it whenever it gets bruised or bashed up.

Eyrun is a great example of someone who just offers what they can, when they can, wherever they're at. And though she never asks for or expects it, people love her back and are challenged because of it.

Is there anyone you know who inspires and challenges you in a similar way?

### Action

Think of practical ways to support one another in being more hospitable. It's good to be open but what if we're struggling financially or we live alone and are worried about bringing unknown people into our homes? How can we help each other in this?

## Session 3 - New Testament Hospitality



**Suggestion:** Set out the room as comfortably and as relaxing as possible, eg: lots of cushions, candles, chocolate etc

### **Game: Which chocolate?**

Everyone writes down on a piece of paper the chocolate that best describes them (eg: Strawberry cream, nut cluster etc) and then puts the folded papers in a hat or mug. The hat/mug is passed round and everyone selects one (if it's theirs they put it back and take another one) and reads it to the group. The aim of the game is to guess who the chocolates are.

### **Hospitality in Jesus' and the Early Church's day**

Hospitality is making people feel like they're not strangers, like they belong. In the NT we see that hospitality was expected, at least as the disciples travelled through Judea and Galilee. When Jesus sent them out he told them to keep things simple and seek out a worthy person and stay in their house while they were in town (Mt 10: 3-11):



Here we see the nomadic laws of hospitality at work, laws that

ensured the safety and well-being of both travellers and those who took them in. Travel was common, inns were rare and any person in that society knew that at some point they might be in need of hospitality too. These laws remained in place to provide a certain level of order and security in society. Whilst still keeping the tradition of OT hospitality alive, however, they also took on a new dimension. As Christians scattered further afield and some to places where hospitality was not a given, it became a demand as well. Thus hospitality became more than just obeying a covenant of God, but about honouring others as if they were God in our midst.



Jesus himself became the stranger who was both received and rejected.

**Video:** Trailer for the film "Chocolat"



Link = <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLAuf4-aOI4>



**Plot Summary:**

Vianne Rocher, a single mother with a little daughter arrives at a tiny French village on Shrove Tuesday, just before the season of Lent when Christians are asked to enter into a period of prayer and fasting in preparation for Easter. She moves into the old bakery opposite the church and Francois Reynaud, the cur   of the parish, looks on her with suspicion when he realizes that she intends to open a chocolate shop.

But through chocolate, hospitality and care, Vianne comes to befriend and help people. Although she undermines the priest's authority, through her, marginalized and forgotten people start to blossom again. Her particular gift is listening and seeing into people's hearts and finding ways for people to find their own inner strength and be set free. For in *Chocolat* it is love, and not faith, which ultimately holds the key to salvation. Reynaud fears love (and pleasure, which he equates with sin), whereas Vianne embraces it and encourages its free expression.

**Questions:**

- What do you make of Vianne? How is she both a stranger and a host?
- Think of someone who makes you feel at home whenever you visit. What is about them and their home that makes you feel that way?



- When have you appreciated someone's welcome and hospitality the most and why?
- Have you ever been embarrassed by someone either as a host or a guest?
- Have you ever behaved in a way that has upset or embarrassed your host or guests?

**Exercise:**

Choose from either of the handouts:

*Jesus at the home of his friends, Mary and Martha.*

or:

*Jesus at the home of Simon the Pharisee*

Imagine yourself in the scene, either as an onlooker or one of the characters in the story. Is it a situation where you feel comfortable or not? Make a note of your thoughts and share back with the group after 10 minutes.

## **Jesus at the home of Mary and Martha - Luke 10: 38-42**

*The Good News Translation*

**38** As Jesus and his disciples went on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him in her home. **39** She had a sister named Mary, who sat down at the feet of the Lord and listened to his teaching. **40** Martha was upset over all the work she had to do, so she came and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!" **41** The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, **42** but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her."

## **Jesus at the home of Simon - Luke 7: 36-50**

*The Good News Translation*

**36** A Pharisee invited Jesus to have dinner with him, and Jesus went to his house and sat down to eat. **37** In that town was a woman who lived a sinful life. She heard that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee's house, so she brought an alabaster jar full of perfume **38** and stood behind Jesus, by his feet, crying and wetting his feet with her tears. Then she dried his feet with her hair, kissed them, and poured the perfume on them. **39** When the Pharisee saw this, he said to himself, "If this man really were a prophet, he would know who this woman is who is touching him; he would know what kind of sinful life she lives!" **40** Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Yes, Teacher," he said, "tell me." **41** "There were two men who owed money to a moneylender," Jesus began. "One owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other owed him fifty. **42** Neither of them could pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Which one, then, will love him more?" **43** "I suppose," answered Simon, "that it would be the one who was forgiven more." "You are right," said Jesus. **44** Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your home, and you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. **45** You did not welcome me with a kiss, but she has not stopped kissing my feet since I came. **46** You provided no olive oil for my head, but she has covered my feet with perfume. **47** I tell you, then, the great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven. But whoever has been forgiven little shows only a little love." **48** Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven." **49** The others sitting at the table began to say to themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" **50** But Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."





### **Discussion:**

Jesus spent more time in the company of "sinners" than the religious and well-to-do people of his day. They were the people who were most hospitable towards and accepting of him so it's no wonder Jesus enjoyed hanging out with them. Consider the story below in this light:

### **Response**

Think about how you respond to people as a guest. Next time you're invited somewhere or someone looks after you, see how they do it. Make a note of anything that particularly strikes you about their hospitality and share it with the group in one of the next sessions.

## Session 4 - Hospitality as social action



**Suggestion:** Set out the room like a squat or a prison. Give guests bread and water as refreshments.

**Slideshow:** "One of us" by Joan Osborne (*from the album, "Relish" - track and album available on itunes*).

**Exercise:** Whilst playing the song "One of us", put images of people around the room and get people to choose the one that affects them the most. The images could be of both "likeable strangers" and "unlikeable strangers". When the song finishes get people to share why they have chosen their particular picture.



*Jesus told the disciples that what they do to the stranger, they do to Him. He is in the guise of the stranger, the poor, the weak and His call is to treat all people how we would treat Him. Jesus understands those who seek refuge and asylum and identifies with them. His great call is to hospitality. He epitomised hospitality in his welcome and treatment of those on the fringes of society. But it was more than a welcome. His hospitality was about reconciliation and the transformation from stranger to guest and from guest to friend.*

**Meditation:**

Consider the picture and the words below. Place yourself in it. Where are you in it? Take time to think about it and then write or draw down your thoughts. Share with the group if you like.



*We have been unable to trace the source of this image. An alternative image is provided on page 44.*

## **The Sheep and the Goats - Matthew 25:31-46**

*The Good News Translation*

**31** "When the Son of Man comes as King and all the angels with him, he will sit on his royal throne, **32** and the people of all the nations will be gathered before him. Then he will divide them into two groups, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** He will put the righteous people at his right and the others at his left. **34** Then the King will say to the people on his right, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. **35** I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, **36** naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.' **37** The righteous will then answer him, "When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? **38** When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? **39** When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?' **40** The King will reply, "I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!' **41** "Then he will say to those on his left, "Away from me, you that are under God's curse! Away to the eternal fire which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels! **42** I was hungry but you would not feed me, thirsty but you would not give me a drink; **43** I was a stranger but you would not welcome me in your homes, naked but you would not clothe me; I was sick and in prison but you would not take care of me.' **44** Then they will answer him, "When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and we would not help you?' **45** The King will reply, "I tell you, whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me.' **46** These, then, will be sent off to eternal punishment, but the righteous will go to eternal life."





### Questions:

- Who are the strangers, the sick, the naked, the prisoners and the least in your neighbourhood?
- Are there times when you know you've not really seen people in need?
- Have there been times when you've not been seen by others when you've really needed some help?

### Story: The Sheep and the Goats

Read the handout and reflect on the following:

The "goats" in this story are genuinely amazed when they are told that they did not see Jesus in the face of the stranger. They do not excuse themselves by saying that they were willing to serve, nor do they offer excuses that they found the task unpleasant or too demanding. They don't go on about having a lack of resources nor do they ask for a second chance. Instead they protest that they just did not *see*.

### Discussion:

Jesus did not set out to *see*. He didn't go looking for someone to heal or deliver. His hospitality to the displaced was not calculated but casual. As he was going, Jesus saw. This is very different from what goes on in the name of Christian hospitality today. Churches continue to promote programmes and call committees to care for the poor, the naked, the hungry. It's good to be organised and work together but these efforts begin the process of institutionalising care. When that happens our ability to see the stranger "as we are going" is eroded. Clothing and feeding, welcoming and visiting become agendas. By adopting the vision of Jesus, by *seeing as and how he sees*, our approach to hospitality will become natural and unforced. Hospitality should be ad hoc and personal.

*(Taken from "I was a stranger" by Arthur Sutherland, Abingdon Press, 2006)*

Do you agree with this?



- What about all the groups and organisations you know that have been set up to help the poor and disadvantaged? Does their work make you feel less responsible/inclined to do something yourself?
- What starts out as a small and informal response to an urgent need often grows into something much bigger and much more organised. The Underground Railroad (see article on page 28) is an historical example of this. Can you think of any current examples?

**Action:**

- When you leave this session and make your way wherever you're going next, make a point of looking at people and really trying to *see* them.
- Start writing a journal describing the people you notice/meet and any incidents that occur as a result. You may prefer to draw them or keep a memory box\* as a way of remembering them (eg: a used coffee cup, a chocolate wrapper) and a prompt to pray.

*(\*See how to make a memory box at [http://www.yourfamily.org.uk/family\\_fun/days\\_in/make\\_it/make\\_your\\_own\\_memory\\_box\\_video](http://www.yourfamily.org.uk/family_fun/days_in/make_it/make_your_own_memory_box_video) - of course it can be much simpler than this if you like!)*

**And finally.....**

Please bring some party food to the next session.

## The Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad was a vast network of people who helped fugitive slaves escape to the North of America and to Canada. It was not run by any single organisation or person but consisted of many individuals - many whites but mainly black - who knew only of the local efforts to aid escaping slaves and not of the overall operation. An organised system seems to have begun towards the end of the 18th century. The system grew, and around 1831 it was dubbed "The Underground Railroad," after the then emerging steam railroads. The system even used terms used in railroading: the homes and businesses where fugitives would rest and eat were called "stations" and "depots" and were run by "stationmasters," those who contributed money or goods were "stockholders," and the "conductor" was responsible for moving fugitives from one station to the next.

For the slave, running away to the North was anything but easy. The first step was to escape from the slaveholder. For many slaves, this meant relying on his or her own resources. Sometimes a "conductor," posing as a slave, would enter a plantation and then guide the runaways northward. The fugitives would move at night. They would generally travel between 10 and 20 miles to the next station, where they would rest and eat, hiding in barns and other out-of-the-way places. While they waited, a message would be sent to the next station to alert its stationmaster.

The fugitives would also travel by train and boat which sometimes had to be paid for. Money was also needed to improve their appearance - a black man, woman, or child in tattered clothes would easily attract suspicious eyes. This money was donated by individuals and also raised by various groups and committees which sprang up in the larger towns and cities of the North, eg: New York and Boston. In addition to giving money, the organisations provided food, lodging and money, and helped the fugitives settle into a community by helping them find jobs and providing letters of recommendation.



## Session 5 - Hospitality as celebration



### **Suggestion:**

Set up the room like a party. Have music playing in the background decorate a table ready for the party food.



### **Party**

#### **Questions:**

- What was the best party you've ever been to and why?
- Have you have been excluded from or not invited to a party?  
How did it feel?
- Have you ever been given a surprise party? Was it a shock?  
Did you feel you deserved it?
- Have you ever run out of food when you've been entertaining people? What happened?



**Exercise:**

The sketch on pages 31-33 describes the water jars' experience of the miracle at the Wedding of Cana when Jesus turned the water into wine. It can either be read through as a group with people taking parts (the 6 jars and Jesus) or a few people could perform it to the group having had a chance to look at the script before the session.

## The Six Jars

by Fiona Smith



Jesus        *(to the servants)* Fill the jars with water!

*The jars begin to wake up.*

Jar 1        What?

Jar 2        Eh?

Jar 3        Uh?

Jar 4        Mmmmm?

Jar 5        Duh?

Jar 6        What, *now??*

Jar 1        'Fill the jars with water'?!? Leave us alone. We've done our bit today.

Jar 2        Not again. Please, not again!

Jar 3        You're joking aren't you?

Jar 4        I don't want to go near all those people again.

Jar 5        What's happening? I was having such a nice dream....

Jar 6        Uh o. Looks like we're back in business.

Jesus        *(to the servants)* I said, fill the jars with water! Go on. Chop chop.

Jar 1 Oh heck. They're coming over.  
Jar 2 Get off me. I am having a rest.  
Jar 3 Didn't you hear him? He's having a rest! And so am I. Get off!!  
Jar 4 Please leave me alone. I'm quite happy in the shade thanks.  
Jar 5 What's going on? Am I still dreaming??  
Jar 6 Oh go on then. If you must.....

*One by one the jars are filled with water and one by one they start to tingle.*

Jar 1 Oooh. What was that? I feel a bit odd.  
Jar 2 There's something in the water!  
Jar 3 Something in the water?! Where?  
Jar 4 Here (*starts to wobble*).... definitely here!  
Jar 5 Wow! It's red! The water's gone red.  
Jar 6 This isn't water - it's wine!

*All the jars gasp.*

Jar 1 But we're stone *water* jars.  
Jar 2 That's right. Big fat heavy *water* jars.  
Jar 3 We're not supposed to carry wine.  
Jar 4 Yeah, wine's for the beautiful jars.  
Jar 5 Not great lumbering lardy jars like us.  
Jar 6 Speak for yourself!

*The jars reel at Jesus' next command.....*

Jesus (*to the servants*) Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.  
Jar 1 The master of the banquet? Not the master of the banquet, pleeeaaase...  
Jar 2 Don't take it to him! Don't take it to him. He won't like it!



Jar 3 Oh heck. They've just taken some.  
 Jar 4 Well, just don't tell him where it came from!  
 Jar 5 I doubt he'd want to drink from jars like us.  
 Jar 6 I doubt he'd believe it was from jars like us.  
 Jar 1 Ah, but look at him.....  
 Jar 2 He likes it!  
 Jar 3 He really likes it!  
 Jar 4 And he hasn't got a clue.  
 Jar 5 Not a clue  
 Jar 6 That it's come from us.

*The jars watch as the master calls the bridegroom aside. They strain their handles to hear what he says.*

Jar 1 Did you hear that? Did you hear *that*?!  
 Jar 2 Yeah. He reckons it's the best wine of the night!  
 Jar 3 And that it's been saved till last *on purpose*.  
 Jar 4 What a laugh! If only he knew.....  
 Jar 5 It's a miracle! A bloody miracle!  
 Jar 6 And he's still no idea where it's coming from...

*The jars laugh wryly and watch with astounded pleasure at the joy the wine is giving as they pour out glass after glass after glass after glass.*

In this sketch the jars didn't think much of themselves. They'd been pouring out water at weddings and other occasions for years. But here something happens which totally surprises and shocks them out of their jaded state. Some of us might feel like the jars. We might be bored in our jobs, we might feel used, we might be tired of the same old faces and places in our lives, we might even be fed up with ourselves and/or with God. The jars never expected a miracle but it came and it came through them.

Take some time now to talk, pray or sit quietly together and reflect on what this means to you at this time.



## **The Parable of the Great Banquet - Luke 14: 15-24**

*The Good News Translation*

**15** When one of the guests sitting at the table heard this, he said to Jesus, "How happy are those who will sit down at the feast in the Kingdom of God!" **16** Jesus said to him, "There was once a man who was giving a great feast to which he invited many people. **17** When it was time for the feast, he sent his servant to tell his guests, "Come, everything is ready!" **18** But they all began, one after another, to make excuses. The first one told the servant, "I have bought a field and must go and look at it; please accept my apologies." **19** Another one said, "I have bought five pairs of oxen and am on my way to try them out; please accept my apologies." **20** Another one said, "I have just gotten married, and for that reason I cannot come." **21** The servant went back and told all this to his master. The master was furious and said to his servant, "Hurry out to the streets and alleys of the town, and bring back the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." **22** Soon the servant said, "Your order has been carried out, sir, but there is room for more." **23** So the master said to the servant, "Go out to the country roads and lanes and make people come in, so that my house will be full. **24** I tell you all that none of those who were invited will taste my dinner!" "





### Questions:

- Have you ever made excuses not to go to a party or event? Why?
- Have you ever not gone somewhere and then found out you'd missed something amazing? How did you feel?
- Have you ever been invited somewhere suddenly and unexpectedly?
- Have you ever invited people to your home or an event whom you would normally have overlooked?

### Story: The Great Banquet



Read the handout and consider the following:

What is your response to this story? Where are the highways and byways today and who are the lame, the poor and the sick?

#### Action:

- Try writing a sketch about this story. Think about where you want to perform it and to whom and then just do it!
- Throw a party for people in your community and see who comes (eg: in a community centre or church hall). Send people out during it to invite people in and see what happens.



## Session 6 - Hospitality as mission: in the city and abroad



### **Suggestion:**

Meet at a train station cafe, motorway services or at an airport. Remind group to bring money for a drink or meal. Give more room in this session for people to talk and feedback from the whole course.





## Exercise:

*(over food and/or drinks)*

- Look at the people around you and imagine their stories. Tell one to the group.
- Tell the group a story of when you met or befriended a stranger in your city or neighbourhood or on a holiday or trip. What happened? Are you still in touch?

## Destiny and divisions - city life

Cities were originally places of refuge and a focus for commercial production. People flocked to them for these reasons primarily and when the Industrial Revolution kicked off in the 1700s, populations soared. Nowadays cities attract people from all cultures, religions, political views and backgrounds and for all manner of reasons. They are places where strangers interact daily but where people generally live in the safe divisions created by modern city planners which keep them apart.



Think about your own city or cities you've visited. Are there places where the rich generally live? The poor? Muslims? Jews? Other groups you can think of? How does this affect you and your neighbours?

## **The Great Commission - Matthew 28:16-20**

*The Good News Translation*

**16** The eleven disciples went to the hill in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him, even though some of them doubted. **18** Jesus drew near and said to them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. **19** Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, **20** and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age."



## Boundaries and borders - the world beyond



Discipleship is not a matter of settling down and protecting and preserving the church family but most richly expressed as a risky journey, a practice that subverts our human

God is powerfully experienced in places that are strange to us. Jesus regularly pushed his disciples away from familiar places to more threatening ones because the people there were strangers.

- Where would you least like to go? Why?
- Have you ever felt a call by God to go somewhere and really struggled with it?
- Have you dreaded going somewhere and then been surprised by what you experienced there?

Read the handout for Matt 28:16-20 and imagine the feelings of the disciples as Jesus sent them into the unknown.

## The Heavenly City - Revelation 21: 1-5; 11-27

### *The Good News Translation*

**1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth disappeared, and the sea vanished. **2** And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband. **3** I heard a loud voice speaking from the throne: "Now God's home is with people! He will live with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. **4** He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared." **5** Then the one who sits on the throne said, "And now I make all things new!" He also said to me, "Write this, because these words are true and can be trusted."

**11** The city shone like a precious stone, like a jasper, clear as crystal. **12** It had a great, high wall with twelve gates and with twelve angels in charge of the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of the people of Israel. **13** There were three gates on each side: three on the east, three on the south, three on the north, and three on the west. **14** The city's wall was built on twelve foundation stones, on which were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. **15** The angel who spoke to me had a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. **16** The city was perfectly square, as wide as it was long. The angel measured the city with his measuring stick: it was fifteen hundred miles long and was as wide and as high as it was long. **17** The angel also measured the wall, and it was 216 feet high, according to the standard unit of measure which he was using. **18** The wall was made of jasper, and the city itself was made of pure gold, as clear as glass. **19** The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. The first foundation stone was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, **20** the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh yellow quartz, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chalcedony, the eleventh turquoise, the twelfth amethyst. **21** The twelve gates were twelve pearls; each gate was made from a single pearl. The street of the city was of pure gold, transparent as glass. **22** I did not see a temple in the city, because its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. **23** The city has no need of the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God shines on it, and the Lamb is its lamp. **24** The peoples of the world will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their wealth into it. **25** The gates of the city will stand open all day; they will never be closed, because there will be no night there. **26** The greatness and the wealth of the nations will be brought into the city. **27** But nothing that is impure will enter the city, nor anyone who does shameful things or tells lies. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of the living will enter the city.





## Coming Home:

Hospitality is to go beyond the trendy notion of "tolerance" and to form real relationships with those who are different at the risk of moving out of our comfort zones and being changed by the encounter. The heavenly city is a community in which the fullness of community is to be had. The Kingdom of God is about declaring this inheritance and living it out prophetically. It's about bringing others into it and satisfying God's goal of creation: one big almighty homecoming.



## Meditation from Rev 21

Read the hand-out or get one of the group to read it. Put yourself and/or others in the picture in your mind's eye. What do you see?

*(NB: You might want to play music in the background if it's convenient. Tracks 14 & 15 from the album 'City of Gold' (available from Gold Records [www.goldrecords.co.uk](http://www.goldrecords.co.uk)) would be good, for example, and are available as individual downloads).*

## Action:

- Write down the main things you feel God has said and/or asked you to do during this course and then pray about these with someone else or as a group.
- Compile a list of suggestions together of small, everyday things that you can do to be more hospitable towards yourself and others. Use it as a reminder of this course and a reference point to act on from now on.

This resource was developed and written by Fiona Smith, Unlock Hull Development worker 2006 - 2008.



## References:

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Sutherland, A, I was a Stranger - A Christian Theology of Hospitality, Abingdon Press, Nashville USA, 2006

[www.spiritualjourneys.org.uk/explore/explore\\_taste.php](http://www.spiritualjourneys.org.uk/explore/explore_taste.php)

The Good Samaritan cartoon on page 8 is from:-

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Alternative image for page 24



This image was obtained from [www.servicioskoinonia.org](http://www.servicioskoinonia.org)



## Resources checklist by session:

### Session 1:

- Drinks, biscuits and cakes
- "Be our guest" from Walt Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" Link = <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ov4tE7XRTUA>
- Pictures of different kinds of hospitality
- Enough copies of page 9 for at least 1 between 2

### Session 2:

- Cushions and drapes to simulate an nomad's tent
- Mint tea, dates
- Arabic or Bedouin style music
- A prop for the 2nd storytelling game (optional)
- Copies of page 15

### Session 3:

- Cushions, candles and chocolates
- Paper and pencils
- Trailer for the film "Chocolat" Link = <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLAuf4-a0I4>
- Copies of page 21

### Session 4:

- Bread and water
- Slideshow "One of us" by Joan Osborne (*from the album, "Relish" - track and album available on itunes*).
- A selection of images of both "likeable" and "unlikeable" strangers
- Copies of pages 24 and 25 (you may also want to provide copies of the quote at the bottom of page 26)
- Copies of page 28

### Session 5:

- Party props
- Seven copies of the drama script on pages 31-33
- Copies of page 34

### Session 6:

- A place to meet, train station cafe, motorway services or at an airport
- Remind everyone to bring money for a drink or a meal
- Copies of pages 38 and 40
- Tracks 14 & 15 from the album 'City of Gold' (available from Gold Records [www.goldrecords.co.uk](http://www.goldrecords.co.uk)) would be good, for example, and are available as individual downloads) and something to play them on.