

Hospitality

Acts 21:15-17

Introduction: Have you ever heard someone make the observation: “That church isn’t hospitable enough.” Such a statement is often made to condemn the group for its failure to cater to the offended individual. Yet, the statement begs two questions:

1. What is meant by hospitable?
2. How much hospitality is enough?

I. The worldly views of hospitality.

A. By hospitality, worldly people today mean entertainment. Therefore, if you don’t invite others to dinners and parties, you are not hospitable.

B. These same people seem to rate hospitality by how well they have been entertained. If they had a good time, then that was hospitable. For example, casinos refer to themselves as hospitality centers. People who are entertained by gambling and getting drunk think of such places as hospitable.

C. The world confuses the true meaning of hospitality. In Kearney, Missouri, they have a Hospitality Inn; it’s a bed and breakfast on Jefferson Street. Yet, you pay for that hospitality when you leave the next morning. The hospitality is not freely given.

D. When people view hospitality in these manners, it is no wonder churches are condemned by the worldly. If only a few members hold dinner parties, then the church as a whole has a lack of hospitality. If they deem the get together dull, then it doesn’t count as being hospitable.

E. Unfortunately, many churches are considered hospitable when they have parties during church, coffee and donuts in the foyer, gymnasiums and fellowship halls. These churches are expected to organize social events, dinners, theatrical plays, and concerts all designed to entertain.

II. The scriptural meaning of hospitality.

A. Hospitable (philoxenos) - a compound word meaning “love of” + “strangers.”

1. Strangers (xenos) aren’t necessarily someone you never met. In Matthew 25:35-44, strangers refer to other Christians (Matt. 25:35, 40).

2. Christians are often referred to as strangers (Heb. 11:13-16; 1 Pet. 2:11).

3. All Christians (strangers) are to treat each other with love and hospitality (1 Pet. 4:8-9).

a. The idea here is that we must care for each other since we are all strangers and citizens of another place (Phil. 3:20).

b. An excellent example of early Christian hospitality was written by Aristide about 125 A.D.

“The Christians, O King, went about and searched, and they have found the truth. As I have learned from their writings, they have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations. ... Falsehood is not found among them. And they love one another. They do not turn away their care from widows, and they deliver the orphan from anyone who treats him harshly. He who has, gives to him who has not. And this is done without boasting. When they see a stranger, they take him into their homes, and they rejoice over him as a very brother. For they do not call themselves brothers after the flesh, but brothers after the spirit and in God. Whenever one of the poor among them passes from this world, each one of them gives heed to him, according to his ability, and carefully sees to his burial. And if they hear that one of their number is imprisoned or afflicted because of the name of their Christ, all of them carefully attend to his needs. If it is possible to redeem him, they set him free. If there are any poor and needy among them, but if they have no spare food to give, they fast two or three days in order to supply the necessary food to the needy.”

4. Elders are required to be hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8).

B. Hospitality (philoxenia) - a compound word meaning “love of” + “guest room.”

1. This is a person who loves to have guests.

2. Practicing hospitality means having people spend time in your home, especially as overnight guests (Rom. 12:13).

3. Hospitality among early Christians enabled the messengers of the gospel to spread God’s word (Heb. 13:2; 3 John 5).

C. Show hospitality (xenodocheo) - a compound word meaning “stranger” + “lodging.”

1. It is only used in reference to the qualification of a needy widow (1 Tim. 5:10).

2. Interestingly, we find numerous examples of lodging other Christians:

a. Gaius had Paul in his home (Rom. 16:23).

b. Simon the tanner had Peter lodge in his home (Acts 10:5-6).

c. Mnason lodged Paul and his traveling companions (Acts 21:15-17).

III. The difference between the worldly view and the scriptural meaning.

A. The world places the emphasis on entertainment. The scriptures place the emphasis on the treatment of brethren.

1. Gaius aided brethren who traveled through his area and sent them on in a worthy manner (3 John 5-8).

2. Dorcas made clothes for her sisters in Christ (Acts 9:36, 39).

3. Just giving a cup of water to a brother is commendable (Mark 9:41).

B. Hospitality isn't:

1. Measured by the number of people you invite to dinner.

2. How often we may have get togethers.

3. Dependent upon the size home we have or the time it takes to cook for others.

4. How well we were entertained.

C. Hospitality is:

1. How we treat other brethren.

2. Treating brethren as family. When family comes to town, hospitality is treating brethren the same way. Think how you would treat your extended family and then do the same for the brethren.

3. Taking care of a brother's needs whether it is a place to stay, a meal, or a cup of water.

Conclusion: Hospitality is a type of brotherly love (1 John 3:13-19). If you love your brethren, show it by your hospitality. When other brethren pass through, show your hospitality by taking care of their needs just as you would for a family member. We are all pilgrims in a foreign land. Let us help one another out. That is when we are truly hospitable.