

Development Phase Selected: Maturing

You selected the phrase, "I intentionally seek to build relationships with unchurched people in order to share God's love."

Congratulations! This is what a mature disciple of Jesus Christ does in the arena of hospitality (Incarnational Hospitality). There are three very significant dimensions to this phase of development:

- **Intentionality:** This is not a random behavior for you. You look for opportunities to build relationships.
- **Unchurched people:** The purpose of the Church is to make disciples. This means that we must build relationships with those who are not yet disciples.
- **God's love:** This relationship is not about our church or us. The relationship is based around the intentional sharing of God's love so that they may respond to it.

Ultimately, hospitality is not about us. Of course, it is essential that we experience God's hospitality for ourselves, but our calling is to share that hospitality with those who have not yet experienced it. That is the beginning point in a journey of discipleship.

This maturing phase of discipleship is where we live out the great commission given to us by Jesus: "Go . . . and make disciples."

This does not have to be as intimidating as it sometimes sounds. The Greek version of this text literally reads, "As you go . . . make disciples." This is important to grasp. Jesus didn't seem to be too focused on programs for witnessing. This text is not written in the imperative (another rule to follow) but as an invitation for how to do life. "As you go . . ." invites us to pay attention to the possibilities for building relationships and being Jesus in someone's life-anyone's life. This includes people you work with, people you play with, the server at your favorite restaurant and the cashier at the cleaners where you drop off your clothes.

What's Next?

It might be tempting to kick back and relax now that you have reached this pinnacle of hospitality.

We would encourage you not to do this. You are part of a very small percentage of disciples who are practicing this level of hospitality. The Church needs you to be faithful in living out this practice. People need you to be a faithful witness.

In addition, because of the experience you bring to the table, you are in a unique position to help others develop this level of hospitality in their own journeys. For example:

- You might consider serving as a mentor for someone who has not reached this level of maturity. This could be as simple as inviting them to join you as you share the love of God with an unchurched friend or colleague.
- You could lead a class helping others understand the value and the methods of sharing God's love with unchurched persons.
- You could serve in worship as a sponsor for new persons entering into the life of your congregation in order to help them discover their place in your community of faith.

Suggested Resources

If you want to read about the relationship God offers to you, we suggest the following resources:

Discipleship Coaching Training (available through Excellence in Ministry Coaching, www.emc3coaching.com)

Faith Coaching by Chad Hall, Bill Copper, Kathryn McElveen

Christian Mentoring by Thomas Bandy