

# PRACTICING BIBLICAL HOSPITALITY

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*Often when we talk about hospitality, we think of “entertaining.” But entertaining has little to do with real hospitality if the goal is to impress others rather than to serve. How do you know if you are being hospitable or just entertaining?*

*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: I am the Lord your God. (Lev. 19:34 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev.%2019.34>))*

What are the first thoughts that come to mind when you think about hospitality?

Is it freshly folded towels and breakfast buffets at hotels, or a fancy dinner that you’ve prepared in your home for your closest friends?

Though these may be expressions of hospitality, they don’t really get to the heart of hospitality. True hospitality is sacrificial, uncomfortable, and does not seek to impress others. Hospitality flows from a hospitable heart. It is more about your open heart and home, not your impressive entertaining skills.

## REDEFINING HOSPITALITY

As I write this from my neighborhood coffee shop, I am reflecting on the conversation I just had with a lady in her sixties next to me. I started talking with her and learned about how she is struggling to find work. She opened up to me, a stranger, about her struggles and allowed me to see her need. I responded warmly and asked further questions, leaving her reflective and thankful to have chatted.

# True hospitality is sacrificial, uncomfortable, and does not seek to impress others.

God gave me an opportunity to be hospitable to this woman. I didn't have her in my home, but I invited her heart to be shared. Hospitality is when we provide for the needs of others by giving of ourselves—even something as simple as our attention in a warm conversation.

## WHAT IS BIBLICAL HOSPITALITY?

In the Bible, the original Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia*, which means *love of strangers* ([Rom. 12:13](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%2012.13) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%2012.13>)). Hospitality is also framed as a means of honoring and loving God by meeting the needs of the poor ([Prov. 14:31](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.%2014.31) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.%2014.31>)).

Biblical hospitality is:

To be practiced without grumbling, complaining or thought of reward ([1 Pet. 4:9](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.%204.9) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.%204.9>)).

Literally, “a love for strangers” ([Heb. 13:1–2](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.%2013.1%E2%80%932) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.%2013.1%E2%80%932>)), treating fellow believers ([Rom. 12:3](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%2012.3) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%2012.3>); [1 Tim. 3:2](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.%203.2) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.%203.2>)), widows, orphans ([1 Tim. 5:1–16](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.%205.1%E2%80%9316) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.%205.1%E2%80%9316>)), unbelievers ([Luke 5:29](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%205.29) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%205.29>)), the poor and needy ([Luke 14:12–14](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2014.12%E2%80%9314) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2014.12%E2%80%9314>)), missionaries ([Matt. 10:9–11](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.%2010.9%E2%80%9311) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.%2010.9%E2%80%9311>); [Luke 10:5–16](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2010.5%E2%80%9316) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2010.5%E2%80%9316>)), foreigners, immigrants, refugees ([Gen. 18:1–22](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.%2018.1%E2%80%9322) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.%2018.1%E2%80%9322>)), and even enemies ([Rom. 12:20](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%2012.20) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%2012.20>)) as if they were your very own family.

Helping the poor with no expectation of repayment ([Prov. 19:17](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.%2019.17) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.%2019.17>)).

Meeting the basic needs of others. (e.g., preparing food, providing lodging, giving physical protection, sharing material possessions, and encouraging and sharing the love of Jesus.

Biblical hospitality is when we give ourselves willingly to the needs of others. It is bigger than food and shelter. It is the outpouring of mercy and grace from God to others, without expectation for reciprocation. Jesus said in [Luke 14:12b–13](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2014.12b%E2%80%9313) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2014.12b%E2%80%9313>), “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

## HOSPITALITY VERSUS ENTERTAINING

Often when we talk about hospitality, we think of “entertaining.” But entertaining has little to do with real hospitality. Secular entertaining is a terrible bondage. Its source is human pride. Demanding perfecting, fostering the urge to impress, it is a rigorous taskmaster that enslaves. In contrast, scriptural

hospitality is a freedom that liberates. Entertaining says, “I want to impress you with my beautiful home, my clever decorating, my gourmet cooking.” Hospitality, however, seeks to minister. It says, “This home is not mine. It is truly a gift from my Master. I am his servant, and I use it as he desires.”

**Biblical hospitality is the outpouring of mercy and grace to others without expectation for reciprocation.**

As we prepare our homes for hosting a dinner, we also can prepare our hearts to serve those who enter. As Karen Mains [writes](http://www.amazon.com/dp/1578490367/?tag=theresurgence-20) (<http://www.amazon.com/dp/1578490367/?tag=theresurgence-20>), “Hospitality does not try to impress, but to serve.” How do you know if you are being hospitable or just entertaining?

<b>ENTERTAINING</b>	<b>HOSPITALITY</b>
I want to look good	I want Jesus to look good
Emphasis on food or outer appearance	Emphasis on the hearts of those in your home
Preoccupied or apologetic about messes	Humbled by the mess and can still serve
Goal: To impress	Goal: To serve

## **WHY SHOULD WE BE HOSPITABLE?**

Hospitality should flow naturally from Jesus’ love for us. If we have been saved from sin, death is no longer our home. Our home is Jesus. He gave us life, food, shelter, and hope. Our foundation is that we love because he first loved us ([1 John 4:19](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%204.19) (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%204.19>)). He is the ultimate host, giving us abundant life. As we stand on this beautiful truth, we can be hospitable and loving to others, compelled by God’s grace that we then extend to people around us.

### **1. GOD IS HOSPITABLE**

Rescuing and redeeming us with his deep love, God is the most hospitable of all. The gift of Jesus is the most hospitable gift in history, and we are made alive through it daily. Made to reflect his love, we reach out to others, inviting them to see God as he is.

### **2. IT’S EVANGELISTIC**

When we extend ourselves to meet the needs of others, we are saying something about the God we serve. Are we quick to tell why we are hospitable? Are we proud of God and his hospitality toward us? If we share our homes, we also share our hearts and the reason for the love we extend.

### **3. IT SHOWS ACCEPTANCE**

As Christine Pohl [writes](http://www.amazon.com/dp/0802844316/?tag=theresurgence-20) (<http://www.amazon.com/dp/0802844316/?tag=theresurgence-20>), “In hospitality, the stranger is welcomed into a safe, personal, and comfortable place, a place of respect and acceptance and friendship.”

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[http://www.amazon.com/Everyday-Worship-Work-Heart-Jesus/dp/178191155X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1378317697&sr=8-1&keywords=everyday+worship](http://www.amazon.com/Everyday-Worship-Work-Heart-Jesus/dp/178191155X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1378317697&sr=8-1&keywords=everyday+worship)

*This post was adapted from Trisha Wilkerson's new book [Everyday Worship: Our Work, Heart, and Jesus](http://www.amazon.com/dp/178191155X/?tag=theresurgence-20) (<http://www.amazon.com/dp/178191155X/?tag=theresurgence-20>).*