



SERIES: MY LIFE WITH GOD

Heavenly Hospitality

Life Reference: Luke 14:12-14; Hebrews 13:2

Focus Verse:

"Given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13b).

The hotdog rested majestically in the center of the fine bone china plate. The five-year-old cowboy never noticed the intricate design or lovely gold rim. All he saw was the food fixed just for him. Mom and the other ladies present that day enjoyed ladylike fare presented prettily on that same Lennox pattern. Attentive to detail, the hostess served a delicious lunch, and each guest—young and old—felt loved and special.



I observed and learned that day that true hospitality is the ability to make each guest feel comfortable and welcome. The attitude of the hostess rather than the expensiveness of the china created an atmosphere of warmth that even cowboys could enjoy.



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Life Reflection:

Do you enjoy being a hostess and opening your home to others?

Do you feel there is there a difference between entertaining and showing hospitality?

In our busyness we sometimes feel we do not have the time or the money to entertain. Some are reluctant to invite others into their home because they fear they will be judged on the fineness of their furniture, the gleam of the crystal, or if a gourmet menu. Hospitality is more than "things." Some of the best times of friendship and sharing may be nothing more than Coke and cookies, a paper plate instead of Mikasa or Royal Albert. A relaxed, simple time together appeals to most people. The fellowship makes the occasion, not the trappings. Don't wait until everything is picture-perfect before inviting someone in.

It is possible for entertaining to become "me focused" rather than true hospitality which is "you focused." Do we strive to impress others with our home or show off our cooking skills? Do we invite those of the same social level and exclude the "lowly"? Does everything have to be perfect? If so, we are merely entertaining, not offering hospitality.

If our goal is to make others comfortable and create an atmosphere in which they can relax and fellowship together, then we are being hospitable. They won't care if the casserole is a bit crusty and the cake leans a few degrees. It's the warmth they feel and the realization that we like them for themselves rather than their social standing or what we expect in return.

Life Reflection:

Think of a time that you were entertained in someone's home. Did you feel a bit out of place and uncomfortable? Why do think this was so?

Can you think of a time when you were thoroughly relaxed and comfortable as a guest in someone's home? What was the difference?



Hospitality is biblical, a quality expected of the child of God. Titus 1:7-8 lists it as one qualification for the office of bishop, while I Timothy 5:10 says women in the congregation who are "widows indeed" should also exhibit it. Paul commended Phoebe, a saint in the church in Cenchrca, because she "hath been a succourer of many" (Romans 16:2).

We often limit our hospitality to those closest to us. While we think of young people as moving in cliques, adults also frequently stay within the same small social group. We don't take the time to expand our social contacts beyond those comfortable few. The Bible, however, speaks of three distinct groups to whom we should offer hospitality: strangers, our enemies, and fellow believers.

The Stranger

In Bible times, before the days of name brand hotels or the motel that "leaves the light on for you," the traveler was taken into the homes of townspeople (Job 31:32). Abraham quickly extended an invitation in Genesis 18 when three men came by. He really did entertain "angels unaware" that day (Hebrews 13:2). Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:35-40 that offering hospitality to the stranger is offering hospitality to Him.

- "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

While few of us will stand by the interstate and invite the unknown traveler into our homes, we should consider inviting the lonely widow, the single mom, a new neighbor, or a couple from church with no family nearby.

Our Enemy

Romans 12:20 asks us to do something more difficult.

- "Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink."

We find it easier to avoid difficult people (even those who may be a relative). The problem may simply be that we look at situations from a different perspective. By bringing this person closer to us, we may learn to understand each other's point of view and thus gain a friend. Even if there is real unfriendliness, if we make the effort to reach out to her, we may discover that her attitude is not directed at us personally but at circumstances in her life. Make it a matter of prayer, and ask God to give you wisdom in how to befriend her.



Fellow Believers

The third group of potential guests is other members of the body Christ.

- “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

These are the ones we probably fellowship with most often anyway. However, we can learn to use hospitality as a means of offering encouragement during difficult times or helping the lonely feel part of the body of Christ. (Also read I Peter 4:9 and III John 5.)

Life Reflection:

Of the three groups—stranger, enemy, fellow believer—to which would you have the most difficulty in offering hospitality?

Which would be easiest for you to invite into your home?

Life Response:

When you think of offering hospitality to others, what comes to mind?

- I'll have family and friends over.
- I just don't have what it takes to do it right.
- My home isn't nice enough.
- I'm too busy.
- It's too much work and too expensive.
- It's nice to do, but it doesn't have any lasting consequences.

Sometimes we offer the excuse that we just aren't that talented as a hostess. Others have “the gift,” but we don't. True, some are more comfortable in that role, but hospitality is not a special spiritual gift that only a few have received. It is something we all can—and should—do willingly. (Attitude does count.)



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- “Use hospitality one to another without grudging” (I Peter 4:9).

Perhaps one of the most important ways in which we can use hospitality is to reach out to those who do not know the Lord or who do not have a strong relationship with Him. If we respond to them with genuine friendship and concern, they will see the Lord in our lives and desire to know Him in a greater way.

Life Reflection:

How can we use hospitality to reach others with the gospel?

Consider ways you can open your heart and home to someone new. Ask God to direct you to that person outside your usual circle, someone who cannot reciprocate. You will find that the blessing is yours and your life will be enriched with new relationships (Luke 14:14).

My Prayer

Lord, help me to be open to others and willing to offer hospitality. Help me to understand that as I do unto others, I am doing unto You. Lead me to those who need fellowship and friendship, and let my home be a haven of peace to those who enter its doors.

More Life with God References

Deuteronomy 10:18-19
Isaiah 58:7-8
Luke 10:30-37
Acts 4:32-38
Hebrews 13:2
James 2:14-16

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