

# Discipleship Moment

**Text: Acts 8:26-40**

In college, I had the pleasure of interning as a pastoral intern for a church in McPherson, KS (the town our alma mater is in). If you know anything about central Kansas, which I don't expect you to, you know that one particular ethnic tradition dominates: German Mennonites. Newton, KS (about 35 miles south of McPherson) is the world headquarters for at least two Mennonite denominations. Mennonites of all stripes lived there: bonnet and dress wearing "Old Order" Mennonites to "Evangelical" Mennonites, who don't dress any different than any of us.

The church I interned at was a Mennonite church. I had never studied Mennonites: their history, church polity, or theology. But, as I began my work there, I noticed something strange about these people: they always invited us to eat at their homes. A weekend service didn't go by without a handful of families inviting us to have meals at their homes. As I learned more about the Mennonite tradition, I found out that this was part of their DNA. Mennonites were often, in Europe, persecuted and exiled. So when they came to the States and found more religious freedom, they made it a habit to open their homes to anyone who was in need. This is what this group of people realized: *the home is a tool for the Kingdom of God.*

Needless to say, we didn't join the Mennonite church (for various reasons), but Sara and I often reflect on our time at this Mennonite church and the hospitality of every member and family there. These Mennonites called this hospitality "Radical Hospitality." Which, to them, was a willingness to host anyone and everyone who has need, no matter how much it hurts or how dangerous it is.

In our text on Sunday, we see an act of Radical Hospitality. Philip, despite the fear and discomfort, decided to start a relationship with an Ethiopian eunuch. These two couldn't have been more different, but Philip made a connection with the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip trusted that by being kind and curious, he could welcome the Ethiopian eunuch into the Kingdom of God. These kinds of connections, connections with people very different from us, are acts of hospitality. We are welcoming people different from us into our lives. We are putting our well-being and our comfort on the shelf in order for someone else to feel welcomed.

I think the greatest gift of the Mennonite tradition is Radical Hospitality. Sara and I carry this with us: our home is a tool for the Kingdom. Practice hospitality in your life this week: in your conversations, your work, and your home.

## Going Deeper

*Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once.*

1. What does it feel like when you visit someone (a family member or friend) who is great at hospitality?
2. What makes hospitality "good?" Have you experienced poor hospitality? Contrast that with your experiences of good hospitality.
3. When was the last time you had someone at your home for dinner? In Luke 14:13, Jesus says when we host a party (or "feast") we should invite the poor, the cripple, and the ones who cannot pay us back or host us. When was the last time you did this? Have you ever? Why not?
4. One of the main concerns with hosting people is that it is stressful: to clean up, to prepare a big meal, etc. One of the aspects of Radical Hospitality is not going out of our way to put on a beautiful dinner party, but simply inviting people along to do the things you are already doing with you. Make a list of some of the things you can invite others to do with you. Weekday family meals? Sporting events? Other celebrations?
5. If you are part of a family, how many meals a week do you have as a family? How many meals per week do you have with others? How many meals a week do you eat out?
6. Put it all together: write a list of ideas you have to practice hospitality in 2019.