

Pursue Hospitality!

A Christian Virtue for All Believers.

BOOK:

Alexander Strauch, *The Hospitality Commands: Building Loving Christian Community, Building Bridges to Friends and Neighbors*. Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1993.

SELECTED QUOTES FROM THE BOOK:

To understand Christian love, we must look to its divine source--Jesus Christ (12)

Christianity's teaching on love is unparalleled in the history of religion. One of the key factors that helps explain the rapid expansion of early Christianity is the love displayed among the first Christians (14).

The pagans were forced to say, "See how they love one another ... And how ready they are to die for each other" (14).

I don't think most Christians today understand how essential hospitality is to fanning the flames of love and strengthening the Christian family. Hospitality fleshes out love in a uniquely personal and sacrificial way (17).

Through the ministry of hospitality, we share our most prized possessions. We share our family, home, finances, food, privacy, and time. Indeed, we share our very lives. So, hospitality is always costly (17).

A cold, unfriendly church contradicts the gospel message (17)

The home is the ideal place in which to build relationships and closeness (18).

I often hear people say, "Oh, we just don't know anyone; we can't make any friends at church." I have a suggestion that might solve the problem. It comes from a couple who had a hard time feeling as if they belonged in their congregation. Instead of leaving, as so many people do, they decided to invite every person in the church to their home for dinner during the next year. By the end of the year, they knew everyone in the church and had made a number of close friendships! (18)

Perhaps you, like many Christians, want to know what you can do for the Lord or how to use your spiritual gift(s). Your *home* is the ideal place in which to start serving. You can invite people into your home for prayer. You can reach out to new people at church or in your neighborhood. You can help believers get to know one another better. You can provide lodging for divided families. You can show appreciation to teachers and youth leaders by inviting them into your

home. You can be the ‘home’ away from home for singles living on college campuses or serving in the military who may not have eaten a home-cooked meal in weeks or months (18-19).

New Christians especially need the loving care and instruction you can provide through your home (18).

If you and/or your local church are looking for ways to evangelize, opening your home is one of the best methods for reaching the lost. Most of us, however, are not using our homes as we should to reach our neighbors, friends, and relatives (22).

Sharing our homes is one of the most loving, memorable things we can do to help communicate the message of Christ’s love (24).

In practical terms today, Christian hospitality for traveling evangelists and teachers means providing food, washing and caring for their clothes, supplying financial help for future travel expenses, giving directions, and caring for their car if that is their means of transportation (29).

Children will especially profit when you invite God’s servants into your home. I believe our children are more mature and experienced because they have had to meet and relate to all kinds of people from all over the world. Having Godly men and women stay in your home will be a unique educational experience for your children. They will learn more than you realize from adult conversation, particularly when it is about the Lord’s work. They will log precious, indelible memories that will stay with them for a lifetime. They will also learn many valuable lessons about serving others as they watch you minister to God’s servants and minister Christ’s love to needy people (30).

Only the power of the Word and the Spirit can convince us that hospitality is to be an essential part of healthy Christian living and can move us to act (33).

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to be a close-knit family. We are to be together, love one another, and care for one another. We cannot do this when our doors are closed. Hospitality, then, is a beautiful expression of our transformed lives being offered wholly to God (34).

Hospitality, therefore, is a concrete, down-to-earth test of our fervent love for God and His people (38).

Love can be an abstract, indistinct idea; hospitality is specific and tangible. We seldom complain about loving others too much, but we do complain about the inconveniences of hospitality. Hospitality is love in action. Hospitality is the flesh and muscle on the bones of love. Through caring acts of hospitality, the reality of our love is tested (38).

If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, we will want to invite them into our homes. We will want them to fill our homes. The presence of Christian brothers and sisters in our homes is a

foretaste of our glorious, heavenly dwelling place that will be filled with people, angels, and the perfect host -- our Lord Jesus Christ (40).

Entertaining angels? The writer of Hebrews is not suggesting that we should expect supernatural agents to visit us incognito if we practice hospitality. Rather, the writer means that hospitality often results in unexpected blessing and reward. In the guest-host relationship, the guest often blesses the host (41).

We must also remember that our Lord taught that hospitality shown to His people is hospitality offered to Himself (42).

You would find few Christians who would list hospitality as a requirement for church office. Yet that is precisely what the New Testament requires (43).

Many Christians are unaware that spiritual leaders are, according to Scripture, required to be hospitable (43).

The biblical shepherd is a shepherd of people -- God's precious, blood-bought people. And like Christ, the Chief Shepherd, the church shepherd must give himself lovingly and sacrificially for the care of God's people (1 Thess 2:8). This cannot be done from a distance, with a smile and a handshake on Sunday mornings or through a superficial visit. Giving oneself to the care of God's people means sharing one's life and home with others. An open home is a sign of an open heart and a loving, sacrificial, serving spirit (43).

If the local church's shepherds are inhospitable, the local church will be inhospitable. So we must never underestimate the power of hospitality in ministering to people's needs. Those who love hospitality love people and are concerned about them (44).

HELPFUL HINTS IN PRACTICING HOSPITALITY

1. I realize that some people can easily invite guests over on the spur of the moment, but most people need to plan ahead and invite people to their table. Set a regular time each week or month to invite people to your home. Unless you plan this into your schedule, you may never get past the good-intention level to the implementation level. You'll say: "This is important. The Bible instructs us to do this, and it will help our church; it will make our congregation a closer, more loving place." But unless you plan ahead, you'll be busy next week, and the next week, and the week after that (49).
2. Let me suggest that Sunday noon is an excellent time to invite the Lord's people to your home (50). [*CFBC meets in the evening, but if we invited folks over for a late lunch, then family worship, then prayer for the evening worship & then left early to arrive early at church, this could be a very profitable way of showing hospitality & preparing for worship.*]

3. Make a list of people who would be encouraged by your offer of hospitality. For example, your hospitality could be a crucial step in helping new church members feel that they are a part of the body. Others in your congregation are lonely and need your love. Those who are going through deep trials may be greatly encouraged by your simple invitation. In effect, you can be a ministering angel to hurting people (50).
4. Remember to invite people to your home during the holiday seasons. These are especially good times for inviting needy saints of God, non-Christian friends, and neighbors. Try to include those who need the acceptance and comfort of your family's love and closeness (51)
5. Collect and file simple, inexpensive recipes for meals. Many people don't practice hospitality because of the expense. You don't, however, have to impress people with sumptuous meals or be the best entertainer in your church. *Hospitality is to be a service to others, not an ego inflater* (51).
6. Volunteer to house missionaries or traveling servants of the Lord (51).
7. Be interested in people's lives. Learn which key questions make our time with other people more meaningful. Ask your guests how they met the Lord. If they are married, ask about their courtship and marriage. You will be amazed to find out how little we all know about each other (52).
8. Be creative in your activities with your guests. Have a time of prayer together, read Scripture together, or sing together. After the meal, take a walk together. All of these activities will draw you and other people closer together (52).
9. Pray that God will give you joy in this service for Him. Confess your selfishness, pride, and disobedience that have hindered you from opening your home to others. Ask the Lord to show you in His Word why hospitality is important. Remember, the Lord knows what is best for us (53).