

Hospitality, The Easy Way

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

I Peter 4:9

Fried hotdogs, macaroni and cheese from a box and canned green beans are hardly the stuff of which great culinary memories are made, but this was the menu that changed my life. I know that sounds a little dramatic, but let me explain.

When I was a new mother and a new Christian, one of the older women in the church graciously invited me to lunch in her home. I expected to find what my mother would have provided, a home that had been freshly scrubbed from top to bottom, tiny sandwiches on fine china, a rich dessert that took hours to make and a nervous, exhausted hostess. What I got was, well, you guessed it. Fried hotdogs, macaroni and cheese from a box, canned green beans in a cluttered home daycare center—and a whole new, relaxed attitude about entertaining. From this enjoyable lunch and many after, I learned from my friend that the biblical command to show hospitality isn't about a perfect menu or a spotless home, but about kindness and inclusiveness. Below I've listed a few ideas to help make hospitality easy to provide, as Peter said, without grumbling.



Make it routine. Every Sunday after church, a friend's family prepares brunch—eggs, pancakes, hash browns and sausage. Everyone in the family has an assigned task and the menu is always the same, so adding another family only means cracking a few more eggs and setting a few more chairs at the table. This simple, inexpensive menu allows the family flexibility to invite visitors home after church without knowing the exact number of guests to expect.

Another friend's "company dinner" menu seldom varies—meatloaf, mashed potatoes and green beans. As she says, "It's not about the food."

So she streamlined the work of menu planning, always has her ingredients on hand and knows her simple recipe by heart.

Do what you can. Obeying the command to provide hospitality doesn't mean you have to invite the entire church for a formal dinner. One young couple I know lived in a small apartment on a tight budget, but extended hospitality by inviting our home group for cocoa and conversation after a Christmas caroling party. It doesn't take much room or money to have a few people over for popcorn and board games, or to watch a rented DVD.

Be creative. Different circumstances call for displaying hospitality in different ways—it won't always mean Sunday dinner. Do you attend church without your husband? Perhaps you should consider hosting lunch for some women during the day when he's at work, or offering your home for a regular daytime Bible study. Single? You are in a perfect position to minister to others in the same situation. How about inviting an elderly widow over for a simple dinner? One older woman I know prepares Sunday breakfast for two young, single students that live in her apartment building. They love having a home-cooked meal, and she enjoys mothering them. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you find ways to express hospitality in your unique situation.

Make hospitality a lifestyle. Though we usually think of hospitality in relationship to our homes, I encourage you to expand the definition. Many of the same skills that you use to make a guest feel comfortable in your home can be used to make a guest feel comfortable in your church or small group. Introduce yourself and then introduce others to the guest. Find a common ground for conversation. Show them where to find classrooms and restrooms. Make sure they know they are welcome.

Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me. Matthew 25:40

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