

Hope Church October 26th 2025

Matthew 8:1-17

Rooted connections – habit #2: radical hospitality.

Share my COVID story...

- When **COVID** hit, the local government in Pretoria made the decision to gather all the homeless people and give them **shelter in a sports stadium** during the LOCKDOWN.

⇒ **15,000 people** who were used to living on their own.

⇒ Many *struggling* with **mental health challenges and addictions**.

⇒ Suddenly all living together in one place.

⇒ There **weren't enough resources**: not enough food or tents or sleeping bags.

Everything was in short supply.

⇒ People were **hungry and desperate**. Fights broke out over food and drugs.

- It was utter chaos.
- Eventually, the government asked churches to step in and help. Out of a city with more than 2.5 MILLION people with **more than 700 churches, only 4** opened their doors.
- Most churches were honestly scared:

⇒ Some didn't feel ready for the challenge or didn't know how to help.

⇒ Others worried that the homeless might break things or that church property would go missing.

⇒ Many were afraid that COVID would get into their communities if they got involved.

- But my church decided to say "yes." We took in 20 homeless men and welcomed them into our office building.

⇒ They came from seven different tribes and spoke seven different languages.

One of them couldn't speak at all.

⇒ For more than 3 MONTHS, these men **lived** and **slept** and **ate** and **bathed** at church.

⇒ Church members served three meals a day and **gave them new clothes**. Good quality stuff. Not just hand-me-downs.

⇒ We invited doctors and psychologists and social workers to help. Making sure everyone **got medicine for their addictions**. Getting them on the right meds for their mental illnesses.

⇒ We helped them get their identity documents.

⇒ We celebrated birthdays – John got his very first cake when he turned 60.

⇒ We helped them **reconnect with family**. And even worked on plans to start small businesses when they went home. Raising chickens or selling airtime for mobile phones.

⇒ We drove long distances to get them back to their loved ones.

- Through all of this, I could see GOD’S LOVE breaking down barriers and **building hope** and changing lives right in front of my eyes.
- And I learned a lot from the homeless. Discovered that not all of them were bad people or addicts. Some of them just made some bad choices or life happened to them.

The Great Commission was clearly and definitively not a call to sit back and stay silent in a world of sin, evil, and suffering. From the very beginning, Christ designed for His disciples to run toward need – not away from it – to engage culture, not to ignore it.

David Platt

A habit is a BEHAVIOR that **becomes automatic**. Over time the behavior becomes part of your identity. *Something that is hard to give up.*

- Last week – living connected with God. Dare I ask – how did the first week with Mark go?
- This week – radically hospitality.

RADICAL HOSPITALITY means welcoming people the way Jesus did. **Fully and deeply and without conditions**. It's not just being friendly to people we already like or know; it's going out of our way to make everyone, *especially those who feel left out or different*, **FEEL seen** and **valued** and **loved**.

You can open your Bibles at **MATTHEW 8**.

- Jesus finished the sermon on the mount where He reminded His followers of God's truth and his standard for life. In **MATTHEW 8** Jesus comes down from the mountain and shows them God's kingdom in action. Not just words.
- CAPERNAUM was a town in Galilee. Along one of the **busiest trade routes** – MAP.
- Back in Jesus' day, people were really careful about what was considered "clean" or "unclean." They went out of their way to **avoid anything that could make them unclean**.

⇒ There was a common belief in Jewish culture that if a Jewish person entered the house of someone who wasn't part of their faith – a Gentile – they would be seen as unclean. This shaped how people acted and who they spent time with.

Verses 1-4:

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus

reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

Matthew 8:1-4 NIV

- Matthew uses the word **ἅπτομαι** / *haptomai* to describe Jesus’ interaction with the leper. Jesus touched him.
- Someone considered **ceremonially unclean and socially excluded.**
- Jesus **IGNORED** purity laws described in **LEVITICUS 13–14**. Don’t touch lepers!
- But Jesus **welcomed the untouchable.** And he was healed immediately.
- In that moment Jesus **OVERTURNED fear and cultural stigma** with healing and mercy.

Verses 5-13:

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.” Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?” The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. //

// I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many

will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. //

// But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

Matthew 8:5-13 NIV

- Jesus connects with a **GENTILE** / *someone that’s unclean*. An **unacceptable behavior** for a Jewish rabbi.
- But Jesus responded immediately in a **positive caring way**. He didn’t check the man’s pedigree or tried to determine if he was trying to trap Jesus. He just stepped in and helped.
- Important Greek word is **ἐξουσία** / *eksousia* (“authority”). The centurion – a man in charge of a 100 soldiers – recognized Jesus’ authority over sickness.
- The JEWISH PEOPLE believed that after judgment day, there’d be a **great banquet to celebrate God’s victory**. A big party just for them.
- But Jesus used the faith of this Roman officer to show that those who think **they already “get it”** often miss Him. While **outsiders / the-not-good-enoughs** sometimes see Him most clearly.
- **GOD’S RESCUE PLAN** isn’t just for the Jews. God’s Kingdom is for everyone!

- Most miracle healings in those days happened through physical touch. When Jesus healed someone “from a distance” – He’s showed that His power has no limits.
- It doesn’t matter where people are or what boundaries might exist. Nothing is beyond the **kindness and love and grace and authority of Jesus**.
- Even your life and the stuff that you deal with. Nothing is beyond the **kindness and love and grace and authority of Jesus**.

Verses 14-17:

When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

Matthew 8:14-17 NIV

- In Jesus’ culture, it was a serious rule that men and women who weren’t family members **should not touch each other**. It was considered *completely inappropriate*.

- Matthew uses an inflection of the verb ἄπτομαι – it shows intimate and physical compassion.
- Jesus' actions were surprising and He challenged the culture they knew and lived every day.

In BIBLICAL TIMES, people's homes were always open to others. **Hospitality was essential**. It was a matter of *personal honor and reputation* in your community. It was part of who they were. It happened **automatically**. It was a **HABIT**.

But it was mainly focused on the right people. The people that walked and talked and looked like you. The clean ones.

But Jesus **flipped the script**. When you look at the three groups in Matthew 8, Jesus reached out to every corner of society.

- He welcomed a leper (**ritually unclean**).
- He honored a GENTILE (**ethnically excluded**).
- He healed a woman (**socially marginalized**).

Jesus didn't discriminate based on **people's faith** or **race** or **culture** or **immigration status**.

- Jesus wasn't just trying to put up with people. He was about **truly sharing life** with those who felt left out or unwanted.

- Jesus brings **God's holiness and a sense of belonging** to anyone who was pushed aside by the social rules or by society itself.
- Instead of KEEPING HIS DISTANCE from what's "unclean," Jesus chooses to come close and to heal and to welcome.
- That's what **life in His kingdom looks like**. A HOLINESS that steps in and lifts up and transforms what the world calls unworthy.

What does this mean for habit #2: radical hospitality?

#1 It's not what we do but how we make people feel.

- Jesus had this beautiful ability to connect with anyone. Clean and unclean. Jew and Gentile. Male and female. Devout religious peeps and sinners.
- But he NEVER COMPROMISED with the **truth or sin**. Jesus had the ability to **make people feel** seen and heard and valued. SAWUBONA! Even when He called them out.
- Even though Jesus **always had His mind set on the cross**, He didn't mind being interrupted. He didn't just make time for *outsiders or people in need* when it was CONVENIENT, or when there was an event on the church calendar.
- Jesus was willing to **stop and listen and care** for people wherever and whenever the need came up.

- It **happened in His everyday life**. Walking from town to town. Visiting friends or their families. Even in those moments when he wanted to get away from everything and connect with His Father.
- For Jesus **people** were MORE IMPORTANT than his schedule or program.
- **MATTHEW 8** challenges us to be present. Challenges us to **be sensitive in how we make people feel**. Challenges us to a sustained commitment to our community.
- **MATTHEW 8** reminds us that radical hospitality is not a program or a to do list.
- Radical hospitality is something **who we are**. Who we **learn to become**.
- It's about **prioritizing community over programs**. In everything. In our church services and our budget and our programming and our conversations with friends.
- Radical hospitality is more than just friendliness. It's *intentional love* that makes others **feel noticed and safe**.
- Radical hospitality is **seeing Christ in every person**. Even in those who don't believe or look or act like us.
- Radical hospitality is **joining others in their world**. Not just inviting them into ours – "How can we be with you?"
- Radical hospitality is **open doors and open hearts for anyone** who walks in. Just like Jesus welcomed the leper and centurion and Peter's mother-in-law.

- When we get this RIGHT, it transforms visitors from **feeling like outsiders** to **experiencing genuine belonging**.
- NO VISITOR to Hope Church should ever walk in and leave without **feeling seen and welcomed and valued**.
- NO ONE in your life should ever walk away without **feeling seen and welcomed and valued**.

#2 What are we willing to risk for it?

- Jesus **risked everything** when He showed how radical the hospitality of God's Kingdom is. To show that God family is open to everyone that followed Him.
- He was alienated from his family. He stepped on toes. Was chased out of towns. Pushed the religious community. Suffered and died on the cross.
- Radical hospitality challenges us to **move into uncomfortable spaces**.
- Radical hospitality challenges us to move into **spaces giving away the power**.
- Radical hospitality challenges us to move into spaces where we **let go of control**.

- **MATTHEW 8** challenges HOPE to be a church that says – *you belong here just as you are*. It challenges me and you to be followers of Jesus that say – *you belong here just as you are*.
- And then we back it up with real actions. **Kindness** and **inclusion** and **care** that go beyond what's expected.
- COVID story of **bootlegging for Jesus...**
⇒ Dodge places meeting super dodgy people...
- What are you willing to risk so that someone new can find a place in God's Kingdom?
- What are you willing to risk to welcome someone new into your group of friends?
- What are you willing to risk to truly include new people in your life?

These are the questions Jesus challenges us with. Including people always costs something, but it's always worth it.

Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy. That is not our business and, in fact, it is nobody's business. What we are asked to do is to love, and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbors worthy.

Thomas Merton