



THE  
MENTORING  
PROJECT

# HOSPITALITY IN THE BIBLE — OPENING YOUR HOME



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# INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, on a cold Saturday morning in January, I received a text from one of our pastors asking if my wife and I could host a man who used to be a member of our church for the night. He was flying from London to Richmond but had to land in D.C. due to bad weather, and needed a place to stay the night. At first glance, the request seemed simple enough to fulfill: make the bed, show the guy where the key was, and maybe pour him a cup of coffee the next morning before he got on his way. After all, this guy had been a member at our church for seven years. He probably has plenty of people he will want to catch up with. We probably won't even see him! With my wife's agreement, we agreed to host him.

My now friend, Austin, showed up a few hours later. To our surprise, he had no plans or ambitions to be anywhere other than with us for the afternoon and evening. At first, this seemed strange and, to be honest, a little annoying. We hadn't planned to spend the day that way, and he seemed bent on seeing those plans thwarted. In the opening conversation, we also learned that the brother was well-to-do, meaning a hotel room would likely not have been a problem for him. Why did he need to stay with us if he could have gone to the Hilton?! He didn't even know us!

Here's the thing about Austin's behavior that day that quickly changed the way I felt about his presence in our home: he was grateful, he was interested, and he was encouraging. Clearly, our willingness to receive him meant a lot to him. Thankfully, he couldn't hear my inner voice as I struggled to understand what is hospitality in its truest form. Also clear was his genuine interest in us. He asked questions about who we were, how

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we met, and why we were in D.C. More importantly, he asked how we came to know the Lord and what it had been like to follow him since then.

Lastly, he was encouraging. First off, his very presence was encouraging. He smiled, said thank you, and offered interesting conversation in truckloads. He also purposefully tried to encourage us wherever he saw evidence of God's grace in our lives. Austin was showing us fellowship in the Bible in action—the kind that moves beyond small talk into soul-stirring connection.

Austin taught me a lot about hospitality in the Bible that January night when he stayed with us. I'll never forget him telling me why he chooses to stay with other Christians rather than in hotels whenever he can. He said, "Since we're united in Jesus, I think it's so fun and encouraging to have extended time with other Christians who are strangers to me. Staying in someone's home provides just such an opportunity. I may not know them when I arrive, but they are my siblings in Christ, so it's always fruitful to get to know them."

Austin understood what does the Bible say about welcoming the stranger better than I did. He was a part of my family, which made his wanting to stay in my home less strange than it first seemed. He helped me see Jesus as the guest and the host, modeling how Christ welcomes us into his presence.

Since Austin first stayed with us, my wife and I have strived to have a brimming ministry of hospitality. We've hosted pastors and church members from around the world. We've laughed and cried with strangers. We've made fast friends with people who, apart from trying to be hospitable, we never would have met. I love hospitality. I love the opportunities it provides to do material and spiritual good to others—truly living out serving others Bible verses in our living room.

I love how, when done well, it almost always results in making a friend. I love how hospitality brings Jesus glory. This life skill guide is all about helping you learn to love hospitality and giving you a few ideas for getting started. We will explore scripture on hospitality and even practical tips like Biblical hospitality on a budget.

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I pray that your ministry of hospitality would bless many. And yet, I have a sneaky suspicion that if you're anything like me, you'll discover that you're almost always the one most blessed. You might find that spiritual gifts hospitality isn't just for a select few, but a calling for all who wish to see the theology of the table come to life. With that, let's begin!

# 1

## WHAT IS HOSPITALITY?

The word for hospitality comes from the Greek word *philoxenia*, which is a compound made from two words: *philo* meaning love and *xenia* meaning strangers. So, *philoxenia* means love for or friend of strangers. Yet, for our purposes, we need to mine the meaning a bit further, recognizing that what is hospitality in the eyes of God goes much deeper.

### ***Modeled After God's Love***

If you don't get anything else from this guide, I hope you get this: the logic of hospitality roots itself in God's love. More specifically, hospitality in the Bible is rooted in God's love for us. You see, sin made us strangers to God. Rather than fellowshiping with God and delighting ourselves in him as what his intent for us was when he created us in his image, we each chose and choose sin over God, effectively making us aliens to him. And yet, God didn't leave us in our sin and suffering. He was not content to leave us where our sins took us. Instead, God sent forth his son, the Lord Jesus, who lived, died, rose, and ascended all in our stead. Having lived perfectly and died in our place, the Lord Jesus creates the means by which you and I may be brought near to God.

Here's how Paul put it to the church in Ephesus:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both

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have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. . . (Eph. 2:13-19; emphasis mine)

What all this means is that you and I have been shown hospitality by God who loves us in Jesus, even when we were sin-stained strangers. If you're trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, then you know what it is to be brought near, to have God say to you, "you belong with me now, and you always will." This is the foundation of fellowship in the Bible.

My friend, God's call for you to be hospitable to others is predicated on the fact that he has been hospitable to you. Until you realize that hospitality roots in God's love shown toward you, you won't fully appreciate the privilege that hospitality gives you to show God's love to others—even to strangers. Another way to say this is to say that you can't understand hospitality until you understand the gospel. As much as any other ministry given to Christians, hospitality is funded by the gospel. This is the core of the theology of the table.

But what does it mean to show hospitality? I hope the rest of this life skill guide fills that question in for you. Here I want to cover two things: 1. Hospitality means having a ministry of care, and 2. Hospitality is an opportunity to be generous.

### **A Ministry of Care**

*What is care? Have you ever stopped and asked yourself that before? I think care is often one of those things that everyone assumes they know but would struggle to define. Let me try my hand at a definition:*

***Care is affectionate and attentive honoring of an inherently valuable place, person, or thing.***

My grandmother was one of the greatest examples of spiritual gifts hospitality to me, particularly because of the depth of her care. I never had to wonder whether she loved me because she always made it so evident that she did. Similarly, I never had to know if her eye was on me because it always was. She honored me even as a child by fixing me food she knew I loved, cracking the jokes she knew I thought were funny, and getting my room at her house ready with the blanket I loved most. She was that way with each of us grandkids.

I remember a time when my younger cousin cooked up the idea to color my grandmother's hallway with crayons. When my grandmother saw what

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the young Picasso had done, she said to her, “Cara, who colored all over my wall?” Cara, proud as any skilled artist could be, said, “Me did! Isn’t it purty?” Rather than scold or discourage, my grandmother said to Cara, “It’s beautiful, Cara.” Though that story may appear a bit afield of our topic, it is a demonstration of hospitality from the heart. In responding with care, my grandmother honored my little cousin by getting on her level, seeing it as she did, and choosing to love what she loved. My grandmother essentially made room in her heart for Cara and her interpretation of what looks nice. And you know what, I think that wall remained colored by crayon for several years before my grandmother could bring herself to paint over it.

You see, hospitality is a ministry of care. Have you stopped to reckon with how high above you and me God is? My friend, there is no one like God (Ex. 15:11). And yet, God stooped low and became like us so we could be brought near to him. He did this because he loves and cares for us. Hospitality is an opportunity to love and care as God does, with one key distinction. God cares for us, though we are far below him. He then calls us to care for each other, though we are equal in value. If God can care for us, then certainly we can care for each other, which is what does the Bible say about welcoming the stranger.

Before we move on from care, I wonder if you caught the two qualifiers: affection and attention. Affection picks up God’s love and shows it to others. Proper hospitality is an expression of love. Attention, however, may first seem like an off-ball. By attention, I don’t necessarily mean it in the sense that you pay attention during math class or to the television. I mean attention in the sense that you’re concerned with another person and their well-being. Attention means seeking to use what you have to honor and promote the well-being of another person, another person who, like you, was created in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27). This is a vital part of how to be a good host.

Why is it useful to frame hospitality in this way? Because we guard against thinking of hospitality as a chore. You remember being a kid and having your mom say, “Go clean your room!” You promptly responded by asking, “Why I gotta?” To which she replied with those words that are misery for every child who has ever heard them: “Because I said so!”

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If you're approaching hospitality because God told you that you gotta, then you're likely not doing authentic hospitality. Hospitality is not a chore! It's not something to be done devoid of affection, attention, and honor. Instead, hospitality is a ministry of love, where you love even as you are loved, and so you honor even as you have been honored. With hospitality, you give just a fraction of what God has given you in Christ. This mindset is crucial for overcoming the fear of hosting.

If you're struggling to show hospitality from your heart, I recommend stopping here and simply praying to the Lord: "Help me see others as you see them. Help me to understand your love for me, and with that love let me love others." The Lord can and wants to help you.

### ***An Opportunity to Be Generous***

Okay, hospitality means care, but care feels a little abstract so far. Let's start our move to the practical, which will carry us to the end of this guide. Hospitality funded by the gospel and shaped by care means, in part, being generous! More specifically, hospitality means being generous with what you have, which is often seen in serving others Bible verses. At one point in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul rhetorically asks, "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). If we remember that the gospel drives hospitality, then the next step is to understand that, like God has given us his love and intends us to share it with others, he's also given us everything else! What do you think his intentions are for us with everything else? To share it with others!

My friend, if you're feeling down on your luck (a term Christians really shouldn't use as more than a figure of speech, given that we know luck isn't real), it may be a good idea for you to try to remember the many things God has given you. You have your life, for one thing. You likely also have food, clothes, and some form of lodging. You may have family. You should have community, given that you're a Christian, and community in the local church is a privilege granted to you by the Lord Jesus himself! Through community, you have friendships and plenty of opportunities to be fruitful. And these are just the essentials! So many of us can attest that God has abundantly given to us, meeting not only our needs but also many of our wants. What do you have that you haven't received? Which of these things

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will you take credit for? The answer should be, “Nothing! It all comes from the Lord.”

Right, so what should you do? You should generously share it with others. This is the heart of scripture on hospitality. Hopefully, you see the logic. God has shared with you in the gospel and in so many lesser, yet real, ways. He calls you to share his love with others, along with so many of the other, lesser things which he has given you in order that you would steward them for his glory. A fundamental building block of hospitality, then, is generosity. In fact, a stingy person can't be hospitable. Hospitality is predicated on giving, giving of oneself and all that one has in addition.

Do you want to grow in hospitality? You can't be close-fisted with your things, if so. And here's the other thing: you don't need to be. Your good and perfect heavenly father has promised to provide for your every need. As we know from Scripture and from life, this doesn't mean we can always expect to live an easy life. Sometimes the Lord, in his gracious providence towards us, requires that we lack in order to teach us to depend more wholeheartedly on him. But he never asks us to go without what we need, and he knows our needs even better than we do. So, don't be stingy. Instead, be generous! Don't hoard. Instead, be hospitable! This is the essence of Biblical hospitality on a budget.

### ***Reflection Questions:***

1. What is the relationship between the gospel and hospitality?
2. What does care have to do with hospitality? Generosity?
3. What is hard for you about being hospitable?
4. How does this section challenge you to seek God's help in growing?

## 2

# TO WHOM SHOULD I BE HOSPITABLE?

We should all now understand why it is so important that Christians be hospitable, given how hospitable God has been toward us in the gospel. Our next objective is to aim our hospitality at those God would especially have us be hospitable toward. I will contend that while everyone you meet might be an opportunity to be hospitable, you should especially be hospitable toward your church family and those with whom you are sharing the gospel with.

### ***Who Is My Neighbor?***

There's this amazing exchange between a lawyer and our Lord, which Luke records for us in the tenth chapter of his gospel account. You may know it as the parable of the good Samaritan. The story starts with the lawyer asking Jesus about how one can inherit eternal life. To this question, Jesus replies, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). Straightforward enough.

Thanks for the clarity, Jesus. "Not so fast," says the lawyer. He presses further: "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus responds with a story:

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and

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gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

Now let me ask you: did Jesus answer the lawyer’s question with this story about the good Samaritan? I think he most certainly did, but to see his answer, we need to know the difference between Jews and Samaritans. In the interest of time, let me just give you the crux of these two’s outlook on each other—they didn’t like each other. At all. The vitriol stemmed from a long line of political, religious, and social differences between the two groups, which we need not get into.

The reason why you need to know of these differences, however, is simple: the Samaritan in Jesus’s story is precisely the last one you’d expect to show hospitality to the presumably Jewish man who was robbed. And yet, it was precisely the Samaritan who came to the man’s rescue. This is the ultimate example of what does the Bible say about welcoming the stranger.

What does this story teach us about hospitality? Well, it teaches us that, in a very real sense, everyone is our neighbor. If the Samaritan can show hospitality across the entrenched lines existing between Jews and Gentiles on the basis that the robbed man was his neighbor, then you can and should, at least sometimes, show hospitality to your neighbor who may happen to be most different from you by some political, religious, or social standard. No one is so different that they don’t qualify to receive your hospitality, according to Jesus. Everyone is fair game.

Does this mean then that we should be hospitable toward everyone in the exact same way? Not quite. Try that, and you might go broke. Try that, and you definitely fail to maximize the spiritual good you could do with your ministry of hospitality. So while everyone is fair game, we need to know how to prioritize whom God would have us focus on to do the most spiritual good.

### ***Hospitality To Church Members***

As a public service announcement: I am deliberately not taking time to mention that you have a God-given responsibility to care for and be generous toward your natural family. The reason I am leaving this out is primarily because hospitality proper means taking care of and being generous toward those who are far off or who are strangers in some sense of the word. So, yes, be “hospitable” toward your family! Show them

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generosity and loads of love. This guide will, however, focus on showing hospitality to those whom God calls you to, even if they are not high on your priority sheet.

With that, in this section, I want to argue that the group you should be most eager to show hospitality to are those who are members of your local church. Paul drafted to the church in Rome a list of things which ought to characterize their life together. Among his exhortations, Paul wrote, “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality” (Rom. 12:13). This is a foundational scripture on hospitality. Straight away, this smacks against the individualistic conception of Christianity many in the U.S. hold. Imagine trying to fulfill this command from Scripture if all your Christianity entails is you and Jesus. Clearly, Paul’s understanding of the Christian life is that it is one lived out in community. Community, mind you, to whom you can fulfill direct commands like this one!

What this means is that, if you’re not a member of a healthy local church, you should be! Make that one of the primary steps you take to grow in hospitality. Go this Sunday to a church that, as best as you can tell, preaches the gospel and takes membership seriously! The local church is comprised of the saints to whom Scripture calls you to show hospitality. That was the case for the church in Rome, and it’s the case for us today. This is the heart of fellowship in the Bible.

The Lord has been kind to us, leading us to an imperfect, albeit very healthy, church. In fact, I’ve never been in a healthier church, and that is because I’ve never been a part of a church where hospitality is taken more seriously. We pray publicly that each of our members would grow in hospitality. We teach on hospitality in our core seminars on Sunday morning. We challenge each other to be more hospitable in our discipling groups. We tell stories about hospitality that lead to spiritual good being done.

I am so encouraged by the efforts that many in our church make to live out the kind of hospitality in the Bible we see in the Scriptures. When we first joined the church, my wife and I received a text from a twenty-something-year-old single guy from the congregation asking if we wanted to come over for dinner. It was a strange-ish request in that we had never hung out with a single stranger nearly a decade our junior before. Nonetheless, we agreed on a time, and he gave us his address. To our surprise, he lived in a very nice row home here on Capitol Hill. We later found out that it was his parents’ house, and they were out of town for a week’s holiday.

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We were also surprised to find a wonderful aroma hitting the snout immediately upon entry. As it turned out, this brother was cooking through the countries; one country's favorite dish for each new member of the church at a time. We were up next, and we drew Cambodia. This is a brilliant example of intentional fellowship ideas for small groups.

The meal was lovely. The fellowship was even better. This brother asked us questions about how we had come to live in the federal city, how we were liking the church, what challenges we were facing at the moment, and how he could pray for us. On that last bit, he even offered to pray for us before we left! We left full and feeling cared for. Even telling the story to you now has me thanking the Lord for inspiring in that brother a meaningful ministry of hospitality to us.

Who in your church might you show hospitality to? As you think about your answer, let me encourage you not just to choose the people who are most like you. My now friend Josiah wasn't like we were. We were married; he was single. We were nearer to thirty than twenty; he was the opposite. We were new; he'd been around the church his entire life. And yet, despite all these differences, he chose to show us hospitality.

Showing hospitality to those who are different from you brings all kinds of advantages. Here are a few to get your mind thinking in the right direction:

- Jesus is foregrounded — It's easier for you and others to know that Jesus is the reason for the hospitality more than anything else! The world chooses friends based on favorite sports teams, similar pay brackets, one's career, or other common interests. Christianity binds people together through Jesus more than through any of these other things. In fact, Christianity provides a way for you to build meaningful friendships with those you only have Jesus in common.
- You grow! — If you only hang out with people who are like you, your opportunities to grow are limited. Showing hospitality to people who are different comes with the distinct advantage of getting to learn from those who have experiences you don't, see the world from a perspective you might not share, and hear about Jesus's faithfulness to them in challenges you haven't experienced. When you build relationships through hospitality with people different than you, you grow!
- Outsiders are compelled to come see — Try going to work on Monday and tell your secular co-workers that after church the day prior, you had a group of people over for lunch. One person was forty years older than you, one was a different ethnicity than you, one was into a totally different set of hobbies from you, and the other had not even

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yet graduated from college. I bet you would be met with some surprise. That surprise represents an opportunity for you to tell them about Jesus and your church. Hospitality begets evangelism! Who would have thought it!

### ***Hospitality to Outsiders***

Speaking of evangelism . . . hospitality is a wonderful way to evangelize! In the previous example, I said that showing hospitality to church members commends your Lord and church to outsiders. That's true. You know what else you might do to encourage them to trust in Jesus? Invite them over as well! Show care (affectionate and attentive honoring) and be generous (use what you've been given) to bless those in your life who don't know Jesus—this is the core of serving others Bible verses.

Who do you have in your life right now who doesn't yet know Jesus? Those are perfect people to put on the invite list for a weeknight meal, a church game night, or Sunday lunch. Welcome them into your home, share a meal, and, most importantly, talk about Jesus. Tell them why hospitality is so important to you. I would guess that most people who aren't Christians probably haven't experienced much, if any, Christian hospitality. That is a shame, but it's one you can make sure isn't the case for your non-Christian friends.

Last note on this: show hospitality to your church members and your non-Christian friends... at the same time! Hospitality can be a group project, and with this format, it can quickly become an evangelism project. This is a great way of creating a welcoming home for ministry. Hopefully, this encourages you to send some texts to people who might need just such an invite to come over and be under your care.

### ***Reflection Questions:***

1. What scares you about showing hospitality?
2. Who in your church can you be hospitable towards this week or next?
3. Who do you know who isn't following Jesus, whom you can be hospitable towards this week or next?
4. How has someone else's hospitality blessed you?

# 3

## HOW DO I GROW IN HOSPITALITY?

Hopefully, you're now convinced that hospitality is not just a command but a privilege—a gospel privilege. In this section, I want to lay out some practical steps you can take to get started showing hospitality right away. Before I lay out some ideas, however, I want to be clear: there are a million ways to show hospitality. These are just my ideas. Add to them your own, and then it will be a real party!

### ***Take Stock***

Remember my grandmother? She was an amazing Bible teacher—especially when it came to teaching the great stories of the Bible. One of my favorite stories she'd tell was about the man who gave his donkey and his colt to Jesus's disciples so that Jesus could ride them into Jerusalem for the triumphant entry just one week before his crucifixion. Matthew records the event as follows:

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, the Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a foal of a beast of burden.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. (Matt. 21:7)

At first glance, this story doesn't seem to be about hospitality. Fair enough. But my grandmother would always note that the man gave what he had to

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provide for his Lord. She would then ask us, “What’s in your hand that you can give to your Lord?”

What is in your hand? This is a great starting point when it comes to hospitality. The reason for this is twofold. First, we tend to think that in order to show hospitality, we first need more of something—like a bigger or nicer house. Friend, you don’t need a bigger house to show hospitality. Just think back to my friend who had my wife and me over for a Cambodian dinner. He didn’t have a house, and yet he served us so well!

What is in your hand? What do you have that you can offer to the Lord and to others in hospitality? Take stock of what you have and then get busy putting it to work. This is the first step in overcoming the fear of hosting.

There’s another young man in our church who has only a small apartment equipped with an even smaller kitchen. Every Sunday, he invites different groups of church members and guests over for lunch between the morning and evening services. He puts a lot of work into the meals, always making sure everyone has what they need and that they leave feeling full and well-loved. To my knowledge, this brother never stopped to think that his apartment was too small to use for God’s glory. Instead, he took stock of what he had, and then he put it to work caring for his fellow church members. He is a master of how to show hospitality in a small apartment.

I think you should aspire to be like our dear brother. Big house or small. Lots of money or only a little. If you can’t afford steak, serve chicken. If you can’t afford a meal, serve coffee or tea. Use what you have and do what you can. God is brought glory by your trusting him and seeking to display his love through your ministry of hospitality. This perfectly illustrates Biblical hospitality on a budget.

### ***Make the Ask***

Here is where the rubber meets the road. You’re in church this Sunday. You look across the sanctuary and see an older couple that always sits in the same section. Hospitality begins when you walk over to them and ask them if they’d come to your house next Sunday after church for lunch. “But I don’t know them!” All the better! A meal shared together will give you a great chance to get to know them.

To your surprise, they are immediately overjoyed to hear that a thirty-something-year-old wants them to come to lunch. They’re in. Terrific. As you’re walking out the back of the sanctuary, you see a group of college students standing in the foyer. Your house has room, and you know these kids have been attending your church since the beginning of that

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semester. Why not invite them also? After all, when do college kids receive an invite to hang out with a young family and a couple in their seventies? I'm not kidding. That kind of opportunity is rare! This is how you generate intentional fellowship ideas for small groups.

You see, hospitality requires that you make the ask. Now, I'm not saying that the ask isn't tough sometimes. I mean, it's one thing to ask a good friend to come over and watch a football game. But strangers?! Sure, church members you don't really know can feel like strangers. But that's where you must remind yourself that whoever calls God Father is your brother or sister if you also call God Father. That means that your fellow Christians aren't strangers—they're siblings. That's why you can lean into your fear and make the ask. That also happens to be why you should! This is a great tip for hospitality for introverts christian.

### ***Ask Curious George Questions***

Your guests have arrived. They're in your home. What do you do now? Ask questions! Generally speaking, people's favorite topic of conversation is themselves. And I don't say this as a slight on your guests. We all tend to be like that! Remember that Jesus tells us that the second greatest command is: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). How do you prefer being loved? I'm sure there are many answers you could offer in response, but one of them probably involves someone taking a genuine interest in you, your interests, your passions, your story, your family, etc. You probably really appreciate being asked intentional questions by people who care about you. When your guests arrive, start asking them the kinds of questions you would want to be asked. Here are some sample questions you might think about asking:

- Tell me about how you came to live in this town?
- What do you do for work? What do you love about what you do? What do you not like about what you do?
- What are your hobbies?
- How did you come to know the Lord?
- What were some of the takeaways for you from this past Sunday's sermon?
- What is the Lord teaching you in this season?

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### ***Listen Carefully***

Okay, you're asking questions, and that's great. If you want those questions to have their full effect, it is essential that you listen intentionally to their answers. A great way to prove to the person that you're listening is to ask follow-up questions based on what they say. I once heard someone say that you have to get to the third level of questioning before the person you're speaking with actually believes you're listening to them. That means that when you ask someone how they're doing, you typically need to interact with what they say two more times before they think you're being sincere in your interest. So listen and then ask more questions!

### ***Pray!***

I'm ashamed to say that I sometimes feel embarrassed about praying during social events. And yet, I always appreciate it when I'm sharing my heart with someone, and they ask to pray for me right then and there. So, I try to lean into any awkwardness I feel and offer to pray for people who are in our house. When you pray for people, you're confessing that their needs extend beyond what you can meet. You're also making it known that you believe their needs do not extend beyond God's ability. So, pray. Depend on the Lord out loud on behalf of your guest. You never know how encouraging it might be to them to hear you call on the name of the Lord for them.

### ***Meet Needs***

Let's go from the lesser to the greater, and to do that, I'll need you to spare me one more story about my grandmother. She was a legend in our church when it came to hospitality. I always remember her telling me how important it was to make a little more food than you think you'll need for your guests. She said this because she never wanted her guests to want more food, coffee, or whatever she was serving, only to find that she didn't have enough. Here's the point: when you have people over, it's important to make sure you have what you need to care for your guests' needs. This doesn't mean you need to spend a lot of money. It just means that you do your best to have on hand what you would hope to receive if the roles were reversed.

Okay, that's the lesser. Let's move on to the greater. You can't meet all of anyone's needs. Nonetheless, the Lord may well have you meet some of them. Our neighbor has lived next to us for about two years. In that time, we've seen them open their home to two different sisters in our church who needed a place to live in the final months before they got married.

## FIELD GUIDE

Sure, I bet Nick and Kaitlyn prayed that the Lord would provide. But they didn't stop with prayer. They asked themselves and the Lord, "Should we use our house to provide for these sisters' needs?" They answered that question affirmatively. I love their example in this. They truly understand Biblical boundaries in hospitality while still being radically open.

You see, sometimes a first act of hospitality shows you that there is more you can do. Maybe you learn that someone's car is broken down and they don't have a way to get to work. You happen to have an extra car that you're not planning to use that week. Would the Lord have you offer them your car for the week? Maybe. Ask him and then do what you think he would have in faith. Perhaps it isn't a car that your guest needs, but instead meals. There is a single mother of three in our church whose husband left her years ago. I could list more than ten names of other members who I know regularly seek to care for her and her children by making sure the family has hot meals on nights when the mother has to work late. This is a beautiful way of hospitality vs entertaining christian perspective—it's not about the show, it's about the soul.

What's in your hand? Whatever it is, can you use it to meet the needs of the person you've begun caring for with your hospitality? It might just be that your acts of love are the means by which they come to understand something of God's love. What a privilege.

Toward the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus teaches his disciples something of the importance of hospitality and a ministry of care. He said:

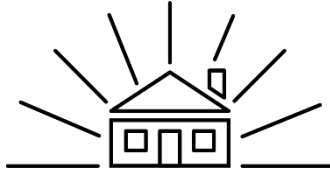
When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 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.' (Matt. 25:31-40)

## HOSPITALITY IN THE BIBLE — OPENING YOUR HOME

Meeting the needs of your fellow church members is, in a very real sense, meeting the needs of the Lord Jesus. He so associates with his people such that to do good unto them is to do it unto him. Are you beginning to see just how important hospitality and a ministry of care actually are? This is the heart of creating a welcoming home for ministry.

### ***Reflection Questions:***

1. What do you have right now that you can use to be hospitable?
2. What scares you about pursuing a ministry of hospitality in your church?
3. What excites you about hospitality?



## CONCLUSION

I love hospitality. I have been the recipient of many people's hospitality, and my wife and I have increasingly sought to be hospitable toward others. Through being hosted and showing hospitality to others, I have made friends from literally all over the world. The Lord has been kind to use both our efforts and the efforts of others on our behalf to richly bless us and to teach us something of his love for us.

Here's my bet: you will find something similar if you start being hospitable to those whom the Lord has put in your path. Use what is in your hand and use it with your whole heart as unto the Lord. Others will be blessed. You'll probably be blessed even more. And God will receive great glory.



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