

Upright Woman



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What is Hospitality?

by Midge Siebert



Midge is the wife of Bill Siebert, an elder of the Southwest congregation. They have two sons, two wonderful daughters-in-law, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Midge has taught children's and ladies' Bible classes and served as secretary of the Southwest congregation for over 34 years.

Has hospitality become a thing of the past in this "me-centered" world? Hebrews 13:1-2 says, "Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for therein some have entertained angels unawares." Philoxenia ("love of strangers") is the Greek word used here as well as in Romans 12:13, where we are encouraged to "contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." This is part of a list of the characteristics of a true Christian.

A man desiring the office of an elder must be hospitable (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim. 3:2). Of course, this would involve his wife. Before a "true widow" is eligible to be financially supported by the church, there are certain criteria she must meet (1 Tim. 5:3ff). Among these, that she "has shown hospitality" (ESV) or has "lodged strangers" (KJV) and that she "has washed the feet of the saints."

Is hospitality extended only in our homes? While having people into our homes creates an atmosphere of intimate friendship and warm reception, we can show our love for others in many other circumstances and places. The Parable of the Good Samaritan gives an example of one who went above and beyond to extend hospitality "on the road." And Jesus Himself (who had no earthly home) is the perfect model of service, love, and humility. One such instance is when He washed the feet of His apostles (John 13:4ff). Foot-washing was a custom which was normally performed by the host or his servant—an act of hospitality for those guests who had traveled on muddy or dusty roads wearing sandals. Jesus wanted His apostles to understand that they should follow His example of humility and servanthood and "wash one another's feet." In other words, they were to focus on hospitality and service to each other rather than getting caught up in trying to out-do one another.

In Matthew 25:35ff, we are brought to the Judgment scene, where Jesus' sheep will be separated from the sinful goats of the world. "Then the King will say to those on the right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

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Then Jesus tells them that as often as they extended loving kindnesses to those about them, they were showing the same hospitality toward Him. What a wonderful blessing to know that we can show honor to the One who gave His life for us simply by serving those around us! We owe Him so much!

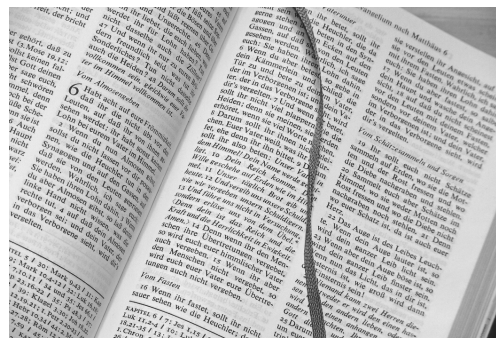
Why practice hospitality? First, it is not a “suggestion” that we be hospitable, as evidenced by the Scriptures cited above; it is a command from our Father. Extending hospitality is as beneficial (or more so) to the host as it is to the recipient. It affords us many opportunities to serve the Lord. Notice the examples of Tabitha (Acts 9:36ff), Lydia (Acts 16:14ff), and Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2f; Rom 16:3-5). And these are only a few of those we read about who opened their hearts and their homes to others.

We must have the right attitude when showing hospitality. If we grumble and complain about serving others, then we have lost sight of the true meaning of love and have failed miserably in our goal of imitating Christ (1 Pet. 4:9-11). To answer the question posed in the beginning; No, hospitality will continue as long as the earth stands, because faithful Christians will continue to reach out to those around them and shine the Light, giving all the glory to God (Matt. 5:16).

To Whom Do I Show My Hospitality?

by Stephanie Griffith

The world today sees hospitality as opening your home and displaying a fancy home full of new dishes, beautiful table settings and a bountiful feast. Biblical hospitality is very distant from this modern idea. And yet, because of the worldly view, many Christian women today are hesitant to open their homes to those in need. Reluctant to reveal the truth that they cannot present a “showcase” home, they keep their doors closed and miss out on the blessings of hospitality.



Consider the Shunammite woman from 2 Kings 4. She saw Elisha, a servant of God, and knew that she had the ability to help him. So she acted - she provided him a room with a bed, table, chair and a lampstand. Notice the simplicity of biblical hospitality. The Greek word “hospitality” comes from the word “philoxenos.” This is a compound word made up of “philos” (loving) and “xenos” (foreigner). So “hospitality” simply means “loving to foreigners.” Visitors in our home are foreigners to our home. Therefore, when we invite people into our home and serve them, we are showing biblical hospitality.

Looking to the gospels, notice those who were hospitable to Jesus. We see the women who traveled with Jesus in Luke 8:2-3. These women “provide for Jesus from their substance” as they are traveling with him. In John 12, we see Martha serving a meal to Jesus and his apostles. Consider Zacchaeus in Luke 19:6-7 receiving Jesus into his home. And then notice Peter’s mother-in-law in Luke 4. If anyone would have an excuse for not serving, she would have that excuse! She is sick with a high fever, but immediately after Jesus heals her, she rises and serves Jesus and his companions (Luke 4:39). This woman was ready to show hospitality at all times!

A familiar lesson from Jesus is that of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. The Good Samaritan showed hospitality to a wounded stranger - he bandaged his wounds, set the stranger on his own animal, and led him to receive shelter in an inn. He left money with the innkeeper so that the wounded man would continue to receive care. In Matthew 25 Jesus tells us that anytime we are hospitable to the hungry and thirsty, to strangers, or the sick, we are actually being hospitable to Christ! “Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.” (Matthew 25:40)

Like the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4, we are often surrounded by servants of God that we can serve. Consider these examples of people in Scripture that were hospitable to preachers of the word. Lydia in Acts 16 invited Paul and his companions to her house after they had taught her the gospel. Also in Acts 16, we see the Philippian jailer who brought Paul and Silas into his home and set food before them (vs. 34). Publius invited Paul, Luke, and their companions into his home and provided for them for three days (Acts 28:7).

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Next, consider Galatians 6:10 – “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Anytime we can serve fellow Christians, we are following God’s command. Our brethren often have physical needs that need to be met – perhaps providing food or money. And certainly like Lydia and the Shunammite woman, we want to use our homes to be hospitable to other Christians.

So to whom should we as Christian women extend hospitality? As Martha, the Philippian jailer, Publius and Peter’s mother-in-law did, we should seek to find ways to be hospitable to preachers of the gospel. Like the Good Samaritan, we should look for ways to help those who have physical needs. Then we should always keep Galatians 6:10 close to our hearts as we search for ways to serve those of the “household of faith.” Ephesians 2:10 is a beautiful companion verse to our hospitality theme. Remember that we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works.” So let us serve and love all of our brethren in His church!

Practicing Hospitality

by Dee Grayson

I think of hospitality as the act of loving people and being God’s hands when we help and care for them. Ephesians 6:7 “Rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man”. Romans 12:13 in the ESV reads: “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”

"Contribute to
the needs
of the saints"

Romans 12:13

We see that we are called to see to our brother’s and sister’s needs and to SEEK ways to show our love and care for them. Seeking would mean that we must know them well enough to understand what their needs are. For example, visit a shut-in or a widow and through your visit you may discover that they are lonely and need more contact with other members.

I always look at someone I go to visit as a book that is to be opened, listened to and learned from. After a couple of visits you will discover how you can make their lives a little richer. You can bring a meal they don’t have to prepare themselves or help with a chore they now have trouble accomplishing. Older people that don’t get out often, many times don’t get enough nutrients and fluids and taking them a bowl of soup can help with that. I often make a big batch and save some for me, place some in the freezer and give some away.

James 1:27 tells us to visit widows and orphans in their troubles. My husband and I would sometimes ask a widow to join us to go out to eat, knowing they must feel isolated but yet still enjoy conversations with mixed company. That could also be said of widowers and singles. When possible, visit children who come from broken homes or who live in group homes. Take them out for a treat or see that they get a present on their birthday.

Hebrews 13:16 tells us to not to neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Sometimes it is just “TIME” that is needed for us to give. I think back to the wonderful Christian men that came and stayed with my husband during the six weeks he was in the hospital so that I could go home and rest a couple of hours. Spending “time” sitting with families of someone whose family member is in ICU or on life support, is hospitality too. “Time” is valuable and precious to the one who receives it. Bringing to the hospital waiting room small gifts of sandwiches, cookies, bars and change for the vending machines or parking garage can be “that cup of water” we are asked to give in Mark 9:41.

Lastly, opening our homes to host a place for someone to stay for our brotherhood meetings is such a delight and a way to make lifetime friends. Jesus told the twelve to stay in peoples’ houses as they traveled to teach. (Luke 9:4) We also see in Acts 20:20 that Paul stayed in the first century Christians’ homes.

Let us, as women, follow Mary’s example in Mark 14:8 by doing what we can in our acts of hospitality. Our homes should be God’s home and be always open to encourage (Romans 15:2), to entertain for the purpose of knowing each other better (Luke 19:1-10), to comfort and edify (Romans 14:19) and to teach others the gospel (Acts 16:34). Thank you, loving Father, for our homes and may we serve you through our hospitality as the example left for us in Matthew 25:35-40.

Benefits of Hospitality

by Ann Armstrong

In chapter 12 of Romans, Paul tells his fellow Christians to present their bodies as a living sacrifice in response to what God had done for them. There is no way we can repay God for what He has done for us. Showing our love for one another is a mark of true Christians (Rom. 12:2-21). We are to contribute to the needs of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and seek to show hospitality. (Rom. 12:13)

Although hospitality sometimes comes at a cost (our time and commitment), it does have its benefits. Hospitality produces unity and fellowship among those in the body of Christ and for those outside the body, it presents a great opportunity for evangelism.

We are all interested in what benefits us and hospitality does have its benefits. The person who offers hospitality is really the one who gains from it. We may feel like we're going to be a blessing to someone else, but we'll often feel like we are the ones receiving the greater blessing. There are benefits gained when Christians interact on a social basis. Did not the early church "eat their meals with gladness and singleness of heart?" (Acts 2:46-47) This helped them to not only grow in their number, but also in their love for one another, binding them together in their service to establish the church wherever they went spreading the gospel.

Hospitality is more than giving others something to eat and a place to sleep. When given with a cheerful heart and generous spirit, we gain much for ourselves. When offered to a new member, we may gain a friend we would have never acquired otherwise. Proverbs 18:24 tells us it is a friend who sticks closer to us than a blood relative. With a Christian sister, you are able to talk about spiritual things and encourage one another. Whether we use paper plates or fancy china, no one really cares about the place setting if they are sitting where they feel loved. John 15:12 and 17 is a command to love one another as He loved us and we must obey.

Hospitality is the foundation in building relationships. Being receptive and open to the needs of others sends the message – "you're important to me." When we open up and engage with others, they will open up to us, giving us the opportunity to share the gospel with them. Being hospitable is about focusing on the other person and understanding their needs. It is our tendency to be focused mostly on ourselves. Serving others forces us to take our focus off self. That's why this practice has such tremendous spiritual benefits. The more we take our eyes off self, the more we'll see others.

If we practice hospitality, we will reap the benefits. The benefits of unity among our members, the opportunities for evangelizing those outside the body, the blessings of giving to those in need, the joys of unexpected friendships, and greatest of benefits – love for one another.

About Upright Woman

The Upright Woman publication is intended to educate, promote, and encourage the women of the church to strive for righteousness in every aspect of life. It is the mission of this publication to provide women an opportunity to study the word and share articles about various issues and topics to encourage us to be upright women in an upside down world.

**"FOR THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS; HE LOVES
RIGHTEOUS DEEDS; THE UPRIGHT SHALL
BEHOLD HIS FACE." PSALM 11:7**



We pray that with every issue and with every article all glory is given to God.