



Biblical Hospitality and the Formation of Contextual Church Communities in Indonesia

Yoas Tanugraha^{1*}, Benny Sinaga²

¹Sekolah Tinggi Theologi IKAT Jakarta

²Sekolah Tinggi Theologi HKBP Pematangsiantar

Corresponding Author: Yoas Tanugraha adaituu2025@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Hospitality, Biblical Theology, Church, Faith Community, Contextualization

Received : 14, January

Revised : 16, March

Accepted : 18, May

©2026 Tanugraha, Sinaga: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

This study aims to construct a theological understanding of hospitality within the unity of the Old and New Testaments and to formulate a contextual model of church practice for Indonesia. The background of this study is the decline of hospitality in the modern church, which tends to shift from deep relationships to formal and functional practices. The method used is descriptive-analytical qualitative research employing biblical theology, contextual hermeneutics, and socio-historical approaches. The texts analyzed include Genesis 18 and Leviticus 19:33–34 (Old Testament), as well as Acts 16:13–40, Romans 12:13, and Hebrews 13:2 (New Testament). The research findings indicate that in the Old Testament, hospitality is a response of faith to God and an expression of covenantal relationship, whereas in the New Testament, hospitality evolves into a means of participation in God's mission through personal and community-based relationships centered on the home.

INTRODUCTION

The church today is facing quite a serious shift. The pattern of relationships that used to be characterized by personal closeness and openness between fellow congregations, is now slowly being replaced by a more administrative way of working, full of programs, targets, and structures (Anugrah, 2025). Interactions between congregations often occur only within formal boundaries: meetings, worship, committees, without really touching the deeper layers of our common life as a people.

This shift has also eroded hospitality practices. In the biblical tradition, hospitality is not just a gesture of manners, it is an act of faith, a way for people to express their obedience to God through openness to others (Stallman, 2013). Yet in the daily life of the church, hospitality often shrinks into ceremonial routines: smiles at the entrance, drinks after services, small talk in the hallway. Hospitality loses its soul, no longer contains the risk or courage to truly open up to the "other" (Febriana, 2018).

This symptom is evident in many Indonesian churches, especially in big cities, where individualistic lifestyles and reliance on digital communication have eroded the quality of relationships within the community (Wulur, 2024). Many congregations come every week, sit down, listen, and then go home, without any more meaningful involvement. What is more worrying is the tendency to find it difficult to accept "new people", both newcomers and those from different backgrounds. Churches that are supposed to be the most open space often display exclusivity that their own citizens are not aware of (Kurniawan, 2024).

The Bible speaks clearly about this. Genesis 18:1–8 describes Abraham welcoming three strangers with hospitality, and it turned out to be a theophany, a real encounter with God. Hospitality here is not just about ethics; it is an expression of obedience. The Law also commanded Israel to love the strangers in their midst, remembering that they themselves had been strangers in Egypt, a historical experience that should be a source of empathy. In the New Testament, this meaning develops even further. The story of Lydia in Acts 16:15 shows how an open house became a center of fellowship and service. Hospitality is not a side activity, it is a mechanism for community formation, the foundation on which the church first took root (Tembang, 2024).

This study comes in response to many studies on hospitality that stop at textual descriptions without establishing a complete theological synthesis, and almost no one has formulated a concrete model of practice for the Indonesian church. This study aims to build an integrated theological understanding of hospitality from the Old Testament to the New Testament, analyze how hospitality shapes the community of God's people, and formulate a model that is applicable to the Indonesian church today so that it can serve as a mirror for the church to re-examine its identity, and encourage hospitality to be lived as a real practice of faith, not just a concept stored in the literature (Pandie et al., 2026).

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical nature. This choice is based on the focus of a study that does not aim to process numerical data, but rather to understand the meaning of hospitality in biblical texts and its relevance to the life of the church today (Wibowo et al., 2024). A descriptive approach is used to map how hospitality appears in biblical texts, while analysis is done to interpret and relate the meaning more deeply. Three approaches are used in an integrated manner. First, biblical theology, which sees hospitality as a theme that evolves from the Old Testament to the New Testament on an ongoing basis. Second, contextual hermeneutics, which places the text in dialogue with the current situation of the Indonesian church, so that its meaning does not stop at the context of the past. Third, a socio-historical approach, which helps to understand the practice of hospitality in the ancient world so that the interpretation is not separated from the original context. The texts analyzed were purposively selected, namely Genesis 18 and Leviticus 19:33–34 from the Old Testament, as well as Acts 16:13–40, Romans 12:13, and Hebrews 13:2 from the New Testament. The analysis is carried out through three stages: narrative reading to understand the dynamics of the text, theological synthesis to unite the findings of OT and NT, and contextualization into the life of the Indonesian church today.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hospitality as a Theological Action in the Old Testament

In the category of social ethics or norms of association between people. It needs to be read as an action that is born from and leads to a covenant relationship between Allah and His people (Stallman, 2013). Accepting strangers is not a neutral act; Behind it is stored a spiritual dimension that connects the practice of daily life with the knowledge of a loving, just, and open God.

1. Strangers as *the Locus* of God's Presence

The Old Testament places the stranger (*ger*) not just as a party to be pitied, but as a space where God's presence can be mediated. In other words, the stranger is the locus, the point of place where the divine may be present in real life.

The narrative of Genesis 18 becomes the clearest text for this. When three unknown men approached Abraham's camp at Mamre, there was no sign identifying them as divine representations. But Abraham reacted extraordinarily: he ran to meet him, bowed, and immediately served the best food (Gen. 18:2–8). It was not because he knew who they were, but because he knew it. The theological essence of speaking of encounters with God occurs not through rituals or mystical experiences, but through the act of welcoming strangers. Hebrews 13:2 echoes it that there are people who entertain angels without realizing it (Lewis, 2018). Openness to foreigners holds serious theological possibilities.

Also noteworthy is that *Ger's* social position in ancient Israeli society was that of an economically and legally and socially vulnerable individual. But it is precisely the most marginalized groups that are placed as the parties most in need of an inverted logic: the presence of God is often mediated through the weakest. Rejecting foreigners, thus, is not just a social failure, it is a theological failure. Closing the door to the unknown means closing the possibility of the encounter with Allah itself (Anugrah, 2025).

2. Hospitality as a *Covenantal Order*

Beyond the dimension of divine encounter, hospitality in the Old Testament was born out of the covenant relationship itself. Leviticus 19:33–34 emphatically commands: treat strangers as Israelites themselves, love as yourself with a reminder, "You yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Stallman, 2013).

This shows that moral commands do not float in abstract space; it is rooted in the concrete experience of the people with God. Israel knows what it's like to be alienated and helpless. Since God has delivered them from that situation, they are called to reflect on that deliverance in the way they treat others, especially those in the same vulnerable position.

Hospitality, too, is a form of *imitatio Dei*, imitating the character of God in everyday life. This is reinforced in Deuteronomy 10:18–19 which says that God himself "loves strangers" by giving them food and clothing. If the character of Allah is such, then the people who walk in covenant with Him cannot be indifferent to strangers (Tembang, 2024).

The implications touch social justice. In the Old Testament, foreigners were referred to side by side with widows and orphans, three groups that were consistently identified as the most vulnerable to exploitation and injustice. All three often appear in one breath, suggesting that hospitality is not only about personal hospitality, but also about how communities build structures that protect the most vulnerable (La'bi et al., 2023). Within the framework of this agreement, hospitality is not an option. It is an obligation of faith. Ignoring it is not just a matter of being disrespectful or indifferent, it is seen as a violation of God's will, something that in various prophetic texts is associated with serious consequences.

3. Home as a Divine Meeting Room

In an ancient society that did not know inns as we know them today, the house was the center of social, economic, and even religious life. Genesis 18 becomes the key text. Abraham's tabernacle, which was physically simple, turned out to be the place where God made a promise about Isaac's birth. The domestic space turned into a theophany space. God reveals Himself not in the temple or on a holy mountain, but in the tabernacle of man who opens the door to unknown guests (Lewis, 2018).

This is not the only example in the Old Testament. Important encounters between man and God often take place precisely in ordinary living spaces, not just in the context of official religious rituals. This hints at something quite challenging for theology: the line between the sacred and the profane is not as rigid as we imagine. God can be present anywhere, including at the dining table and living room, as long as people are open to welcoming Him (Maria, 2021).

More than that, opening a home to strangers is an act that reflects the identity of the community. He shares his protection, resources, and life. Hospitality, in this sense, is the liturgy of life. Faith is expressed not only in scheduled rituals. However, faith is expressed in simple actions such as welcoming guests, providing food, and providing shelter that shows the practice of living and faith uniting without barriers (Kurniawan, 2024).

Hospitality as a Means of Mission in the New Testament

If in the Old Testament hospitality is primarily read as an expression of obedience within the framework of the covenant, then the New Testament brings a new dimension that cannot be ignored. Here, hospitality moves beyond ethical obligations, it transforms into an active mission tool, a medium in which the Gospel is not just preached verbally, but is experienced in real life in human relationships (Tembang, 2024). This shift is not just an expansion of concepts; it is a theological development that reflects the way God works through an open and welcoming community of believers (Maria, 2021).

Hospitality as a Gospel Medium

In the New Testament, hospitality is not just a good deed, but a concrete vessel for the gospel to move and take root. Romans 12:13 advises to "give a ride to the saints" and actively show hospitality. Hebrews 13:2 reminds us not to forget to welcome strangers, for thus some have unwittingly entertained angels. These two texts are not talking about complementary activities in the life of faith, but are describing the basic ethos of the Christian community (Tembang, 2024).

The context of the early church is helpful to understand why hospitality has such a central role. In the first century, there were no established and structured church buildings or institutions, only a network of interconnected houses, where believers gathered, prayed, ate together, and strengthened each other (Kurniawan, 2024). In such conditions, opening the door of the house is the most concrete act of mission that a person can do. Without hospitality, there is no room for the gospel to move.

1. The gospel is rarely preached in a formal, sterile public lecture format. It circulates through conversations at the dinner table, through interactions that occur when one lives in another person's home, through the living testimony seen in everyday habits and values. Hospitality, in this context, is the infrastructure of the mission. It provides a space where the gospel is not only heard but also seen to be lived (La'bi et al., 2023).
2. In the Gospel narrative, Jesus himself is often present at the dinner table, eating with tax collectors, welcoming sinful women, opening space for those who are considered unworthy of acceptance by society. The hospitality of the early church, thus, was a continuation of Jesus' pattern of ministry. When the church opens their homes, they are continuing the movement started by Christ, a movement of acceptance and openness that is at its core a participation in God's work of salvation (Lewis, 2018).

Personal Relations as the Entrance to the Community of Faith

The early church grew not primarily through a program of mass evangelization. The most organic growth occurs through a network of personal relationships, people know people, family knows family, and the house opens itself to other houses. And hospitality is the thread that knits that tissue (Yahya et al., 2022).

The stories in the Acts of the Apostles show a pattern of repentance that is not only repeated in squares and synagogues; It often starts from personal meetings, from conversations that are intertwined in the intimacy of a house. When a person is brought into the hospitality space, what happens is not only the fulfillment of physical needs, he or she is invited to share life (Pandie et al., 2026).

This process is important because faith, in the New Testament sense, is not something that can be absorbed through instruction. It needs to be seen, experienced, and felt in a real community. When a new acquaintance with the gospel enters an open house, he or she witnesses with his own eyes how gospel values are embodied in the way one treats his or her guests, in the way the family talks to one another, in the way they face adversity. Hospitality, in this sense, is the most effective catechism, not the one written in books, but the one written in life (Maria et al., 2023). More than that, the relationships born of hospitality create a strong bond. Early church communities were not just a collection of individuals who met occasionally. They are a fellowship that knows each other deeply, bears each other's burdens, and shares resources. The *koinonia* they have is not a theological slogan, it is born out of real practice, and hospitality is one of its most important foundations.

Lydia and the Prison Chief: Home as a Church Base

In the New Testament, there is an interesting story about hospitality. Acts 16:13–40 features two characters, Lydia and the jailer in Philippi. The story is raised from a different angle of how hospitality becomes a bridge between the acceptance of the Gospel and the formation of a community of faith (Maria, 2021).

Lydia is introduced as a seller of purple cloth from Thyatira, a God-fearing man (Acts 16:14). When Paul and his companions preached the gospel by the river where people usually prayed, the Lord opened Lydia's heart to listen and respond. His response did not stop at the confession of faith; he immediately moved to action. He urged Paul and his entourage to stay in his house (Acts 16:15). The word "urgent" in this text is not an expression of politeness; it reflects sincere firmness and sincerity. Lydia did not just offer a place to stay overnight, she opened her entire household as a base for service (Kurniawan, 2024).

The consequences are immediately felt. When Paul and Silas were later released from prison, they returned to Lydia's home, where the brethren had gathered (Acts 16:40). The house has become a church. Not a church in the sense of a building, but a church in its most original sense: a community of believers who live, pray, and strengthen each other together. Lydia's hospitality was the first act that made it possible for all of that to happen. The story of the prison chief offers a different perspective but with the same structure. He repented in dramatic situations, earthquakes, loose bondage, and the testimony of Paul and Silas in the middle of the night (Acts 16:25–30). Once repentant, he immediately washed the wounds of Paul and Silas, took them to his home, and served food (Acts 16:33–34). Hospitality was the first response of his new faith.

His entire family was baptized that very night. The house that used to be the residence of a prison official is now the starting point for the formation of a faith community. Faith is not only accepted individually; it immediately touches a broader social unit and forms a new community. The same pattern repeats: hospitality opens doors, and through those doors a community of faith grows. Both of these cases show something that is not a coincidence in the New Testament. There is a consistent and deliberate pattern: hospitality is the bridge between the preaching of the gospel and the formation of community. Home is a place where the two things meet. The gospel is not only heard there, it begins to be lived together there (Leppan & Tandi, 2023).

Synthesis of Old and New Testament Theology

When the Old Testament and the New Testament are read together in one breath, hospitality emerges not as two separate concepts, but as one common theme but continues to move and develop (Tembang, 2024). Hospitality in the OT and NT are not identical phenomena, but they both speak to the same reality: how God's people express their faith in God through the way they treat others, especially those who come from outside their circle (Stallman, 2013).

From Response to God to Participation in God's Mission

In the Old Testament, hospitality was essentially an act born out of the experience, the concrete experience of Israel with God that had acted first in their history. The commandment to love strangers in Leviticus 19:33–34 does not come in a vacuum. It comes with a reminder: you yourself used to be a stranger in Egypt (Stallman, 2013). Israel is not being asked to behave well because it is polite or beneficial, they are being asked to remember, and from that memory comes action. Hospitality, in this sense, is a faith that moves outward through memory.

Furthermore, Deuteronomy 10:18–19 says that God himself "loves strangers" and provides for their basic needs. This is not just a command that God gives from a distance; He did it himself. So when the Israelites show hospitality, what they are doing is imitating God's character, reflecting in their daily lives what they have seen God do in their history. There is a strong vertical orientation here: the treatment of fellow human beings is a direct extension of the relationship with Allah (Anugrah, 2025).

But when we get into the New Testament, something shifts. Hospitality is no longer just about responding to what God has done, it is a means to what God is doing. Acts 16:13–40 shows this very clearly. When Lydia opened her home to Paul and his entourage, she did more than just welcome guests. He was taking part in the gospel movement. His home became the starting point for the formation of the congregation in Philippi. The jailer who that night washed the wounds of Paul and Silas, provided food, and baptized his entire family, was unconsciously being part of something much bigger than himself (Maria, 2021).

Romans 12:13 and Hebrews 13:2 reinforce this picture. Hospitality in the New Testament is not just a passive act of accepting who comes, there is intentionality in it, there is an awareness that openness to others is part of the way the people participate in the *missio Dei*, God's ongoing mission in the world (Tembang, 2024). This is the most significant leap in the journey of this concept: from a response to God's past to active involvement in God's work that is taking place today.

From Faith Obligation to Mission Strategy

In the Old Testament, the normative character of hospitality was very pronounced. It is part of the law, an obligation to be carried out as a form of obedience to God. The prophetic texts speak loudly of the injustice of strangers, this is not a matter of personal choice that can be ignored, but a serious violation of God's will. There is a real moral pressure behind these commandments.

The New Testament does not remove that dimension of obligation. But it adds a new layer: hospitality becomes a mission tool that is used consciously and strategically. This is very evident in Paul's pattern of ministry. Whenever he arrived in a new city, he relied on a network of people willing to open their homes. Without that hospitality network, the mobility of the mission would not be maintained. Paul didn't just preach and go, he stayed, ate together, lived in other people's homes. From there, relationships are formed, from there the congregation grows (Kurniawan, 2024).

Acts 16 again provides the most concrete illustration. Lydia's house was not just a place to spend the night, it became the center of church activity in Philippi. There the congregation gathers, there the teaching takes place, there the believers strengthen one another. Lydia's hospitality was the first act that made it possible for all of that to happen. Without that openness, there is no physical or relational space for the gospel to take root (Maria et al., 2023).

What is interesting is that this transformation does not remove the liability dimension of the OT. What happened was an expansion, that obligation was now given a new awareness of why it was important: not just because God commanded it, but because through it, people could hear and experience the gospel. The ethical dimension and the missionary dimension merge into one in the hospitality practice of the PB (Pandie et al., 2026).

From Individual Action to Community Foundations

In the Old Testament, hospitality in general was still individual in nature. Abraham welcomed three strangers into his tent, it was the act of a private man, though it had far-reaching consequences. Lot opened his doors to guests who came to Sodom. Other characters in the OT narrative show hospitality in a personal or family capacity. The action is real and meaningful, but its structure has not yet institutionalized as an organized community practice (Lewis, 2018).

The New Testament brought about a pretty dramatic shift in this regard. The early church was born and grew without buildings, without formal institutions, and without an established hierarchy. What exists is a network of houses that are connected to each other through relationships. In Acts, we see the congregation gathering to break bread, pray, and hear teaching, and all of that happening in the private rooms of homes opened by people like Lydia. In Romans 16, Paul greets several congregations gathered in certain homes, a picture of a church that is decentralized and heavily reliant on a network of hospitality (Simorangkir & Siagian, 2026).

In this context, hospitality is no longer just an act of kindness that one does to another. It becomes the structural foundation for living together as a community. Without people willing to open houses, there is no place to gather. With no place to gather, there is no *koinonia*. And without *koinonia*, there is no church in the true sense. Hospitality, in this sense, is not a complement to the life of the church, it is a condition (Leppan & Tandil, 2023).

There is also an ecclesiological dimension that needs to be underlined. A church built on hospitality is one whose identity is shaped by acceptance and openness, not by walls and rules of entry. When a person is welcomed into the house, he is welcomed into life. He saw how believers lived, quarreled, reconciled, and endured with one another. That is what constitutes a lasting faith, not lectures, not programs, but honest and open coexistence (Tuju et al., 2021).

Theological Reconstruction of Hospitality: From the Old Testament to the New Testament

In biblical theology, hospitality emerged and grew gradually from the Old Testament to the New Testament while maintaining the common thread of its meaning (Tembang, 2024). In the Old Testament, hospitality was born out of the Israelites' collective memory of their own experience as God's accepted and saved parties, most evident in the exodus. From that experience arises the obligation to accept strangers, not as a mere social virtue, but as a form of obedience to the covenant God (Stallman, 2013).

Leviticus 19:33–34 expressly commands the people to love strangers among themselves, a commandment that has its roots directly in the covenantal relationship between God and Israel.

Entering the New Testament, the meaning of hospitality shifted substantively. It is no longer merely a response to God's actions in the past, but develops into active involvement in the *missio Dei*, God's ongoing mission (Pandie et al., 2026). Private homes are transforming into centers of congregational activity, while the habit of hosting and eating together becomes the most concrete way to build relationships and spread the gospel. Hospitality thus acquires a new dimension: not only reactive, but missionary and proactive (Kurniawan, 2024).

Another shift that is no less important is the expansion of the subject, from individual actions to community characters. If in the Old Testament figures such as Abraham who personally opened his doors to strangers (Genesis 18:1–8) are exemplary, then in the New Testament hospitality becomes the collective characteristic of the church (Lewis, 2018). The early church lived in a pattern of mutual acceptance and sharing, making the home not just a living space, but an ecclesiological space where the church took root and grew.

Behind all these practices lies a deeper theological meaning: hospitality reflects the character of God Himself. The God of the Bible is the God who receives and provides for His people, so that when people live a life of hospitality, they are actually manifesting the *imago Dei* in real life (Anugrah, 2025). The house becomes a stage, the banquet becomes a symbol of acceptance, and relationships become channels of faith that are lived and inherited. All three emphasized that hospitality is not an accessory to the life of faith, but one of its cores, a bridge that connects relationships with God and relationships with others in an inseparable unity (Maria, 2021).

Hospitality as a Structure for the Formation of a Community of Faith

The biblical findings reveal something ecclesologically interesting: hospitality is not merely a personal act of kindness, but the backbone of the formation of the community of faith itself. The early church was not born out of organizational meetings or constitutional documents, it grew out of relationships nurtured through a willingness to accept others (Acceptance), open the door of the house (Openness), and sit at the table together (Sharing life) (Leppan & Tandi, 2023).

Acts 2:46 describes the church moving from house to house, breaking bread, and living in close fellowship. There is no predominantly organized meeting agenda or program, what exists is a shared life that grows organically. Relationships take precedence over the system. It is in this atmosphere that trust is formed, social distance narrows, and solidarity between members of the congregation strengthens naturally (Tuju et al., 2021).

The home plays a role that goes far beyond its domestic function. In the era of the early church, there was no worship building as we know it today. Private homes became theological spaces, where prayers were offered, the word was heard, and fellowship was lived (Maria et al., 2023). When a person opens his house, he not only provides the floor and roof, but also opens up part of his life to the community. This shows that the church's presence does not depend on the building, but rather on the quality of the relationships among its people.

A banquet is not just a matter of the stomach. It is a space where social barriers collapse and everyone, regardless of background, is accepted as part of the same community. It is at the dinner table that gospel values such as love, equality, and unconditional acceptance take on the most concrete form. Community identity is not formulated in the document, but is experienced together through the habit of sharing food (Yahya et al., 2022).

Theological and Cultural Integration: Hospitality as Cross-Tradition Values

One of the most interesting findings of this study is that hospitality does not belong exclusively to one tradition. It is present, in different forms and motivations, both in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and in the practice of traditional Chinese marriage. All three show patterns that are structurally mirrored each other, even though they rest on different foundations. This is what makes this comparative analysis worthwhile: hospitality turns out to be not just a theological concept, but also a social reality that lives in diverse cultural contexts (La'bi et al., 2023).

The Old Testament places hospitality as a response to faith, an act born of the realization that God Himself had first accepted and saved Israel. Receiving strangers, providing food, providing protection: all these are forms of obedience, not just spontaneous kindness. In the New Testament, this meaning is expanded. Hospitality grows into a way of participating in God's mission (*missio Dei*), a relationship established through hospitality becomes a way for the Gospel to move from one person to another, from one house to the next (Gusha, 2024). Both of these traditions place God as the starting point for all these practices of acceptance.

The Chinese marriage tradition shows a different but no less structured face of hospitality. Sangjit processions, the exchange of gifts, the symbolism of the color red, angpao, and abundant banquets all serve as social mechanisms to build and formalize relationships between families. Hospitality here works as a communal glue, not an expression of faith in God. From these three traditions, four striking structural similarities emerge: first, hospitality always moves in the direction of acceptance of the "other"; second, the banquet is the decisive moment in the formation of relationships; third, the abundance of the dish serves as a language of respect; and fourth, all of these practices are connected to the concept of honor, the success of hosting reflects the dignity of the host (Yahya et al., 2022).

The fundamental difference lies in motivation. The Bible encourages hospitality because of God's character and His work of salvation; Chinese culture encourages it because of the value of social harmony and continuity of kinship. But this is precisely where the study's contribution lies: hospitality can be a productive meeting point between theology and culture, paving the way for the church to theologize in a more contextual way without losing its biblical roots (Pandie et al., 2026).

Hospitality Integration: Biblical Traditions and Marriage Cultural Practices

This research reveals that the value of hospitality is not exclusive to one particular religious tradition, but is also concretely manifested in the cultural practices of the community, including traditional Chinese marriages (Febriana, 2018). Hospitality exists as a universal value that transcends religious and cultural barriers, although it rests on different theological and symbolic foundations. In both the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Chinese tradition, hospitality is manifested through patterns of welcome, communal banquets, homages, and the strengthening of social-communal bonds. This confirms that hospitality is not just an interpersonal act, but a value system that builds community identity while maintaining social harmony (Yahya et al., 2022).

In the Old Testament, hospitality was closely intertwined with the tradition of the banquet. The Genesis 18:1–8 account of Abraham shows that entertaining was always accompanied by the best meal, a warm welcome, and sincere respect. Abraham did not wait for the guests to come to him, but ran to pick them up and immediately prepared a banquet. This pattern proves that hospitality in the Jewish tradition is active, not passive, demanding effort, sacrifice, and a willingness to open up space for others. The structure of Jewish hospitality also includes stages that are in succession: welcome, purification, banquet, conversation, protection, and the provision of travel provisions. Within this framework, eating together is not just about meeting

biological needs, but also a symbol of acceptance and the formation of relationships (Lewis, 2018). Furthermore, the home in the Old Testament tradition served as a sacred space, a place of encounter with God in the context of daily hospitality, as reflected in Genesis 18.

In the New Testament, hospitality developed into the foundation of a community of faith as well as a medium for the proclamation of the Gospel. The story of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11) describes a serious social crisis when the wine runs out in the middle of a feast. In the first-century Mediterranean culture of honor, the lack of food is not just a matter of consumption, but a threat to the dignity of the host family (Gusha, 2024). Jesus' act of turning water into wine is thus twofold: a miracle as well as a restoration of social honor. Meanwhile, Acts 2:46 records that the early congregation gathered from house to house to break bread together, the banquet becoming a symbol of *koinonia*. The story of Lydia in Acts 16:15 reinforces this: after receiving the Gospel, she opened her home to Paul and his associates, turning the domestic space into a missiological space (Maria, 2021).

The Chinese marriage tradition shows a hospitality structure that is no less systematic. The *sangjit* (proposal) procession begins with the handing over of gifts from the male side to the woman's family, not just an economic transaction, but an expression of respect. The color red that dominates the entire series of feasts symbolizes joy and prosperity. The culmination is a communal banquet, where the principle applies that food should not run out, because the expiration of the dish is considered to reflect a lack of respect for the guests (Lewis, 2018). The presence of wine in Chinese wedding banquets also has a symbolic resonance that parallels John 2, both placing the abundance of drink as the guardian of the social dignity of the host.

In synthesis, these three traditions share three structural similarities: hospitality as a relational reception, banquet as a symbol of community formation, and abundance as a marker of honor. The difference lies in the foundation: the biblical tradition is rooted in a theological relationship with God and participation in His mission, while Chinese culture rests more on social harmony and continuity of kinship. These findings open up space for the church to formulate a contextual model of hospitality, drawing from the richness of local culture without relinquishing its theological roots.

Indonesian Contextual Church Hospitality Model

From all the biblical findings and cross-cultural comparisons that have been presented, there is now room to formulate a grounded hospitality model for the church in Indonesia (Kurniawan, 2024). This model stands on four mutually supportive dimensions: relational, communal, cultural, and missiological.

The first dimension, relational hospitality, is born out of real concern. Today's church is often caught up in program routines and institutional busyness, so that it unknowingly loses something most basic: the depth of human relationships (Wulur, 2024). Relational hospitality challenges the church to re-place human beings at the center of a shared life. What is needed is not more events, but more sincere encounters and a space to get to know each other in its entirety (Mariana & Brya, 2024).

The second dimension, home-based communal hospitality, revives the pattern of the early church as described in Acts 2:46, the congregation moving from house to house, sharing food, and living in close fellowship. In the Indonesian context, this can be realized through small groups or cell groups (Leppan & Tandi, 2023). The home creates a much warmer, more open atmosphere than a large church hall, and that's where faith is easier to share honestly and personally.

The third dimension, cultural hospitality, invites the church not to be blind to the cultural richness around it. Indonesia has many strong traditions of hospitality, home openness in Batak culture known for the concept of ramitok stakes, banquet and honor culture in Chinese traditions, and a spirit of kinship in Papuan and Manado cultures (Yahya et al., 2022). These values are not rivals to biblical hospitality, but rather fertile soil in which it can grow contextually (Tuju et al., 2021).

The fourth dimension, missiological hospitality, returns evangelism to its most natural roots: relationships. In the New Testament, the gospel was spread not primarily through speeches in the square, but through the dining table and open doors of the house. In the midst of a pluralistic Indonesian society that is increasingly sensitive to confrontational religious approaches, hospitality offers a different way, presenting the Gospel not only through words, but through the act of receiving, serving, and being present for others (Pandie et al., 2026). These four dimensions together show that hospitality is not an additional program of the church. It is the essence of what makes the church a church (Simorangkir & Siagian, 2026).

CONCLUSION

A search of Old Testament texts reveals that hospitality has three layers of complementary meaning: as a space of encounter with God through the presence of strangers, as a covenant commandment that reflects the receptive and loving character of God, and as a concrete practice embodied in the space of the home, a domestic space that in the Israelite tradition was never completely separate from the sacred. Meanwhile, New Testament texts affirm that hospitality was not a fringe element in the life of the early church, but rather a gospel medium that integrated the message of salvation with the experience of everyday life. A simple home turns out to be the basis for the church to take root and find its form, while the personal relationships born of hospitality become the entrance for a person to know and experience faith.

A reading of the trajectory from the Old Testament to the New Testament results in three simultaneous theological movements: from the response of faith to mission participation, from normative obligation to strategic awareness, and from individual action to the foundation of community. These movements are continuous in development. Integration with cultural practices, particularly Chinese marriage traditions, also reinforces these findings by showing that patterns of hospitality such as banquets, abundance of offerings, and acceptance of the "other" present across traditions, albeit with different motivations and foundations. A fundamental difference remains to be emphasized: biblical hospitality is rooted in God's character and His work of salvation, while cultural hospitality rests more on the value of social harmony and the continuity of kinship.

Hospitality connects the way people relate to God and the way they relate to others, making the two inseparable. The ecclesiological implications are real: the true church does not stand on an organizational structure, but grows out of a relationship imbued with a willingness to accept, open up, and live in concrete communion.

Thus, this study contributes to contextual theological discourse by affirming that hospitality can be a productive intersection between biblical theology and the richness of local cultures. For the church in Indonesia in particular, these findings are not only academically relevant, but also practically challenging: is openness to others still part of the church's identity, or has it become merely a memory of a tradition that has been slowly abandoned?

REFERENCES

- Anugrah, D. (2025, November 26). Hospitalitas: Mandat Ilahi Yang Terabaikan. Diambil Kembali Dari Reformed Center For Religion And Society: <https://www.reformed-crs.org/karya/esai/hospitalitas-mandat-ilahi-yang-terabaikan>.
- Febriana, M. (2018). Hospitalitas: Suatu Kebajikan Yang Terlupakan Di Tengah Maraknya Yang Terlupakan Di Tengah Maraknya. *Jurnal Jurnal Theologia Aletheia*, 20(14), 57-92.
- Gusha, T. H. (2024, Oktober). The Implications Of Honour And Shame In Matthew 5:38-42 And In Unhu Philosophy As A Response To The Political Violence In Zimbabwe. Diambil Kembali Dari Researchgate:
- Kurniawan, R. (2024). Implementasi Teologi Hospitalitas Oleh Gereja Masa Kini Bagi Keberlanjutan Masyarakat Indonesia. *Comserva: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4(5), 1338-1352. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59141/comserva.v4i5.1903>.
- La'bi, D. T., Parura, M., & Mari'pi, Y. (2023). Melihat Sikap Hospitalitas Kristen Berdasarkan Analisis Teologis Lukas 10:25-37 Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Upaya Pencegahan Konflik Agama Di Indonesia. *Voice Of Hami: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 6(1), 15-23. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59830/voh.v6i1.94>.
- Leppan, L., & Tandi, T. A. (2023). Relevansi Sikap Hospitalitas Kristen Dalam Budaya Raputallang Sebagai Upaya Rekonsiliasi Konflik Di Gereja. *Danum Pabelum: Jurnal Teologi Dan Musik Gereja*, 3(1), 102-112. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54170/dp.v3i1.156>.

- Lewis, A. (2018, September 24). The (Unexpected) Hospitality Of God: The Wedding At Cana. Diambil Kembali Dari Pilgrims Plough: <https://Pilgrimsplough.Wordpress.Com/2018/09/24/The-Unexpected-Hospitality-Of-God-The-Wedding-At-Cana>.
- Maria, H. (2021). Implementasi Makna Hospitalitas Kristen Terhadap Pelayan Gereja Dan Anggota Jemaat. *Bonafide: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen*, 2(2), 176-194. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.46558/Bonafide.V2i2.79>.
- Maria, H., Salenda, S., Vivian, O., Batara, F. G., & Pajan, W. D. (2023). Tantangan Dan Peluang Praktek Hospitalitas Kristen Di Era Adaptasi Kebiasaan Baru (AkB). *Kharisma: Jurnal Ilmiah Teologi*, 4(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54553/Kharisma.V4i1.118>.
- Mariana, M., & Brya, H. A. (2024). Relevansi Hospitalitas Gereja Terhadap Upaya Pencegahan Kasus Bunuh Diri. *Masokan: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan*, 4(1), 64-76. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.34307/Misp.V4i1.127>.
- Pandie, R. D., Mbura, M. A., Feoh, F. A., Romika, & Ndun, A. J. (2026). Hospitalitas, Alteritas Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen Interkultural. *Shakan: Jurnal Teologi, Konseling, Dan Pendidikan Kristen*, 1(1), 50-64.
- Simorangkir, G., & Siagian, R. J. (2026). Eksistensi Gereja Sebagai Tubuh Kristus Di Era Globalisasi. *Jurnal Iso: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik, Dan Humaniora*, 6(1), 14. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.53697/Iso.V6i1.3188>.
- Stallman, B. (2013, Mei 28). Siapakah Sesamaku Manusia? (Imamat 19:33-34). Diambil Kembali Dari Theology Of Work Project: <https://www.teologikerja.org/perjanjian-lama/kitab-imamat-dan-kerja/hukum-kekudusan-imamat-17-27/siapakah-sesamaku-manusia-imamat-1933-34>.
- Tembang, S. (2024). Memaknai Hospitalitas Kristen Berdasarkan Roma 12: 17-21 Dalam Mewujudkan Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia. *Predica Verbum: Jurnal Teologi Dan Misi*, 4(2), 160-177. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.51591/Predicaverbum.V4i2.111>.
- Tuju, S., Siahaan, H. E., Ayok, M., Siagian, F., & Sampaleng, D. (2021). Hospitalitas Pendidikan Kristiani Dalam Masyarakat Majemuk. *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup*, 3(2), 344-355.
- Wibowo, G., Akin, G. G., & Dian S., M. B. (2024). Pengantar Metode Kualitatif Dalam Ilmu Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen. Cv. Mega Press Nusantara.

Wulur, H. G. (2024). Relevansi Gereja: Mendorong Pertumbuhan Spiritualitas Generasi Z Di Tengah Budaya Individualisme. *Jurnal Apokalupsis*, 15(1), 69-87. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.52849/apokalupsis.V15i1.102>.

Yahya, Y., Baeduri, I., & Najma, A. (2022). Hospitalitas Kristen Sebagai Landasan Relasi Mayoritas-Minoritas Di Desa Segaran, Kecamatan Wates, Kediri. *Societas Dei: Jurnal Agama Dan Masyarakat*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33550/sd.V9i2.332>.