

Christian! For the Joy of your Soul & for the Glory of Christ, Practice Hospitality in Your Home

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The New Testament provides a marvelous means of Christian growth and fellowship among the people of God: opening your home and sacrificially serving others. This is called hospitality. Believers are to practice hospitality (Romans 12:13). Furthermore, Peter writes that Christians should be hospitable to one another without complaint (1 Peter 4:9). The Scripture even requires hospitality to be a present reality and a necessary qualification for all the men of God who serve in the service of pastor-elder (1 Timothy 3:2). Since God out of His great love instructs His children to love one another in this particular way, how can we practice hospitality since it's sadly neglected in our society.

In this essay, I want to provide 4 simple tips for you to practice hospitality in your home.

1. Keep it simple.

Hospitality does *not* mean exquisite, lavish, five-course meal. Hospitality can be very simple. In fact, it could be reasonably argued that it should be quite simple since believers are to pursue and practice this wonderful discipline frequently. Not many people can pull off an exquisite, five-course meal every week. But everyone can open up their home with regularity. And that's the point. Keep it simple so that you can do it frequently. Don't overdo or outdo yourself. Serve your guests. Make the home presentable. Clean before they arrive. But keep it simple. Be yourself. You're inviting people into *your* home. So, let them see *what your home is really like*. Keep it simple. If it is a meal, or a dessert, or just tea or coffee, keep it simple and warm and friendly. Remember this! Hospitality does not mean that you go over the top every week to impress people.

2. Remember the goal.

Why does God provide so many references in the Scriptures for believers to show hospitality, serve one another, encourage one another, and fellowship together? Because God sees it as vitally important and supremely necessary to our spiritual growth. Mark it on your mind: it's *impossible* to grow without regular Christian fellowship. You can go to church and hear the Word preached and that's great! But without Christian fellowship and serving the body, you're closed off from the flock and they're cut off from you and it's quite hard to grow in Christ when you're severed from His Body. So, the goal of hospitality is quite simple: to actively serve others by opening your home, inviting them into your world, seeking to speak about Christ together, and to be mutually encouraged. Hospitality is not simply having a group over to watch the football game. Hospitality is the opening of one's home to other people -- to strangers, to fellow believers, to missionaries, to those in need, and to the lost. Because this is the goal, a bit of preparation is in order.

3. Direct the conversation.

Before the guests arrive, seek to have a game plan in order. Know a few good questions that would allow Christ to be honored, the gospel to be rehearsed, and the encouragement of the saints to take place. If the goal is to serve others, then do that by providing a friendly, welcoming, inviting, and Godly environment for those who will enter the home. Also, as others enter into your world in the privacy of your home then be yourself. If you have small children, remember that others will see small children do what small children do -- and that's ok! As you seek to speak about Christ to one another for the upbuilding of the believers present, then carefully and deliberately guide the conversation. Ensure that good questions are asked, and when answers are given that should be pursued further, ask open-ended questions to hear more of the guest's heart. It would be profitable to have a Bible nearby to open the Word together to share what you are reading and learning in your own times with God. You could ask what they have been convicted by lately from God's Truth. You could ask how the sermons have touched their souls. You could ask what they've been praying through. You could ask what sins they're battling with. You could ask how their marriage is. You could inquire as to how the parenting of their children is going. And then -- after you've chatted together, consider having a time of corporate prayer together as you seek the face of God, pray for each other, pray for your church, and pray for the gospel to spread. This can happen! It just takes a bit of preparation and planning and prayer ahead of time.

4. Pray for fruit.

Why hospitality? It is to stir up one another in the pursuit of godliness. It also serves to open up one's home for those in need. For missionaries and those traveling in the ministry, opening up one's home can provide a warm, family-environment for them as they are away from their own home. So pray! Pray for fruit! Pray for lasting fruit! Pray that God would stir all the people involved (whether 2 people or 10 people) to be practicing hospitality on their own as the ripple effect spreads through the people of God. Pray that God would be honored, that homes would be opened, that hearts would be touched, and that the lost would be won. Before the hospitality occasion, pray that God would guide the conversation by His Spirit and that all that would be done and said would glorify Christ. During the time of hospitality, be sure to pray together and engage in worship. Afterwards, pray that God would stir up His people to pursue this Christian practice fervently. In fact, one way that fruit can come from hospitality is to ask the guests that have come into your home if they have shown hospitality before and what their experience is like. Then, it may be good to ask how they can show hospitality to others and even encouraging them to begin with their own church membership roster and just go down the line of families and invite them over.

Much happens in the home that cannot happen the few minutes that believers chat before the service begins or after it's over. In the home, it's a relaxed, unhurried, and warm environment where you can ask heart-probing questions, listen intently, and allow the Spirit to lead as He wills. You can pray together. You can enjoy each other as you serve your guests in the confines of your own personal home. This is special. This is sacrificial. This is touching. This is *rare* in our day. And that is one reason why we are strangers and aliens in this world, namely, because we actively open up our homes to serve others, become vulnerable with them, to encourage them, and to edify one another through Christ-centered, gospel-refreshing conversations. So, dear Christian, for the joy of your soul and for the glory of Christ, practice hospitality in your home!