

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is a concept that can be too narrowly defined, or dismissed as an unimportant or unattainable spiritual practice. Interestingly, 40-50 years ago, at least in some of our experiences, it was common to have people over for Sunday lunch, or Saturday night ice cream, or just to eat corn on the cob or watermelon. Brace yourself, but it was even quite normal to show up to someone's home *unannounced*, just to visit. Oh, how times have changed!

In the Old Testament, hospitality was an important value among the Jewish people. It was a way to honor God and set apart His chosen people. In a harsh desert and nomadic existence, it was valuable to offer travelers food and drink, a place to bathe and protection from dangers that surrounded them. They would go above and beyond as hosts, and water the stranger's animals. As an example of *extreme* hospitality, Elisha prepared a meal for an army who had come to kill him! (2 Kings 6:16-23)

Jesus tells us in the New Testament that whatever we do for the least of people (Matt. 25:40), we do for Him. Again, we see hospitality is first and foremost being the **hands and feet of Jesus to our world**. By doing so, we show others that we serve a generous God who loves them, and that they are worthy of that love.

So much of the New Testament is spent around tables that we have modeled our auditorium seating after that example. It invites fellowship, connection, belonging. It reminds us that in Christ we come together as family, and we honor God our Father by extending warm hospitality to those who are with us as guests. They honor Him by accepting His invitation to the feast, the nourishment of His Word and His love.

1. Are you thrown off by the notion of “entertaining” others? Are you less intimidated by the idea of helping someone feel comfortable, welcome? What are ways we can do this?
2. There is an artistic rendering of loaves and fish titled “Divine Hospitality”. Jesus asks one question – what do you have? Bring it to Him. Pray over it. He'll show you how to use it. What are your “loaves and fish”?
3. How is hospitality related to the 2nd greatest command, “Love your neighbor”? (Matt. 22:39)
4. Hospitality starts with a willingness to share of ourselves. Sometimes the real reason beneath our hesitance toward hospitality is a fear of opening ourselves to others. Could Satan be using that fear to keep you isolated? What is a small step toward conquering that fear?