



GOSPEL-CENTERED
Hospitality

GROWING IN GRACE
NOVEMBER 2022

When hospitality is described in the Scriptures, there are zero instructions regarding home décor, menu, or table setting.

Let's take a journey through Scripture as we paint a word portrait of biblical hospitality.

WORD PORTRAIT

- According to **John 14:15, 21-24**, the primary evidence that one is a Christian and loves her heavenly Father is her choice to **obey his commands**. Though we live in a world that promotes "having things your own way," I learned that to please the Lord I need to respond to all of his instructions with an obedient spirit, not just pick those that appeal to me—and this includes our response to what his Word teaches about hospitality.
- **Romans 12:13b** says we are to practice hospitality—literally, to **"pursue the love of strangers"** (Heb. 13:2)—not simply to hang out with our best friends. If we want to demonstrate obedience to our heavenly Father, we will practice biblical hospitality.
- **1 Peter 4:9** builds on the instruction to practice hospitality and reminds us that our attitude is of utmost importance—**we are to practice hospitality without complaining**. This verse challenges us to conduct a heart search to discern whether we're approaching this opportunity to minister with a "hearty attitude" (Col. 3:23).
- We are reminded in **Hebrews 13:2** that our willingness to extend hospitality may have far-reaching implications. If we study the lives of

Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:1-3)	Lot (Gen. 19:1-2)	Gideon (Judg. 6:11-24)	Manoah (Judges 13:6-20)
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we learn that **all entertained strangers were actually special messengers from God**. While our motive should never be to give in order to receive, **Luke 6:38** clearly states the measuring cup we're to use to dispense our gifts and talents will be the same one used to provide our own. What's the size of your hospitality measuring cup?
- **3 John 7-8** challenges us to **extend hospitality to those involved in vocational Christian ministry**. It's exciting to know that as we share our homes and resources with our Lord's servants, we become an active part of their ministries.
- One of the requirements for individuals involved in church leadership, according to **1 Timothy 3:1-2** and **Titus 1:7-8**, is **a willingness to allow others to observe them inside their homes**—the arena in which their Christianity is most graphically revealed. Are you privileged to be in a leadership position in your church? If so, remember that these verses are qualifications, not suggestions.

HOW DO WE PURSUE HOSPITALITY?

Well, if you look at the original word, the Greek word for hospitality, it actually means two words, *love* and *stranger*. I think that's a powerful description of what the Gospel is. You know when we were strangers and aliens, God took us in when we didn't have a home or a family, God brought us into his. When we were without hope in the world, God adopted us as his children and with the ultimate gift of hospitality, ultimate act of hospitality God gave us his son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for us, and Jesus epitomized hospitality. Everywhere he went, he didn't even have a home or casserole dishes or any of that, but he welcomed people into his life.

Hospitality reflects the Gospel.

Faithful Christians are—and have always been—a strange minority in a hostile world. Redeemed by Christ, we have lost our old lives—and with our lives, we have left behind the history, identity, and people who once claimed us.

Conversion starts with the sacrifice of what once was, and the gospel provides for what we have relinquished through hospitality. When Peter says to Jesus, "See, we have left everything and followed you," Jesus responds with this comfort: "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold, now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come, eternal life" (**Mark 10:28-30**). The gospel comes with a house key, and that key unlocks the "hundredfold" of God's provision of family and community for others. Hospitality is the ground zero of the Christian life.

Hospitality is Spiritual Warfare.

Hospitality that gathers brothers and sisters alongside unsaved neighbors and strangers isn't charity or kindness; rather, it takes the gospel upstream of the culture war—where it belongs—and shakes the very gates of heaven for the souls of our neighbors. When we are in each other's lives daily, we are not operating with ignorance or stereotypes about other people and their "lifestyles."

We don't have to wonder what our unbelieving neighbor thinks about us, because he is sitting right here, passing the potatoes and telling us exactly what he thinks.

Hospitality makes room for different kinds of hosts and guests

Every Christian is called to practice hospitality, but that does not mean that everyone practices it in the same way. We practice hospitality by sharing our resources and our needs, by serving as both host and guest, as Jesus did when he walked this earth. Hospitality works on the same principle as tithing. You are either giving, or you are receiving. You are either building up the body, or you need the body to build you up. All of us have a stake in hospitality because Jesus does.

Hospitality requires unity in the church

**Hospitality
nurtures
& grows
the family
of God**

Chronic loneliness should never be the norm in the church. The church is God's family, and we should live in daily community. Chronic, debilitating loneliness in the midst of the great assembly of God's people devastates lives, and sadly, this cancer is growing in the church.

Nourishing the family of God and compelling those outside of God's favor to come to your table are the twin heartbeats of hospitality.

**Hospitality
is good for
the giver**

Hospitality puts our lives and hearts on display. We see our selfish ambition and our pride. When we see our own sin clearly, when we confess and repent of sin daily, then we are ready with a clean conscience to hold material things lightly and people dearly. Hospitality is good for the giver because it puts our lives and hearts on display. It compels us to confess and repent, to live below our means, and to build in margin time for the unexpected needs of others.

**Daily
Hospitality is
good for the
children**

They watch you live gospel fluency, handle conflict, make sacrifices, and they see unbelievers come to Christ at the kitchen table. The children in the neighborhood catch on to what is going on at your home, and soon, they start coming to dinner, asking questions, opening their hearts in family devotions, and coming to church. These kids start to bring their siblings. Or their parents. Your children behold that Jesus really is King and really is alive, and that he isn't just some prop you pull out on Sunday morning or for youth group.

**Hospitality
is a
sacrifice**

**Hospitality
is
worth it**

6 WAYS TO GROW IN GOSPEL-FUELED HOSPITALITY

To practice hospitality well, we need to lay down our idols and consider our context.

1. Expand Your Guest List

Jesus rocked people's world when he said:

"When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just" (**Luke 14:12-14**).

Jesus had already rebuked *the guests* of the party (**Luke 14:7-11**); then, he corrected *the host*. When you have a party—Christmas party, birthday party, or some other significant event—invite those who *can't repay you*. Invite the marginalized. And you will be repaid "at the resurrection of the just." **Jesus fills up ordinary events with eternal significance.**

2. Serve Others Rather Than Trying to Impress Them

Many confuse hospitality with "entertaining." Entertaining is often about the host, not the guests. It's about showing off, not serving. You can be thoughtful without being extravagant. You don't have to wow people with expensive china and food. Aim for warm rather than wow. **Your goal isn't to draw attention to yourself, but to Christ.**

3. Reject the 'My Home Is My Refuge' Mentality

Jesus is your refuge. Anything else we make our "refuge" is idolatry. When it comes to our homes, we should think stewardship rather than ownership. **A home is a place to welcome and love the broken.** Hosting reflects the values of God's kingdom, giving people a foretaste of what's to come.

If you have a small house, consider other ways to welcome and host—especially newer residents. Show them around town. Give advice on places to eat, shop, and play in your area. Introduce them to your church family.

Be on the lookout for that lone person at your church. Invite them to go eat after the service, or hang out with them during the week.

4. Pay Attention to People's Needs, Likes, and Concerns

Surprise guests with their favorite food or beverage. Supply them with material items they need. These little touches will leave a lasting impression on your guests. It doesn't need to be anything pricey, just a thoughtful touch to show that you care.

These are great pathways into further conversations. **Pay attention to the deeper heart issues: a person's fears, dreams, hopes, and questions.**

5. Don't Feel the Need to Copy Others' Practices

We currently hosts a monthly book club at our house. This is not a "Christian book club," but a group of ladies from our neighborhood reading popular books together. We eat and talk about the monthly selection.

We coach baseball, and this has allowed us to hang out with many parents. Perhaps you can cook. Perhaps you need to learn!

Whatever you do, do it with gospel intentionality

6. Greet Warmly, Engage Sincerely, Say Goodbye Thoughtfully

The greetings and farewells in the New Testament have always struck me (**Acts 20:36; 21:5-6; Rom. 16:16**). They are filled with **warmth, love, and meaning**.

When someone comes into your home, greet them affectionately. Take their coat. Offer them a drink. Give them a place to sit. As you talk with people, ask about their life. Don't turn everything back on yourself. Put your phone away. Draw attention to Jesus's grace.

When they're ready to leave, walk them to the door, or even to their car. Invite them back. All of these gestures convey value and love. And people remember them.

BE A GOOD GUEST

You'll learn to show good hospitality by **learning to receive it**. Be thankful for people's generosity. Write the host a thank-you note or an email to express your gratitude. Hospitality flows out of a humble, grateful heart.

Be a student of hospitality when hosted. You will grow in hospitality as you seek to humbly learn from others.

Finally, **meditate on the goodness of God**. We were the orphan, but God adopted us into his family. We were the stranger without a country, but we have been brought into the kingdom. We were the widow, but Jesus has become our Groom. We were the poor, but we now have a glorious inheritance. We are pilgrims here on earth, but Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us. Marvel regularly at this grace, and remember that the proper response to God's grace is grace—a lifetime of gratitude, generosity, and hospitality.

BARRIER TO GOSPEL-CENTERED HOSPITALITY

I'm busy. I'm tired. My home is untidy. My kids are too loud. My lunch break is too short. My paycheck is small. I'm not good at small talk.

It's easy to think of excuses for not showing hospitality—in our homes or elsewhere. It's true: there are obstacles to overcome if we want to offer the kind of others-centred, grace-filled welcome the bible calls us to. But the greatest hindrance to our hospitality is not the size of our home, table or bank balance. It's not our lack of cooking or conversation skills. **What hinders us most from offering warm, generous hospitality is our pride. Pride is the great enemy of hospitality.**

Biblical hospitality and pride won't coexist. They contradict each other in every way.

Hospitality is outward- looking and others focused

Pride is inward-looking and self-centered

Hospitality seeks to elevate others

Pride seeks to elevate self

Hospitality prioritizes the needs and preferences of those it serves

Pride prioritizes the needs and preferences of its owner

So we need to choose: we can continue to let pride dominate our desires and priorities, or cultivate a heart that loves to welcome others as God our Father welcomes us.

If we choose to cultivate a hospitable heart, there are a couple of principles that will help us in the fight against pride.

number 1:

**REMEMBER
WHO
GOD IS**

When we meditate on God's majesty, power, and splendor, it brings our view of self into perspective. We're really not that impressive—so there's little point pretending we are. When we remember that our purpose is to magnify the greatness of our God and call others to worship Him, too, then we are freed from our preoccupation with our own image or reputation. The goal of our hospitality is never to point to ourselves, but to point to Him. To reflect His generous, compassionate, undeserved welcome of us in the way we welcome others.

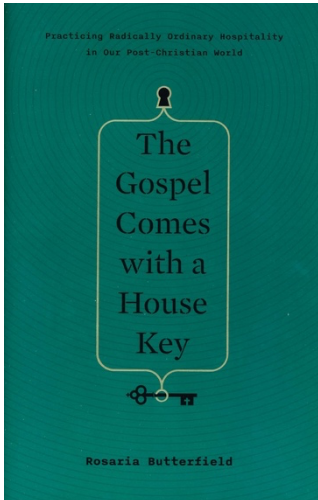
number 2:

**REMEMBER
WHO
WE ARE**

When we're tempted to think more of ourselves than we should, we need to remember that we are weak, sinful, and undeserving, but God has given us new life in Christ. When we are tempted to fear what people think of us, we can remember that God has exalted us with Jesus (**Eph. 2:6**). Our identity comes from Him, and is secure in Him. The high position we now have in Christ liberates us to serve others humbly, joyfully, and without fear. We risk nothing by seeking to invite, include and invest in the people God has placed us among, regardless of their response.

Why not ask God to show you this week how you can offer humble hospitality that reflects his character and points others to him?

RESOURCES:



The Gospel Comes with a Housekey by Rosaria Butterfield

The word “hospitality” can often create various levels of anxiety because of the perfect images of fashionably dressed hosts and impeccable homes that media and culture bombard us with. Yet, Rosaria Butterfield, in *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, casts a far more reassuring and ordinary vision for what hospitality should actually look like. Using engaging stories from her own experiences of being on the receiving end of radically ordinary hospitality, Butterfield shows how one’s simple, but authentic, welcome can become a bridge for the gospel to reach the lost friends and neighbors in your life. This type of hospitality views our homes as God’s tools where authentic love and grace can be seen in action, revealing what true Christian faith looks like.

Hebrews 13:2

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

1 Peter 4:9

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Romans 12:13

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Leviticus 19:34

You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Titus 1:8

But hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

1 Timothy 3:2

Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

Luke 14:12-14

He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

1 Timothy 5:10

And having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.

Acts 28:2

The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Mark 9:41

For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

3 John 1:5-8

Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

Romans 16:2

That you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

Ephesians 6:7

Rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,

Isaiah 58:7

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Hebrews 13:16

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Matthew 25:40

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Galatians 6:10

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Matthew 10:40-42

Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Luke 10:38

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.