

Hospitality and Prayer

Detailed Outline

Part 5 of 5

“He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded and guided them with his skillful hand.” (Psalm 78:70–72 ESV)

V. An Elder Must Be Hospitable

A. Use your home for the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. In our hyper-busy society, hospitality is almost a forgotten ministry. This is an outright disobedience to the clear commands of Scripture.
2. The commands in scripture about hospitality are just that: commands!
“We are missing a valuable jewel in the crown of the Christian life.” – Alexander Strauch
3. Hospitality is closely associated with encouragement. It is almost always found in the context of love.

B. Scripture

“Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show [or pursue] hospitality.” (Rom. 12:13)

“Show hospitality [or practice] to one another without grumbling.” (1 Peter 4:8–9)

“Do not neglect to show [or practice] hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Heb. 13:2)

Elders, “. . . [be] hospitable . . .” (Titus 1:8)

C. Shepherding work is selfless work. There is much sacrificing in caring for God’s people in a spiritual way.

“For I have no one like him [i.e. Timothy], who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 2:20–21)

D. Hospitality is hard word, but it reaches people—they respond to love.

1. It is a tool for building the church and helping people get to know one another.
2. Helps people get out of their Sunday morning “churchianity.”
“Rarely in my travels do I find congregations who are seriously committed to being a genuine community.” – Eugene Peterson, The Unnecessary Pastor
3. We as leaders must lead by example.
4. It is impossible to shepherd people in one or two hours a week. We must open our homes to people.

E. Examples of people to have to your home

1. Students who are away from home
2. The elderly people who live alone
3. People who are new to your church—show them you are a loving community.
4. Keep the crock pot ready so you can invite people spur of the moment on Sunday after meetings.
5. People who are suffering
6. Young people who need help or mentors
7. Missionaries, itinerate ministers—your children will benefit from rubbing shoulders with servants of the Lord.
8. Non-believers—hospitality is a marvelous tool for evangelism.
9. Anyone who has never been in your home, or who are strangers to you

*"I've done more for the kingdom of God around my kitchen table than I ever did in the pulpit."
– Martin Luther*

VI. An Elder Must Be a Prayer Leader

A. An elder must be a leader in the area of prayer

1. We will never arise above our prayer life.
2. Our work as elders is mainly a spiritual work.
3. The most important aspect of our lives is that part that only God sees.
4. Prayer is an elder's highest activity and probably the primary test of his spiritual state.

"Jesus never taught his disciples how to preach, only how to pray. To know how to speak to God is more important than knowing how to speak to man. Not power with men, but power with God is the first thing." – Andrew Murray

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you . . ." (1 Sam. 12:23)

5. A consistent prayer life is one of the most difficult things in our hyper-busy society.

B. Scripture

"Epaphras, who is one of you . . . always struggling on your behalf in his prayers . . . I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you . . ." (Col. 4:12–13)

Paul wrote that he was "praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints." (Eph. 6:18)

"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you . . . we have not ceased to pray for you . . ." (Col. 1:9)

"But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:4)

This is key for a leader, what was a priority for the apostles.

"Prayer does not fit us for the greater work, prayer is the greatest work." – Oswald Chambers

"We must go forward on our knees." – Hudson Taylor

C. A praying elder is a caring elder.

D. Practical suggestions

1. Use your church directory. Divide it into seven days. Pray for certain people on a given day, pray for everyone in your church. This is also a good way to get to know people's names and memorize them.
2. Be aggressive to get the prayer requests from people in the church.
 - a) Let people know the elders are praying for them.
 - b) Put prayer request slips of paper in the pews.
 - c) Seek requests during corporate prayer times.
3. Seek to improve corporate times, make this a dynamic part of your elder ministry
 - a) Have a prepared prayer list.
 - b) Be a prayer facilitator
 - c) Break into small groups. Have two or three elders prayer together.
 - d) Make sure you say "Amen" during prayer.
 - e) Keep prayer short so people don't go to sleep.

"If the veil of the world's machinery were lifted off, how much would we find is done in answer to the prayers of God's children." – Robert Murray McCheyne

E. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of prayer in dealing with God's people.

Closing quote for this series on "People Skills":

"I regularly tell our seminary students that if I happen to visit one of the churches in which one of them serves, I will not ask is the man a good preacher. Rather, first of all, I will ask the secretaries, office staff, janitors and cleaners, what is it like to work for this pastor? I'll ask what kind of man is he? Is he a servant? Is he demanding and harsh? Or is he patient and kind and forbearing as a man in authority. One of our graduates may preach great sermons, but if he is a pain to work for, then you know he will cause major problems in any congregation. Leaders of the church are required by scripture to set an example in the areas of love, kindness, gentleness, patience and forbearance before they are appointed to preach, teach and rule. If we obediently require these character traits and attitudes of our leaders, what will our new community look like." – Professor Jerram Barrs