GUIDE · UBUNTU

A guide for people who hold the Ubuntu ethic of shared humanity, across many faiths and none, mostly in Southern Africa.

Ubuntu is a philosophy and ethic, not a single religion, and it is held by Christians, Muslims, followers of African traditional religions, and others. Its central saying, often rendered "a person is a person through other people," treats our humanity as something we practice toward others, including guests and strangers, through hospitality, generosity, and gentleness. Ubuntu does not describe life as a test set by a higher intelligence, though many who hold it do see ethics as joined to a spiritual world, and the idea that character is shown in how we treat others is already at home in it.



Five things to do this week

- [ ] **Greet everyone you meet properly**
  Stop, make eye contact, and ask after the person and their family before any business. Greeting well is a first act of recognizing someone's humanity.

- [ ] **Offer a stranger food or drink**
  Share a meal, a cup of tea, or a seat with someone who is not expecting it. Hospitality to guests is one of the qualities scholars name in Ubuntu.

- [ ] **Give without telling anyone**
  Quietly cover a small cost for a neighbor or help with a task and let it go unmentioned. Generosity here is measured by the relationship, not the credit.

- [ ] **Listen before you judge**
  When someone is in conflict or in the wrong, hear their account fully. Ubuntu is often invoked in reconciliation, where the aim is to restore a person to the community.

- [ ] **Ask who is missing from your circle**
  Name one person who is lonely or left out, and reach out to them this week with a call or a visit.

Questions to bring to your own teacher

- How did my grandparents' and elders' generation treat a stranger who came to the door, and what did they say it meant?

- When is a person's humanity damaged, and what does our community expect of us toward someone who has done wrong?
- How does our faith or family tradition connect Ubuntu to our duties toward God, the ancestors, and the living?

What this guide is not claiming. Scholars differ on how to define Ubuntu, how old its modern philosophical form is, and whether it has been used as a political slogan, so this guide offers one cluster of themes, not a definition. It does not claim that Ubuntu teaches life is a test, and the website's idea is not Ubuntu's own. I am not a scholar of your tradition, and no tradition or its leaders have endorsed this site. Ask your own teachers and community what these passages mean to them.

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A free message about how we treat each other. Nothing to buy, nothing to join. One person’s hypothesis, not advice. Woodcut images were made with AI tools; the words are Keith Adler’s. Share freely.