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Book Review: The Hospitable Leader: Creating Environments where People and Dreams Can Flourish by Terry A. Smith

Harvey Mitchell Jr.
Biola University, hvm_1979@live.com

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BOOK REVIEW

The Hospitable Leader: Creating Environments where People and Dreams Can Flourish.

By Smith, Terry A.
Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2018.
230pp.
US\$17.99.

Reviewed by Harvey Mitchell Jr. who received his B.A. in Pastoral Ministries from Central Bible College in Springfield, MO., MDiv. from Fresno Pacific University in Fresno, CA., and is currently a DMin. student at Biola University. He has served in numerous positions at churches in California and Missouri including two lead pastor positions. He currently lives in Inner City St Louis with his wife Karissa.

Terry A. Smith has served as lead pastor of The Life Christian Church in the New York City metropolitan area for twenty-seven years. TLCC is a nondenominational faith community known for its vibrant diversity and robust leadership culture, with people from more than 132 distinct communities in the New York metro area participating in the life of the church. He holds a bachelor's degree in Organizational Management (Church Studies) and an MA in Organizational Leadership.

Smith says "Hospitable leaders view life and leadership through the lens of hospitality. They aspire to create environments of welcome where moral leadership can be exercised in all its permutations. These

environments can be physical, even literal feasts perhaps, but even more they are spiritual, attitudinal, and communicative.” (20) The author then lays out the outline for the book where he categorizes the 5 ways to extend hospitality: 1. Welcome Home, 2. Welcome Strangers, 3. Welcome Dreams, 4. Welcome Communication, and 5. Welcome Feasts (22, 23).

The author tells us hospitable leaders care not just about their dreams but also the dreams of those they lead. When a leader begins to realize that their success is directly connected to the success of those that follow them, the leader begins to take interest in the passion and dreams of those they lead. This adds to the leader’s dreams and passion. For people to believe that the leader cares about them and their dreams, the leader must begin to welcome them home (to a place) and begin to warm their hearts like the warmth of home (45). Once someone feels at home, they will begin to follow at a higher level. The author suggests, “practicing leadership with a hospitality mindset is the right way—the moral way—to lead people. It is the community with purpose, fellowship with outcomes, hospitality with results.” (39)

Part of helping people feel at home is learning to welcome the stranger. The author’s working definition of a stranger is, “anyone who seems strange to you. Or to whom you may seem strange.” (63) Only when people have been accepted and given a place and a seat at the table can we really learn and grow from our shared experiences and interactions.

We then begin to create an environment where people and dreams can flourish: “Hospitable leaders are hospitable to people and to their dreams. We love it when we find ourselves leading people whose heads and hearts are full of dreams.” (94) Part of our calling as hospitable leaders is to help people discover their unique calling and giftings that will begin to help them understand “place” and ultimately discover the God given dreams that were inside of them. As leaders, our job is to call people out to great dreams and then greatly encourage them (126).

The last part is to learn how to enjoy all of life, the struggles as well as the blessings (202). In the last chapter, the author wraps up the idea of the hospitable leader welcoming people home in four things: 1) Be at peace with the fact that happiness is experienced in anticipation. 2) Anticipation opens us to the possibility. 3) Hope moves us to faith—

and when we have faith, possibility becomes reality. 4) Always hope for more (218).

The author's background is in leading a multiculturally diverse congregation where he has lived out the leadership lessons in this book. The only bias by the author was his excitement for his model of leadership that he calls "The Hospitable Leader," It felt like there was overlap between the servant leadership model and the author's model.

People should read Smith's book because even though his model sounds similar to the servant leader model, he does have some new and fresh ideas pertaining to leading diverse groups of people. The weakness of the book is that it could have been more concise. Some of the chapters felt redundant. However, the overall book was great. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in leadership.