

UNREASONABLE HOSPITALITY: THE REMARKABLE POWER OF GIVING PEOPLE MORE THAN THEY EXPECT**Will Guidara (Portfolio)**

My summer reading has taken me down a distinctly culinary route: Butter by Olivia Potts, Eat Sleep Repeat by Nigella Lawson, My Last Supper by Jay Rayner and Unreasonable Hospitality by Will Guidara. This last book ended up being one of those that was an easy and enjoyable read, but also thought-provoking, and with some leadership gems between its pages.

In essence, the book charts the rise of high-end New York 3* Michelin restaurant, Eleven Madison Park to, becoming the finest restaurant in the world. Guidara, together with chef Daniel Humm, achieved the goal first dreamt about and scribbled on the back of a cocktail napkin in the space of 11 years. He learnt some leadership along the way.

I loved the strap line of this book 'The remarkable power of giving people more than they expect'. It speaks to me of grace. I know what it is to be amazed by grace, and this is a quality that I want to exemplify in my leading. One of my favourite things in church leadership was when a visitor would comment that they received more than they had expected.

Guidara wanted to elevate the dining room experience to one that embodied connection and graciousness, and he was also intent on ensuring that his team were recipients and conveyers of the same qualities. He spent time intentionally changing the culture, step-by-step, meeting-by-meeting, in every interaction, celebrating wins, humble in failure.

As far as I know, Will Guidara is not a Christian, but he describes principles of leadership and hospitality that are rooted in a desire to bless others, and could be summed up as 'going the extra mile'.

He built a team with strong foundations of trust and invests in them. The restaurant business is intense and competitive and can be one in which staff retention is difficult, but the culture that Will and Daniel built together was so precious that their team were committed and loyal. They were both in their 20s during EMPs rise to success, and many of their team were young and inexperienced, but they were passionate. Will gave them opportunities to take ownership of significant areas of

responsibility and they thrived when released into their gifting.

He also charts the tough times – the times when the existence of EMP was threatened by the financial crash. Will is intuitively adaptive in his leadership, reinventing the offering at EMP whilst being savvy about savings that could be made without impacting customer experience.

I would caution against cynicism when reading this book. Obviously the author is describing a different world from the one most of us inhabit, where a meal costs hundreds of dollars. He is describing hospitality that is only extended to a tiny fraction of the world's population. He is looking to grow a business. But don't let that stop you imagining what unreasonable hospitality could look like in our churches.

What if we became known as the most hospitable people on earth, embodying connection and grace to all that we meet? What if we went the extra mile in our welcome and extended it to all? Jesus was unreasonable in how and who he loved, and I want to be too.