

Community of Hospitality

1 Peter 4:8-9, Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2

Scripture

1 Peter 4:8-9—⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.
⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. (NIV)
 Romans 12:13—¹³ Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. (NIV)
 Hebrews 13:2— Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. (NAS)

Main Idea

Background & Focus

Tim Keller defines biblical hospitality using 4 aspects: "Hospitality is 1) generously and regularly sharing your material possessions and especially your home and food 2) with an open heart and attitude 3) seeking to turn strangers into brothers and sisters and friends 4) out of gratitude and joy for Jesus' radical hospitality to us.

The basic definition of hospitality is "love of strangers". It was valued and practiced in the ancient world – but it was done periodically and mainly toward travelers. The NT transformed the practice of hospitality into a habitual practice for those in the church. As people joined the family of God through their belief in the gospel, hospitality became imperative if the church would go from a group of strangers into a loving family.

I've included the verse from Hebrews but didn't write a specific question linked to it. There may be a question about the whole angels thing. There are a number of ways people have interpreted this but, based on context of the entire book, I think the best way to understand this is as a reference to Abraham's hospitality to the 3 mysterious strangers in Genesis 18.

The focus of this study is to see the necessity of hospitality flow out of our belief in the gospel. The gospel calls us to open up our lives to one another in order that we might bless others and in order that we might receive blessing. The opening up of our lives can only happen at a superficial level without the opening up of our homes, our things, and our time to one another. Because God has shown us radical hospitality in the gospel (we've gone from strangers to family), we show radical hospitality to one another.

Starters

- What was it like the first time you met your spouse's family? What was it like when you realized you'd be joining the family?

Discussion

Q1: How would you describe our culture's attitude toward hospitality (the sharing of our homes, our things, and our time)? Do you see these attitudes reflected in your own practice and idea of sharing your home, your things, and your time?

Q2: Hospitality is mentioned often in the bible. Besides the verses above, it is also included in the list of qualifications for church leadership/elders (1 Tim 3:2, Titus 1:8). Why do you think hospitality is so important to God?

Q3: Peter (1 Pt. 4:9) makes it a point to tell us to avoid grumbling and complaining when practicing hospitality. What kind of things might we grumble about when being hospitable and what kind of heart attitudes do these things reveal? And what about when we are shown hospitality?

Q4. In Rom. 12:13, Paul says we should “practice” hospitality. The word “practice” can be translated “pursue” or “continuously work hard at”. As a group, brainstorm some ideas for establishing the habit of being hospitable in each of your families.

Q5: The gospel says that each one of us has experienced God’s hospitality in Christ, each one of us has gone from stranger to family member. Look at Ephesians 2:

¹²remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ...¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, (italics added for emphasis)

How can God’s hospitality be the model and the motivation for ours as His people?

Prayer

Try to pinpoint your/your family's biggest barrier in becoming radically hospitable. Share this barrier with the group and pray that God might transform your heart and your habits into a reflection of his welcoming hospitality in the gospel.