

Hospitality

Detailed Outline

I. Introduction

A. Personal examples of hospitality (or a lack of it)

1. In a letter to newspaper columnist Ann Landers, a man described how he had visited 190 churches. In the vast majority of them, no one talked to him except to ask him to move his legs, or something similar. He concluded that churches are generally not friendly.
2. My wife and I, on our honeymoon, visited a very small church we had never been to before. A young couple invited us for an afternoon at their lake home.

B. Biblical examples

1. This reminds me of Abraham, the man of faith who was also a man of hospitality. He hosted and fed angels (Gen. 18).
2. Think of the Shunnamite woman preparing a room for Elisha.
3. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus frequently hosted Jesus.
4. A personal favorite of mine is in Luke 24, two disciples on the road to Emmaus after the crucifixion but before knowing of the resurrection.
 - a) Intimate fellowship around a meal where the Lord chose to reveal himself to them, to their surprise and ultimate delight.
 - b) The warmth of fellowship turned to a burning in their hearts.
 - c) These weary, downcast hosts suddenly became energetic servants!

C. A requirement for elders

1. Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus both list hospitality as a qualifying characteristic for an elder (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8).
2. This shouldn't surprise us since hospitality is commanded all Christians.

II. Meaning of "Hospitality"

A. The word for hospitality, "philoxenios," occurs six times in Scripture.

1. "Philos" means brotherly or compassionate love.
2. "Zenos" means stranger.
3. So hospitality refers to the practice of loving strangers.

B. In New Testament times, the word often referred to inviting people for meal or lodging.

1. But, at heart it is not just entertaining friends.

2. It is reaching out to those outside of your normal circle of friendship, inviting them into your world, sharing your lives with them.
- C. In Spanish there is a phrase for hospitality, “Mi casa su casa,” or “My house is your house.”**
- D. In Bible days, travel was difficult, and inns were dangerous. By receiving travelers on their way, Christians could show practical love to one another.**

III. All Christians Should Practice Hospitality.

A. Outward workings of the Christ-committed life

¹ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship . . . ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. (Rom. 12:1, 13 NASB)

B. Peter stressed even during the trials of life, hospitality is a priority.

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. (1 Peter 4:8–9)

C. The writer of Hebrews speaks of the importance of hospitality.

1. He wrote of the great faith of many (11 people are mentioned), running the race of endurance with eyes fixed on Jesus.

2. Then he turns to love and makes the startling statement:

Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Heb. 13:1–2)

3. Readers were being pressured to turn back to the old ways of law.

4. In light of this, Christians should fan the flames of love, that’s Hebrews 13:1, by showing hospitality, not partial, open even to strangers—even during times of persecution.

5. In the end, you might even entertain angels without knowing it!

[The overseer must be] . . . hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled . . . (Titus 1:8)

IV. A Practical Aspect of Shepherding

- A. Venue – The best place is in your home. However, consider dinner in a restaurant, or a fast food restaurant with a kids’ play area can be a creative way to show love to families.
- B. Do hospitality as a joint ministry with your spouse.
- C. Plan and pray, make a list well ahead of time. Match people: new people with an older couple, visitors with long-standing members.
- D. Divide up the congregation among the elders. Each elder should show hospitality.

- E. Keep it simple. Being too elaborate could scare people away. Also it may set a wrong example for others that hospitality requires lavishness.
- F. Ask about food allergies.
- G. Set priorities. Don't just reach people you are comfortable with. Invite newcomers, single people, down-and-outers, seniors.
- H. Encourage spiritual conversation, but don't force it.
 1. Three general questions that are helpful:
 - a) Let me ask, how is your spiritual walk doing?
 - b) How can I pray for you?
 - c) Do you have any questions for the elders, or anything we need to be aware of?
 2. Even without a specific spiritual conversation, hospitality can be simply a caring way to show love to others—so don't try to force a long spiritual conversation. Simply give openings and follow the Lord's leading.

V. Conclusion

- A. Hospitality can cost very little time or money.
- B. Don't let either pickiness or lavishness keep you from practicing hospitality.
- C. The effort is relatively little compared to the benefits when people feel like you have shared your life with them.
- D. You may in time discover that you have entertained angels.
- E. But when we invite people into our homes/lives, they bring their mess. This ratchets up what it means to love people more than we love things.
- F. Additional benefits of hospitality
 1. Your private home life is opened; people can see you in your environment. In showing hospitality you open yourself up to people seeing you and your family as you are.
 2. It is a powerful demonstration of humble love.
 3. It provides connectedness in our digitally impersonal, disconnected society, providing flesh-and-blood togetherness, that encourages a depth of sharing.
 4. In your home, interaction can be more relaxing than at a Sunday morning service.
 5. As a shepherd you get to know the sheep, the people in your congregation, better. Jesus said, "I know my sheep" (John 10:17).
 6. Unrushed and relaxed, people may open up about spiritual struggles.
 7. Hospitality lets people know you care, which may lead to their feeling comfortable in approaching you in the future about a need they may have.