

Biblical Hospitality

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Day One

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word hospitality? Do you picture having friends over for dinner or hosting overnight guests? We are looking at what it means to show hospitality from a biblical perspective.

When I have guests over it usually involves a lot of planning and preparation ahead of time. I'm thinking about menus, making lists, going grocery shopping, planning activities, cleaning the house—all to make guests feel comfortable and welcome. And I enjoy doing it. But is that really what the Apostle Paul is talking about in Romans 12?

Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality (Romans 12:13).

What does it mean to practice hospitality? It's an unusual phrase to me; it stands out to me. The definition of practice means to put something into action—not just think about it. Hospitality comes from the Latin word “hospes” meaning host, visitor, or stranger. It focuses on the treatment of strangers and visitors, not just friends.

This is not the first thing that comes to mind when I think of hospitality. But I think it's what Paul means: actively seek to welcome and care for those you don't already know. The ESV translation puts it this way, *seek to show hospitality*. It's not just about entertaining—it's about looking for people in need and reaching out.

I also like the way The Message paraphrases it: *be inventive in hospitality*. Be creative about showing God's love to others who are in need. There's not just one way to practice hospitality. Use the gifts God has given you to practice hospitality.

Biblical hospitality goes beyond dinner parties. It's about seeing and serving others—especially those who might feel overlooked or alone. Maybe it's inviting someone who needs encouragement or having a homesick student over for a meal.

The Bible doesn't say this is a requirement for only certain people with specific gifts—not just for those of us who like to entertain guests. I think all of us are called to “practice” hospitality. It's not dependent on our own feelings, living conditions, talents, or resources. It's about putting God's love into action in practical and meaningful ways.

Day Two

We are looking at what it means to practice hospitality as the Apostle Paul encourages us to do in Romans 12.

Certainly, part of this is entertaining guests—and usually that's a planned event. But what about the unexpected guests?

In Genesis we read about the patriarch Abraham and the three “visitors.” You can read the entire story in Genesis 18, but let me give you the highlights:

The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant (Genesis 18:1-5).

The story goes on to describe how he and Sarah quickly prepare meat and bread—the finest things they had on hand—and serve their three unexpected guests. They used what they had on hand. This is a great reminder that according to the Bible, being hospitable isn’t about being perfect and having everything in place. It’s more about being open and welcoming and offering to share what I have and focus on the relationship more than the presentation.

Abraham saw his visitors’ needs and met them. Their feet needed washing from the journey. They needed to escape the heat of the day in a shady place. He was eager to show hospitality and acted on it. My guess is they were not planning to host any visitors that day. But Abraham saw these visitors and was quick to greet them and invite them to stay and be refreshed. It may not have been convenient for him. There was a sacrifice of time and resources. Yet, he was welcoming and generous.

What an example this is to you and me. Hospitality is not about having the perfectly clean house or a meal that’s been planned and prepared in advance. It’s opening our homes to welcome those in need. It’s setting aside our agendas, seeing others, and reaching out.

Day Three

Have you ever been described as a “Martha?” When I say “Martha,” I’m referring to the account of Mary and Martha in Luke 10 which says:

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:38-42).

Can you relate to Martha? I certainly can. I often find myself caught up in the preparations—focused on the details, planning, organizing—because I genuinely enjoy it. But sometimes like Martha, I get so consumed by all the things that serving becomes a burden rather than a joy.

Jesus gently reminded Martha—and me—that “few things are needed and indeed only one!” I need that reminder: to keep my focus on my guests, to be present, listen, and offer encouragement.

Hospitality should be outward-focused. It’s not that preparation is wrong. It’s good and necessary—but it shouldn’t take center stage. The priority is the guest, not the checklist.

It seems to me that Martha truly wanted to give her best. She opened her home and gave of herself and time, but she became frustrated when her sister Mary had a different priority.

Interestingly in John's gospel we see a later moment in Mary's life. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, she and her siblings hosted Jesus and his disciples again:

Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served (John 12:2a).

Martha is still serving, still practicing hospitality, but it seems to me she's not distracted. Her priorities have changed.

That's my prayer for me and you. That we would continue to practice hospitality—showing God's love through our service, without letting the details overshadow the purpose.

Day Four

Have you ever caught yourself grumbling about serving others? The Apostle Peter addresses this issue in 1 Peter 4:9-11.

“Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:9-11).

Did you catch that? You and I are called to offer hospitality without grumbling! That means showing God's love by serving others with the gifts he's given us—and doing so without complaining.

Peter gives examples of how to serve others using our God-given gifts. Whether it's through speaking truthfully from God's Word or helping one another with all our strength. Everything you and I have is from him, and we are called to use it for his purposes.

Hospitality can take many forms:

- Listening with care
- Sending an encouraging message
- Reaching out to someone who's struggling
- Praying with or for someone
- Helping with a task or technology
- Running errands or grocery shopping
- Visiting someone who is homebound

Peter emphasizes we're not to complain about this kind of service. Why? *So that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.* When we serve others with a willing heart, we reflect Christ and bring glory to God.

Offering hospitality can be inconvenient, expensive, even aggravating at times. But you and I are called to pursue this with a good attitude. It pleases God and is a witness to how Christians are meant to love and care for one another.

Day Five

We've explored what it means to practice hospitality in everyday life, but how does that translate to our jobs? Today, there's an entire hospitality industry—hotels, restaurants, travel, and event services. You can even earn a degree in hospitality management! For those working in that field, hospitality is built into the job: welcoming strangers, serving with kindness, offering guidance, and meeting the practical needs of guests.

But even if you don't work in that industry, the call to hospitality still applies. In the workplace, it might look like showing patience and grace to coworkers and clients, offering help when someone is overwhelmed, or simply pausing your own agenda to listen. It's that same outward focus—seeing others and responding with care.

The greatest example of hospitality is Jesus himself. He consistently met people's practical needs with compassion and love.

In Mark 8, he responds to a hungry crowd.

"I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance" (Mark 8:2-3).

Jesus saw their need—and he acted. He miraculously provided food when none was available.

In Mark 1, a man with leprosy begs Jesus for healing.

Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be healed!' Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed (Mark 1:41-42 NLT).

Jesus saw the unseen people. He touched the untouchable, welcomed the outcasts, and made space for the overlooked—women, children, lepers, Gentiles, and sinners.

Then of course when Jesus washed his disciples' feet at the last supper he beautifully demonstrated how to practice hospitality—to show God's love in practical ways and serve them—all for his glory.

Hospitality isn't all about entertaining. It's about seeing others and serving them with love. Whether it's a kind word, a helping hand, or a listening ear, it's all for God's glory.

I hope you're encouraged to practice hospitality wherever you are—including your workplace. Because when we serve others, we reflect the heart of Christ.