

Hospitality Pt. 1

I. Introduction

- A. What is it that ought to mark the Christian community?
- B. John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are my disciples..." What was it? "If you love one another." Love ought to mark Christian community.
- C. Christian love, of course, flows out of the gospel.
 1. 1 John 3:16 "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us."
 2. 1 John 4:19 "We love because he first loved us."
 3. Luke 7:41-43 "'Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?' Simon replied, 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.' 'You have judged correctly,' Jesus said."
(Perhaps share the whole periscope Luke 7:36-43 for context.)
 4. We need to soak in God's love for us, so immense that he would send his one and only Son, who lived the life that we should--but don't--live, who died the death that we deserve, so that by faith in him--not by anything we do--we can have new life.
- D. How can we live out and demonstrate Christian love to those around us?
 1. One of the more powerful ways in which Christian love can be demonstrated is in *hospitality*, which is why we will be spending the next two weeks digging into this topic.
 2. We will explore the following questions:
 - i. What does the Bible teach about hospitality?
 - ii. How does hospitality demonstrate the gospel?
 - iii. How can I show hospitality in the context that I live in?

II. What is hospitality?

- A. Dictionary (answers.com): "Cordial and generous reception of or disposition toward guests"

- B. Vine's Expository Dictionary: "Love of strangers" (from *philoxenia*)
- C. Me (probably from Jeff Vandersteldt): "Receiving those who are not family as if they were family"
 - 1. I like this way of thinking about hospitality because it highlights how the gospel is demonstrated in hospitality. God invites us into his family even though we were his enemies, even though we deserved nothing but hostility from him, instead, through Christ, we receive a warm welcome.
- D. Quote from Alexander Strauch: "Hospitality fleshes out love in a uniquely personal and sacrificial way. Through the ministry of hospitality, we share our most prized possessions. We share our family, home, finances, food, privacy, and time. Indeed, we share our very lives. So, hospitality is always costly. Through the ministry of hospitality, we provide friendship, acceptance, fellowship, refreshment, comfort, and love in one of the deepest way possible for humans to understand. Unless we open the doors of our homes to one another, the reality of the local church as a close-knit family of brothers and sisters is only a theory." (p. 17)

III. Hospitality as a commanded as an expression of love

- A. All the NT commands to practice hospitality are in the context of love. It is one of the practical expressions of Christian love that are expected of believers. (It is not *the exclusive* expression of love, but it is certainly one of them.)
- B. 1 Pet 4:8-9 "Above all, love each other deeply.... Offer *hospitality* to one another without grumbling."
- C. Rom 12:13 "Love must be sincere. ... Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. ... Share with God's people who are in need. Practice *hospitality*."
- D. Heb 13:1-2 "Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers (Gk=hospitality), for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

IV. Hospitality is an expected part of growing in Christian maturity, something that we cultivate.

- A. 1 Tim 3:2 (Qualifications for overseer/pastor/elder) "Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, *hospitable*, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but

gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well....”

- B. 1 Tim 5: 10 (Qualifications for widows list) “No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, *showing hospitality*, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.”

V. Hospitality in the example of the early church

A. Toward traveling missionaries and evangelists

1. Acts 9:43 - Peter stayed with Simon the tanner in Joppa, where Cornelius sent for him.
2. Acts 16:15 - Timothy, Paul, and Silas stayed with Lydia in Philippi
3. Philemon 22 - Paul intended to stay with Philemon when he was released from prison
4. Rom 16:23 - Gaius hosted Paul and the church

B. Toward strangers, the poor and marginalized (Turn to Luke 14: 1,5-14)

1. Huh? *Don't* invite friends or well-to-do neighbors?
2. Well, sort of. Your friends and rich neighbors need the love of Christ, too.
3. BUT, remember that the kingdom of God is upside-down. The well-to-do get worldly privileges, but the poor and marginalized will be privileged in the kingdom.
4. I don't want to overemphasize this aspect, but I do think that this is going to be our biggest challenge.

C. Toward relatives, friends, and neighbors

1. Acts 5:42 - Early Christians met house to house
2. Acts 20:20 - In Ephesus, the church met house to house and Paul taught there
3. Luke 5:29 - Levi invited Jesus to dine with him and a bunch of his tax-collector friends

VI. Hospitality provides a great context

- A. For developing friendships in which you can share the gospel
- B. For discipleship
- C. For bringing together your believing friends and your unbelieving friends.
Sometimes someone else will have the opportunity to speak truth in a way that you wouldn't

VII. Practical issues

- A. Opening your home vs. Expressing love by opening your home
- B. Hospitality vs. Pride
 - 1. Are you more concerned about looking good or about making guests comfortable?
 - 2. Is it about you or is it about them?
 - 3. Examples
 - i. Cleaning old apartment before community group came over
 - ii. Getting out real glasses for Scott and Alyssa
- C. Potential objections
 - 1. My life situation doesn't allow me to open my home at this time? (e.g. live with parents or roommates, insufficient apt. conditions or resources)
 - 2. It's awkward!
 - 3. My neighbors will think I'm weird.
 - 4. I can't cook.
 - 5. I'm not a good/naturally gifted host.
 - 6. I'm too busy.
 - 7. Maybe more will come up in your discussion at tables
- D. Response to objections
 - 1. Hospitality isn't the only way to express love toward people. Whether or not hospitality is possible, we should love our neighbors and our brothers and sisters in Christ and find tangible ways to express that.

2. The call to hospitality isn't just for *right now*. This is something that God calls us to as part of our lifestyle until he calls us home. As you make choices about where and how to live, keep hospitality in mind as one of your objectives.
3. Practice is going to be the best way to get better at hospitality. It's not important that you have a scrumptious meal or that your house be immaculate. What counts is love. Giving of your time and inviting others into your life is what will really count.
4. We're not all gifted at teaching or evangelism or encouragement either, but we are all called to do what we can in the power of the Holy Spirit. When we reach limitations in what we feel like we can do, that should drive us not to discouragement but back to the gospel.
5. The more sensitive we become to the needs of those around us and the opportunities to minister Christ, the "less time" we will have because we will be busy on the mission of God.
 - i. If you feel busy and you're busy on the mission of God, *don't feel guilty*; "the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few" (Luke 10:2). Keep it up!
 - ii. If you feel busy and you're busy on the mission of ME, then I think God would be calling you to embrace the gospel--what Christ has done for you in reconciling you to God--receive that, and join His mission.
6. If hospitality is not your strongest gift, be wise and don't try to make it your primary ministry. But don't give up on it.

VIII. Conclusion

- A. Christian hospitality is going to be hard.
- B. Nonetheless I believe that we need to work hard at it. I think this will be a tremendous expression of our love toward one another and of our love toward our neighbors.
- C. I encourage you, don't pursue hospitality because you *are supposed to* as a "good Christian". Pursue hospitality because God has so lavished his love upon you that it oozes out in everything that you do.
- D. Next week we'll have a special guest speaker, someone who has been living out a lifestyle of hospitality, who will help us unpack this some more and dig into some of the practical issues more.

IX. Regen Reflection

- A. Share about a time that someone has demonstrated hospitality toward you and how that affected you.
- B. What are the difficulties that you face in showing hospitality?