

HOSPITALITY vs. UNFRIENDLINESS

USING WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO US TO DEMONSTRATE HIS LOVE FOR OTHERS.

“Use hospitality one to another without grudging” I Peter 4:9.

DEFINITION OF HOSPITALITY

The Greek word for *hospitality* is *philoxenos*. *Philos* means “close friend” and *xenos* means “strangers or guests.” Hospitality is a concern for the welfare of those who are in need of food, clothing, or shelter. In Scripture, *philoxeos* could be appropriately translated “caring for strangers as if they were close friends or loved ones.”

WHAT IS HOSPITALITY?

True hospitality is bringing guests into a home in which the character of Christ is being lived out on a daily basis. It begins with an inventory of the physical and spiritual resources we can share with our guests. “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things (Matt. 12:35). A Dutch proverb says, “When there is room in the heart, there is room in the house.” Jesus taught the principle of hospitality by saying, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous,” (Luke 14:12-14, New International Version).

COMMANDS TO DO IT

1. “Use hospitality one to another without grudging” (I Peter 4:9).
2. “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality” (Romans 12:13). Note: The word *given* means “to pursue, to press forward, and to follow after.”
3. “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2).
4. A bishop must be “given to hospitality” and “a lover of hospitality,” because hospitality is to be a ministry of the church. (See I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8.)

THE SCOPE OF HOSPITALITY

Hospitality should be a natural response of those who practice the teachings of Jesus, because it demonstrates the love and light of God. Love and light do not choose their recipients; they are available to all who need them.

“You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect,” (Matthew 5:43-48, New American Standard).

The same message is given in James. “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (James 2:15-16).

GUIDELINES FOR HOSPITALITY

Even though believers are to have the spirit of hospitality and demonstrate hospitality to all who need it, there are specific restrictions about the type of people who are to be brought into a person’s home.

1. A believer is not to eat a meal with another believer who persists in immoral behavior. “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” (I Corinthians 5:11).
2. One who promotes false doctrine is not to be brought into the home. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (III Jn. 10).
3. A believer is not to have fellowship with an openly immoral or angry person. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret” (Ephesians 5:11-12). “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go” (Prov. 22:24).
4. A deceitful person or a liar should not be brought into the home. “He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight” (Ps.101:7).

REWARDS OF HOSPITALITY

Believers are urged to show hospitality to strangers; the one you serve may be far more important than you realize. “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2).

Examples of rewards:

- Abraham showed hospitality to two strangers who were angels. They informed him of the coming judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. This gave Abraham an opportunity to intercede for the people and to save Lot and his daughters (Genesis 18).
- Lot was a man of hospitality and demonstrated it by providing housing and protection to the same two angels who appeared to Abraham. He was aware of the dangers that would face these visitors if they were to stay in the streets overnight. His commitment to their protection was incredible. Through his hospitality, he and his daughters escaped the destruction that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19).
- The widow of Zarephath provided hospitality for Elijah. At his request, she used her last bit of meal and oil to bake him bread. God rewarded her hospitality by providing food for her and her son, along with Elijah, as long as the famine lasted (I Kings 17:8-16).
- The Shunammite woman took initiative and provided a furnished chamber for Elisha on his regular trips through the city. God rewarded her hospitality by giving her a son and later bringing him back to life when he died (II Kings 4:8-37).
- Peter brought Jesus to his home. His mother-in-law was sick, and because of Peter’s hospitality, Jesus raised her up to good health (Matthew 8:14-15).

THE KEY TO DEVELOPING HOSPITALITY

The ultimate reward of showing hospitality is the knowledge that whenever we provide food, clothing, or shelter for one of the least in God's kingdom, we are doing it unto Christ.

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me,'”
(Matthew 25:35-40, New International Version)

HOW HOSPITABLE ARE YOU?

1. Have you purposed to develop a spirit of hospitality and to use your home to demonstrate it?
2. Have you removed clutter in your home that would be a distraction to visitors?
3. Have you taught each member of your family to practice proper etiquette whether or not there are visitors in the home?
4. Have you learned specific questions to ask in order to develop friendships with your guests?
5. When you invite others into your home, is your goal their comfort, or to impress them with the lavishness of your home?
6. Do you have items in your home that illustrate answers to prayer or are testimonies of God's power?
7. During conversation, do you focus on the interests of your guests or on the things you and your family have done?
8. Have you prepared family activities, such as quoting a passage of Scripture or playing music, that would encourage your guests?
9. Do you have a peaceful atmosphere in your home, with appropriate music and a spirit of harmony among family members?
10. Do you have anything in your home that would offend a visitor?