

Strategic Hospitality

(Without Grumbling, but Possibly With Eggs)

By Steve Burchett



When I was a boy, we didn't lock our house during the day, even if we left. Those were the "good ol' days." I'm sure security at my parents' house has changed. We also had an if-you-show-up-we'll-have-some-dessert-for-you policy. I'm positive that hasn't changed. I'm thankful to have grown up in a home where neighbors and family were always welcome. It was a

hospitable atmosphere that gave me plenty of wonderful memories.

The biblical idea of hospitality goes beyond just welcoming someone into your home for a cup of coffee, a piece of pie, and a good conversation. When Peter says, "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9), he had in mind activities like hosting missionaries or other believers in your home who were traveling, or sharing space in your house with believers who have been displaced by persecution, or using your residence for church meetings. Peter is talking about welcoming Christians into your home and sacrificing your resources for their benefit.

Cultures vary, so hospitality might look somewhat different from place to place. For example, the majority of churches in the U.S. meet in some kind of a facility, not a home, for their main meetings. Nevertheless, even in that context, hospitality is possible. And a large number of us do have homes that could be ground zero for strategic hospitality.

Why Practice Hospitality?

One reason to practice hospitality is to help people to keep following Jesus. My wife, in-laws, and I once decided to go to a very well-known church in Brooklyn, New York, on a Sunday evening. I'll never forget it. The moment we walked in, we were bombarded with love and interest. In fact, the men were so engaged in my life and how they could help me to keep following Jesus, they followed me right into the men's restroom with their questions and concern!

You may not have a home for hosting lots of guests, but you can practice hospitality with your church in this way. You're care for a brother or sister in Christ one Sunday just might be the means God uses to keep him or her from drifting away.

If God has given you a home with more space than you need, consider the possibility that the extra square footage has been given to you by God to help some hurting, desperate, needy believers. Remember the gospel logic for doing this: God welcomed us into his "house" through the sacrifice of his Son, and so we are to love others sacrificially — and not just when it's convenient for our schedule.

Another reason to practice hospitality is to participate in the advance of the gospel. In Third John, John rejoiced at the hospitality some itinerant Bible teachers and gospel preachers had enjoyed in Gaius' home and said, "(W)e ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth" (v. 8). I have personally traveled for ministry all over the U.S. and a significant number of places around the world, and here is the truth: a private room, a warm shower, and a nice meal are more important than you might realize for the advance of the God's kingdom.

One Way NOT to Practice Hospitality

Peter understands us, doesn't he? "Practice hospitality *without grumbling*." We get tired. We get lazy. Some might even take advantage of us! Still, be hospitable "without grumbling." Once again, remembering the gospel, particularly the patience of God with us not only before we knew Christ, but even once we became believers, will be a healthy antidote to our selfishness.

One way out of a bad attitude about hospitality is to consider what is ahead — the consummated kingdom. So then, we should remember that part of God's design for the perseverance of his children and their readiness for Christ's return is the sacrifice of his people on behalf of each other. Thinking about the second coming of Jesus will help us when we are waiting on the suddenly overcrowded bathroom, or marveling at the inflated water bill. These people now sitting at our tables are family who need our kindness, and eggs, if they are going to be ready for his return.

"Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." (Romans 12:13)