

# Resources

## The Hospitality Handbook

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by Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

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# The Hospitality Handbook



Biblical hospitality is the practice of welcoming others into our lives.

Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue.

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# Notes



“The world could use more ordinary Christians opening their ordinary lives so others can see what life in light of the gospel looks like.”



## 01 Biblical Definition of Hospitality

Biblical hospitality is about honoring God by obeying His command to "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." Romans 12:13

Biblical hospitality is the practice of welcoming others into our lives. Hospitality means inviting someone to share a meal, shelter, or a ride, so you can get to know each other on a deeper level. Hospitality entails providing an environment of care for our brothers and sisters in Christ or for the stranger with whom we want to share Christ. Hospitality means gladly receiving the neighbor next door or the traveling saint in need of refreshment.

Obviously, hospitality was very important to the early Christians. In fact, New Testament writers Paul, Peter, John, and the author of Hebrews made hospitality a scriptural command, a duty!

But why should hospitality be made a command? Why should hospitality be important to Christianity? Why should it be considered a Christian virtue? What does hospitality have to do with religion?

**The word translated as "hospitality" in the New Testament is the word philoxenia, which is the combination of two words: love (phileo) and the word for stranger (xenos). It literally means "love of stranger."**

## 06 How Can I Grow in Hospitality?

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Romans 15:7

### 01 Grow in Love for Other Believers

Hospitality is an expression of earnest, genuine love. So it follows that we will grow in hospitality in the church as we grow in love for the church. Actually the arrow points both ways. Love increases our hospitality, and hospitality increases our love.

### 02 Welcome Widely

Remember, you can exercise hospitality in a number of different ways in addition to having people in your home. Take another member of your church out for lunch during the week. Give someone a ride to church or Bible study. Grab coffee with a friend. Visit an elderly member in a nursing home.

### 03 Don't Neglect the Main Course

Practice hospitality for the sake of pointing others to Jesus. Hospitality that doesn't focus on building relationships and pointing others to Christ is like serving a meal without the main course.

### 04 Aim to Bless, Not Impress

Hospitality is not about how we look but how we make Christ look. Even in hospitality we need to remember that we have died, and it is Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20).

### 05 Do the Work of Ministry

Hospitality facilitates much of the other ministry Scripture requires of Christians: evangelism, fellowship, care, and teaching. Hospitality is often the platform from which we can build up the body of Christ.



## 05 The Blessings of Hospitality

### **Christian hospitality fosters selflessness.**

Because it is other-focused and requires sacrifice, biblical hospitality will be a tool that God uses to root out self-centeredness in us.

### **Christian hospitality provides refuge.**

Our world is very broken, and increasingly so. An open home shaped by Scripture is a safe place in an unsafe wilderness. In hospitality, Christian homes are places where people are physically safe from abuse and danger.

### **Christian hospitality deepens fellowship.**

Hospitality creates time separate from the rush of daily life to come apart for a couple of hours and talk—to know and be known.

### **Christian hospitality honors the Lord.**

Practicing hospitality is part of being faithful. But like much of life, we cannot control the outcome of our hospitality. We may open our homes with the best of intentions, motives, and preparations, only to end up with strained relationships and messy kitchens.

Our job is obedience, trusting the Lord to use it in the best way, even when we can't see it. That is why practicing biblical hospitality is part of walking by faith, not by sight.



**Hospitality is not merely a practical consideration but a theological one.**

## 02 Understanding Christian Love, Family, and Community.

### **Understanding the Christian Family**

Although the New Testament writers used different images to describe the nature of the Church—the body, the bride, the temple, the flock—the most frequent is the family, particularly the fraternal aspect of the family, brethren. The terms brethren, brother, or sister occur some 250 times throughout the New Testament.

### **Understanding Christian Love**

To understand Christian love, we must look to its divine source—Jesus Christ. In order to communicate the importance of this love, our Lord issued a new commandment during the last few hours He spent with His disciples before His death: “love one another, even as I have loved you.” (John 13:34).

### **Understanding the Christian Community**

There is nothing in this world like self-sacrificing, genuine, Christian love to encourage, inspire, comfort, and build others up. But how, in practical, down-to-earth terms, do we show more genuine, Christian love and community? One clear answer is hospitality.

## 03 Christian Command to Practice Hospitality.

The subject of hospitality often stirs up fear in people's minds. It raises many uncomfortable questions. When most Christians hear about their responsibility to practice hospitality, they can think up an amazing number of creative excuses to explain why they cannot be hospitable. Yet Christians are commanded to practice hospitality.

### **Be hospitable to one another without complaint.**

Use hospitality one to another without grudging.  
1 Peter 4:9

### **Do not neglect to show hospitality.**

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.  
Hebrews 13:2

### **We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.**

We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.  
3 John 8

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### **As a way of life.**

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.  
**Romans 12:13**

### **Necessary in the example set for the church.**

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;  
1 Timothy 3:2

### **Distinctive mark of those who have lived with a Christian testimony.**

Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.  
1 Timothy 5:10

## 04 The Power of Hospitality

It's the most amazing spiritual reality: at the end of the grand redemptive narrative, God will open His home to us! John 14:2-4

### **In the early expansion of Christianity, hospitality played a key role.**

"The enthusiasm to evangelize which marked the early Christians is one of the most remarkable things in the history of religions. Here were men and women of every rank and station in life, of every country in the known world, so convinced that they had discovered the riddle of the universe, so sure of the one true God whom they had come to know, that nothing must stand in the way of their passing on this good news to others.."  
Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 236.

### **The home is a natural place of witness for the gospel message.**

In order to use our homes effectively, however, we need to expand our vision of hospitality. When we think of hospitality, we most often think of entertaining close friends and relatives. Because we are closest to these people, we naturally want to invite them to our homes. Our Lord acknowledges this closeness but also commands us to extend the circle of our hospitality to include unrelated, needy people. Luke 14:12-14

### **Hospitality provides needed encouragement to other Gospel messengers.**

As they spread the gospel and established churches throughout the vast Roman Empire, traveling evangelists and teachers depended on a network of hospitable, Christian homes to provide lodging, food, and travel expenses.