

# Christian Hospitality

**Introduction** – There is a common set of ‘manners’ in every culture used to produce particular societies. And in different societies there are different reasons for having people into your home. As Christians, we are commanded to be hospitable, and particularly to one another. This is “Christian” hospitality, and it comes with its own set of reasons and rewards. A growing body must always return to considering the mundane work of ‘loving one another’. It is also very important in a message like this that you avoid the temptation of sidelong glances.

**The Context of Love** – Calling one another ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ in Christ is not just a matter of sharing similar ideas, interests, or circumstances. Nor is it simply a matter of joining the same club. We have been adopted into the family of God (Eph 1:5, 2:13), and Jesus Himself is our elder Brother (Heb 2:11). Therefore, the terms ‘brethren’, ‘brother’, or ‘sister’ show up in the New Testament over 250 times, as in 1 Peter 2:17 – “*Love the brotherhood*”. This is the new command that Jesus gave to His disciples (John 13:34-35). As we look at several passages regarding hospitality, notice that the command is always an expression or application of this command: love one another.

**Hospitality from Fervent Love (1 Pet 4:8-10)** –

**Fervent** – This Greek word does not mean ultra-emotional. It rather suggests the taut muscle of strenuous and sustained effort. It means ‘earnest’ ‘zealous’ and ‘with straining’. This is how our love for one another is to be described. Why? Because it is hard to love a sinner. Only this kind of love will ‘cover a multitude of sins’. Love does not require a bunch of feelings. Love requires a bunch of work.

**Hospitable** – The word has in it the idea of ‘entertaining strangers’, but came to mean having others into your home. It is not simply a command to house travelers, for we are to be hospitable to ‘one another’. That is, this is a reciprocal command.

**Without Grumbling** – The apostle understands that this is hard work. He has already heard *all* of your excuses. And his reply is “stop your complaining and obey the command – joyfully”. It will cost you some of your most treasured possessions – your time, your money, your food, your privacy, your family.

**Pursue Hospitality (Rom 12:1-2, 9-13)** – These commands come in the context of all that God has done for us in Rom 1-11, and in the command to offer ourselves to God in service.

**Unhypocritical love** – requires us to strive after a long list of sacrifices to one another.

**Given to** – Some translations (v13) have ‘practicing’, but the idea is stronger – ‘pursuing’. We are told to ‘pursue righteousness’ (1 Tim 6:11), ‘pursue the good’ (1 Thes 5:15), ‘pursue peace’ (1 Pet 3:11), and in this passage – to ‘pursue hospitality’. This is the application of being kindly and affectionate, of showing honor and giving preference. The picture could be likened to chasing down potential guests in the parking lot.

**Cultivate What You Have** – The command for hospitality assumes the first part of this list is practiced in your home already. If there is nothing but strife, anger, unforgiveness at your table, you have nothing to share. But you have no excuse to be neglecting these things at home.

**Unexpected Blessings (Heb 13:1-2)** – The command is in the negative this time – do not forget hospitality. This is *how* brotherly love will continue. While certainly harkening back to OT stories, the writer probably does not mean that we should expect visitations from angels ourselves. Rather, we can expect unplanned blessings.

**Practical Concerns** –

**Husbands Must Lead the Way.** This is not a “Woman’s Command”. Generally, men are less given to hospitality, and then the women fall as well because it becomes such a burden. But godly leadership requires the characteristic of hospitality (1 Tim 3:2).

**Mind Your Manners.** This is love in the little things. Only then are you a blessing to have over or to have others over. Don’t arrive too early. Don’t stay too late or too long. Children, learn to listen to and enjoy the adult conversation.

**Bless Your Guests.** This is not an invitation to be a nuisance. The goal is not to meet your own ego or emotional needs. Also, learn to make it a special time. Wine, flowers, singing, storytelling, all add to the celebration. Guests should also bless their hosts with appropriate gifts or helps, and while you are invited to ‘make yourself at home’, you shouldn’t ‘make yourself at home’.

**Start Simple.** While you might have grand plans for elegant feasts, the point isn’t to ‘wow’ the world, but to provide warm fellowship and a fresh sandwich. Do so.

**Conclusion** – We are to have a high view of God’s ongoing work of world conquest. But our application of that work begins with very mundane, simple things. The kingdom of heaven advances, and the giving of each cup of water is noted (Mark 9:41). Fervently loving one another isn’t growing in a warm feeling for all the world. It is asking someone over for lunch today.

*Dave Hatcher – April 2, 2000*