

The Hospitality Handbook

Introduction

- Hospitality is a major theme of 2 John.
- These Core Seminars allow the study and treatment of a topic.
- Being in 2 John and being the holiday season I had wanted to go here.
- However, the responses I continue to get from the community make me want to study and implement this even more.

Acknowledging people are not looking for a “friendly church” but friends.

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

O1 Biblical Definition of Hospitality

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

- In fact, New Testament writers Paul, Peter, John, and the author of Hebrews made hospitality a scriptural command, a duty!
- 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.”

Questions

- 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?

This is my prayer for us as we get started.

Hebrews 13:1 KJV

¹ Let brotherly love continue.

02 Understanding Christian Love, Family, and Community.

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

1. 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.

Christian brotherhood and sisterhood is derived solely from Jesus Christ.

- Christians are not brothers and sisters merely because they share similar ideas, interests, and circumstances, but because they share “the life of Jesus.” [2 Corinthians 4:10](#) “10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”
- They share in this life not by natural birth but by spiritual birth. [John 1:12–13](#) “12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”
- The writer of Hebrews boldly declares that Jesus Christ is not the least bit reluctant to call us, who were once vile sinners, His brothers and sisters: [Hebrews 2:11](#) “11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,”

After a ladies event someone gave Tinsley a nice note and gift card. Knowing being a PK has challenges. It meant as much or more to Stephanie than if she had gotten the card. Why? We are knit as a family

- So real is Christ’s brotherly solidarity with all His blood-bought brothers and sisters that He says that whatever is done for one of His brothers and sisters is equally done for Him: [Matthew 25:40](#) “40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

In many practical ways, the local church in the New Testament shows itself to be a close-knit family of brothers and sisters:

- The Christians greeted one another with a holy kiss. Romans 16:16
- They shared material possessions. [Acts 2:44](#)
- The early Christians met in homes. Romans 16:5

On occasion, people make the argument that churches did not meet in buildings they owned until after Constantine. As to say “what do you think the early Christians would say about our building?” I think they would say congratulations and rejoice with us. This building show aid and not be a deterrent to our life together. It does have the potential for both.

- They ate together. Acts 2:46
- They cared for their widows. Acts 6:1–6
- When appropriate, they disciplined their members. 1 Corinthians 5:6
- Brotherliness provided the guiding principle of conduct between members. [Romans 14:15](#) “15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.”
- They showed hospitality. [Acts 16:15](#) “15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”

2. 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](#)).

3. 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.***

The source of all Christian activities and relationships is Jesus Christ:

“If our brotherhood derives from Christ, so also does our *love* as brothers. His infinite love for us is the source and stimulus of our love for each other.”

- Jesus in his final hours gives this new commandment. [John 13:34–35](#) “34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
- The Greek word group for love—*agapē* in some form appears approximately 320 times in the New Testament.
- Love is to be the distinctive *Mark of the Christian*.

Paul goes so far as to say that if a Christian could speak with

- angelic language
- know everything about the Bible and God
- exercise faith greater than Abraham
- give everything away to the poor
- become a missionary martyr
- it would all amount to a giant zero if it was not done in love.

We are challenged to continue in this love.

- Even when it is true among us, let it increase more and more. [1 Thessalonians 4:9–10](#) “9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. 10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;”
- To the Christians in Rome, Paul writes, [Romans 12:10](#) “10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;”
- Peter tells us to love from the heart. [1 Peter 1:22](#) “22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:”
- Peter also tells us that this is the supreme virtue. [1 Peter 4:8](#) “8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”
- John joins in the chorus describing the extent of our love. [1 John 3:16](#) “16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

Man saying he wasn't sure he was fast enough to take a bullet for his wife. Maybe a sword. We are to love one another in this way.

- John goes on even further to say [1 John 3:14](#) “14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” / Right before this is the comparison of Cain and Abel. A love for self manifests itself as hate for your brother.

Christianity's teaching on love is unparalleled in the history of religion.

- Tertullian, tells us that the pagans of his day had to acknowledge the extraordinary love of the Christians.
- The pagans were forced to say, “See ... how they love one another ... and how ready they are to die for each other.” “hardly have they met when they love each other.... Indiscriminately they call each other brother and sister.” / makes me want to give a Marine “**Ooh-rah**”
- The famous Bible translator, James Moffatt, adds the point that “no church has any prospect of stability or chance of existence in the sight of God if it neglects brotherly love.”

If what I have read this week is true, then there are churches who need to represent of their lack of Christian love. Story told of a man who was told the price of his seat.

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.

1. **Be hospitable to one another without complaint.** [1 Peter 4:9](#) “9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.”
2. **Do not neglect to show hospitality.** [Hebrews 13:2](#) “2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”
3. **We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.** [3 John 8](#) “8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.”
4. **Necessary in the example set for the church.** [1 Timothy 3:2](#) “2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;”
5. **Distinctive mark of those who have lived with a Christian testimony.** [1 Timothy 5:2](#) “2 The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.”
6. **As a way of life.** [Romans 12:13](#) “13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”

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](#) “2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”

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.

05 The Blessing 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.

06 How can I grow in Hospitality?

1. 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.

The major New Testament exhortations to practice hospitality all appear within the context of brotherly love:

- The Hebrews 13 passage starts with, “Let brotherly love continue.” The writer immediately follows his exhortation to brotherly love with the admonition to not neglect hospitality (Hebrews 13:1,2).
- Peter charges his readers to “... keep fervent in your love for one another.” The next thing he says is, “Be hospitable to one another without complaint” (1 Peter 4:8a,9).
- Paul’s exhortation to pursue hospitality is found within the larger context of brotherly love and Christian relationships (Romans 12:13).
- Gaius’ hospitality to unknown, itinerant brethren was reported to the church and described as “your love” (3 John 5–8).

Love increases our hospitality, and hospitality increases our love.

2. Welcome Widely

[Romans 15:7](#) “7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.”

- Open your heart and welcome your brothers and sisters into your life for the glory of God.
- 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.

3. 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.
- Remember [Luke 10](#), Jesus didn’t rebuke Mary for her lack of hospitality. He rebuked Martha.

4. 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. [Galatians 2:20](#) “20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

- One need not be wealthy to be generous. [2 Corinthians 8:1–2](#) “1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”
- One of Jesus’s most amazing miracles was an act of supernatural hospitality—feeding a meal to over five thousand men, women, and children (John 6). But go back and read that story again. You’ll find Jesus didn’t want people to focus on the food. He wanted the focus on him and his teaching (6:35).

5. 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.

- Hospitality toward gospel-workers is all over Paul’s epistles.
- Paul includes “hospitable” in the list of the qualifications for pastors, also called elders (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- It is vital to the work of the Lord.

Resources

Provides a Powerful Testimony

- The Gospel Comes with a House Key by Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

Helpful Resources for this Study

- How Can I Grow in Hospitality?, Church Questions by Keri Folmar.
- The Hospitality Commands by Alexander Strauch

Recommended for Men

- The Simplest Way to Change the World: Biblical Hospitality as a Way of Life by Dustin Willis

Recommended for Women

- Holy Hygge: Creating a Place for People to Gather and the Gospel to Grow by Jaime Erickson