

Spiritual Discipline of Hospitality
Luke 2:1-7, Romans 12:13
December 7, 2014

Read Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2 & 1 Peter 4:8-10

1. What do these verses say to you about the practice of hospitality in the life of every follower of Jesus?
 - a. How would you define hospitality?
 - b. Where can you practice hospitality in places other than your own home?
 - c. How can you help make your church a more hospitable environment each time you come?
2. What potential blessings can you see coming from practicing hospitality?

Read 1 Timothy 3:2 & Titus 1:8

3. We don't often consider hospitality as a qualification for leadership, yet Paul certainly did. How does the practice of hospitality display the kind of maturity in following Jesus that we would want in our leaders?
 - a. How would you rate your level of hospitality?
 - b. Where are you more likely to be hospitable to others? Less likely?

Read 1 Timothy 5:9-10

4. Here is another place in the New Testament writings where the idea of hospitality appears in a context we might least expect it. What surprises you about the inclusion of 'being kind to strangers' as a criteria for the support of the church community?
 - a. What does this say about how strongly the early church viewed hospitality as a practice?

Scripture Memorization:
Romans 12:13

Hospitality

Spiritual disciplines are practices that help prepare us to listen for and follow the voice of God. Another way of phrasing this is they are practices that put us in a position to listen or follow the leading of God. Hospitality as a practice is something that will put us in a position to see God work around us and in us.

Hospitality is simply the practice of seeking to make others "feel at home" in whatever environment you find yourself in. We often associate it with our own homes, but our understanding should extend to any place we find ourselves. The word in the New Testament translated "hospitality" comes from the Greek word that literally means "love of strangers. So this is a practice not just for those "we know and are already comfortable with, but anyone in our lives.

Hospitality was a core practice of the early church and was an important aspect of why the followers of Jesus enjoyed the goodwill of those around them (Acts 2:42-27). This practice is not just for some either, but is repeatedly commanded in the New Testament (Romans 12:13, 1 Peter 4:8-10). Hospitality was considered so basic to Christian conduct that widows who did not exercise hospitality were actually instructed to be left off the list for support (1 Tim. 5:9-10).

This likely sounds strange to some of us, and intimidating to others. Yet, consider the example of Jesus... He became human to help us become more comfortable with God. He also welcomed all people into His company, spending time with any who wanted to be with Him, including prostitutes, tax collectors, Pharisees, fishermen, women and children. Remember hospitality is not just limited to the home; it is limited to where you are in the moment and to who is with you at that time.

Yes, some of us have the gift of hospitality. My personal example is Bridget's Aunt Verda who recently passed away. It didn't matter what was going on or the state of her house, you were made to feel welcome no matter who you were. All of us as followers of Jesus are called to make others welcome in our lives.

Hospitality encourages people to be open about their lives and their needs, and to share where they are at. It's about making people feel at home so they can be themselves, even if that is something very different than what or who you are.

Practices For Anybody:

- Remember a time when you were particularly made welcome and open to share with those around you. What was done for you? How can you do the same for another person this week?
- Develop the practice of praying for the people you invite to your home, regardless of the reason (even if they are coming to repair something). Pray for them as they leave.
- Open your house for a dinner party each month. Don't try to make it "perfect", focus on making people feel comfortable.
- For those of us who aren't great at "small talk", make a list of questions you could ask people. In other words, help your guests be more comfortable by making yourself be more comfortable. As you are talking ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to listen to their story.
- Next time you are in a waiting room, look to start up a conversation with someone near you.
- Consider how you can make people you don't know feel more welcome at church on Sunday morning. Make a plan to invite some people home from church (or out to lunch with you) one Sunday a month.
- Think of your neighbours or co-workers. Who is God placing on your heart to connect with over a meal? When you have a name, make a plan and follow through.

Practices to do With Children:

- Plan a party or 'play date' with your children for their friends. Encourage them to think about what will make each one feel most welcome.
- Encourage your children to consider who is in their class that is 'alone'. Prompt them to think of ways of including them in their circle of friends.
- Next time you are preparing to host people at your house, have your children help with making the meal or other preparations. Talk to them about how you are wanting to bless those coming to your house.