

LIVING SENT

Week Three: Hospitality God's Way

INTRODUCTION

Here in rural North Carolina, we're familiar with hospitality – specifically, Southern hospitality. Perhaps you've enjoyed being the host with the most. Your desire is for every guest to feel welcome – like family. Or you've been on the receiving end of this display of hospitality. There was freshly brewed SWEET tea, front porch sittin', unhurried conversation, a home-cooked meal, an indulgent dessert, and a plethora of goodbyes including, "Y'all come back now, ya hear". Sound familiar? You may even be living this scenario right now if you're walking through this study in a group setting. While there's nothing wrong with this picture, let's take a deeper dive into biblical hospitality.

BIBLICAL MATERIAL

The concept of hospitality is introduced very early in Genesis, by God, as he welcomes Adam (mankind) into his own perfect creation. This portrait of welcoming hospitality is continually modeled throughout the Old Testament. Abraham welcomes strangers to rest after their long journey (Genesis 18:2-8). Elijah receives the hospitality of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17-18). Elisha is hosted by the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4).

Hospitality became central to the identity of God's people as they were reminded of the hospitality that had been shown to them. Leviticus 19:34 commands, "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." This commandment is echoed in Deuteronomy 10:19. Later, God's prophets remind Israel and Judah that they will be judged based on their care for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger – that is, by the degree to which they provide outsiders the privileges that naturally belong to those who are part of their community.

In the New Testament, Jesus practiced hospitality and received it from others. Eating with sinners and tax collectors was more than simply sharing a meal. Jesus was identifying with them and bringing them into his community. Jesus feeding the five thousand (Luke 9:10-17) was an astonishing, miraculous, and compassionate act of hospitality. The disciples wanted to send the huge crowd away to seek provision for themselves, but Jesus told the disciples to feed these strangers – to treat them as if they are insiders, part of their community.

The following New Testament passages contain the word hospitality (in the ESV): Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 5:10; Hebrews 13:2; and 1 Peter 4:9. These verses reveal that hospitality is both action and affection. It is both receiving and loving a stranger. Hospitality without love is not biblical hospitality. 1 Peter 4:9 tells us to "show hospitality to one another without grumbling".

Biblical hospitality is the glad welcome of the stranger. It is engaging the stranger with both our hands and our hearts.

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MISSIONARY TASK RELEVANCY

We see in the New Testament that hospitality became a basis for evangelism in the early church. In ancient Rome, hospitality was typically shown for people of great earthly importance. But believers in the early church began to extend hospitality to all, even to the least.

As we discuss and develop relationship building, we must not forget hospitality to the least – to the stranger. May we do as Jesus did and cultivate a reputation of love and hospitality that leads to gospel conversations and Kingdom growth.



LIFE APPLICATION

As you seek to grow in hospitality, consider these strategies:

- Pray that our hospitable God would provide you joy in demonstrating his character to others.
- Start simple by spontaneously inviting someone to your home to eat a meal after church.
- Identify people who would be encouraged by an offer of hospitality and then make it happen – more than once!

If you've been a recipient of hospitality, whether from a believer or not, discuss your experience.

Read the following NT passages (previously referenced) containing the word hospitality and discuss practical life application: [Romans 12:9-13](#); [Hebrews 13:1-2](#); and [1 Peter 4:8-10](#)

What other biblical examples or stories of hospitality come to your mind? Discuss the character and heart of the one offering hospitality. Also discuss the effect that hospitality may have had on the recipient.

What challenges do you face when it comes to offering hospitality to a stranger?

Read Matthew 25:31-46. Let these words of Jesus sink in. While we aren't saved by our works, we know that a life in Christ is filled with fruit and evidence of good works. We discussed two weeks ago that our works are meant to show God's glory to others. How does offering hospitality to the stranger reflect the gospel and show God's glory to others?

Hospitality goes hand-in-hand with generosity. It will cost you of your time, money, and/or energy. Sacrifice may likely be involved. Knowing this, how can you practice hospitality (and generosity) "without grumbling", and with a joyful heart, as stated in 1 Peter 4:9?

Brainstorm a list of simple ways that you can practice hospitality. Get creative! Not every act of hospitality has to be a home-cooked meal.