A Home Away From Home

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One of the great joys of being part of the Four12 family and travelling away from home to serve and be part of what God is doing around the world is having many “homes away from home” – be it in Benoni, Brazil, the Isle of Man, Australia or the Netherlands. Likewise, it has been an incredible privilege and joy to be a “home away from home” for others, as I have opened up my own home to others who have come to experience what God is doing through us in Cape Town, South Africa.

Yes, hosting can be stretching – for instance, when the host and the guests do not speak the same language (it does make for some fun acting out conversation, though!), when the host moves into the bathroom so that the guest can have the bedroom (true story), or when the bathroom does not yet have a door, and you have to time it right to avoid any potential embarrassment (another true story!).

I can honestly say, however, that the joys of hosting (and being hosted) have always far outweighed any discomfort or inconvenience. Over the years, many strangers have become family as we have shared stories and hearts, as what’s in their fridge has become mine and what’s in my fridge has become theirs (a saying we have in Joshua Generation Church). Sometimes the clothes on their backs have become the clothes on my back (as I recently experienced when my luggage did not arrive in the Netherlands)!

There have been other times where, practically, it has not been possible to host, but that has not stopped me from extending hospitality to the family from around the world. I have been able to do this by having them over for a meal during a Conference, taking them out for a coffee, or blessing someone else who is hosting others with a meal I can enjoy with them and their guests. At other times, I have lent out mattresses and bedding or helped lift guests between meetings – and it has always only been a blessing to them and me!

The Gospel in Action

As Christians, God expects us to show hospitality to one another. Romans 12:13 says, "_contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." _In Hebrews 13:2, we are reminded, "do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers". And, lest we do it only out of duty and with a long face, rather than a happy heart – 1 Peter 4:9 tells us to "show hospitality to one another without grumbling".

When we open our homes and invite others into our space (our lives), we actively serve and meet our brothers' and sisters' need for a temporary place to stay. But it's more than that: doesn't the Bible say that "by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35)? By practising hospitality and loving our family in Christ this way, we are witnesses of Jesus – the way He served and gave of Himself because of His great love for us. Opening our hearts and homes to others testifies and points to a God whose own heart (salvation) and home (heaven) is open to all who will receive Him – and is, therefore, the Gospel in action!

Practical Handles

It can be daunting to host or to stay with someone you do not know. Whether you are the host or the guest, remember "the golden rule" – to treat others how you want to be treated (and if you're not sure, ask). On the other hand, do not get stressed out about not being the "perfect" host or guest – this is not a performance, but doing life (and family) together.

To further help you, I have prepared a PDF with more **practical tips for hosts and guests** that you can read and download to reference. There are also a few other great write-ups by some of the Four12 family that you may enjoy reading and find helpful: **Be My Guest** by Pamela Marais, **Mi Casa es Su Casa** an interview by Four12 and **The Art of Hospitality in the Age of Isolation** an article by Michael d'Offay.

Ultimately, hosting is about having an open heart and open home – being grateful for the gifts (of a roof over our heads, food in the fridge, other church families who can share in the joy and

privilege of contributing what they have) that He has given us, and sharing those with our brothers and sisters in Christ! Acts 20:35 tells us that “it is more blessed to give than receive”. Why not take God at His Word, be a blessing, and expect His bountiful blessing in return?