



BRINGING BACK THE LOST ART OF HOSPITALITY

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Practicing hospitality seems to be a dying art unless done for profit. We turn our beautiful and cozy homes into rentals, sometimes with a minimum stay of two nights, with weekends commanding an even higher price than weekdays. Our hurried lives mean less time for planning meaningful get-togethers with our own family or friends.

The Bible has many passages that encourage hospitality, such as willingly opening a home to serve a delicious meal or offer a warm bed, or both, without any financial expectation. In the Old Testament, Abraham sent his oldest servant to visit his relatives in search of a wife for his son, Isaac. When the servant got there, Laban, Abraham's relative said, "Come and stay with us, you who are blessed by the LORD! Why are you standing here outside the town when I have a room all ready for you and a place prepared for the camels?" (Genesis 24:31). Laban wasn't expecting him, yet there was an instant readiness to show hospitality. The New Testament also reminds us "[not to] forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!" (Hebrews 13:2).

What makes it easy for some to show hospitality? What if entertaining others is only a prelude to a beautiful life lesson to being a follower of Jesus Christ?

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DAY 1:

READING: GENESIS 18-19, 21:1-7

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED: A LESSON ON PROMISES AND FAITHFULNESS

Abraham's invitation to the three men provided a welcome respite as they arrived during "the hottest part of the day." With the men's feet washed and some time for R & R having passed, it was time for the meal. Abraham personally served the freshly baked bread and the roasted tender calf he hand-selected, accompanied by some yogurt and milk. At the end of the meal, the surprising announcement was made that a son was to be born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age.

A sojourner himself, Abraham understood how tired from a journey one can be. He knew how it felt to be welcomed. And if roasting a calf seemed lavish for a handful of guests, so be it, as God had made Abraham a wealthy man. But God also made "an everlasting covenant with Abraham, to be God to [him] and to [his] offspring after [him]" and "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession..." (Genesis 17:7-8). He promised to bless him and Sarah with a son even in their old age (v16). Yet, as they continued to remain childless, and beyond their childbearing years, it was easy to doubt what God said. But the news delivered by the three visitors of Sarah's upcoming pregnancy surely brought Abraham back to the conversation he had had with the God of the covenant.

Just like what Abraham did the first time God had promised him an heir, and like what Sarah did while she was eavesdropping on Abraham and their guests, we may laugh at news that may seem ridiculous or an impossibility. But God's Word must never be taken lightly. He will do exactly what He says in His perfect time. We must trust in God and know that He is faithful to fulfill His promise, especially when we least expect it!

Reflection:

1. When have you been excited to offer hospitality to guests?

2. What response did you have to extraordinary news or "prophetic" words delivered to you, that no one knew you were praying for?

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the opportunity to entertain people, offering to care for them when they need it. Help me to see You and Your blessing through them.

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DAY 2:

READING: 1 KINGS 17:8-24

FROM EMPTY TO PLENTY: A LESSON ON TRUST AND OBEDIENCE

No one wants to entertain when the kitchen pantry is empty. But that is exactly what happened when the widow of Zarephath was asked by the prophet Elijah for water to drink and bread to eat, as he arrived in her town. This woman didn't know who Elijah was, but she shared with him her sad truth: that she was preparing the last meal of a simple flatbread for herself and her son.

God had spoken to Elijah earlier about the woman—but she didn't know this – and God had told Elijah that the widow would feed him! Being unaware of God's plan, the widow saw only her meager stock when Elijah asked for something to eat. But after hearing what God said to Elijah about the bounty coming to last until the drought was over, the widow trusted Elijah's word. And the widow's flour and oil containers miraculously never ran out!

Elijah was used by God to teach the widow and her son about trust and obedience, and to become willing to extend hospitality even if there didn't seem to be enough food for the three of them. Elijah's word about the miracle God would do with the widow's empty containers proved that God will bring the abundance to those who listen, obey, and share, even out of their lack.

Perhaps you've heard of the miracle that Jesus performed with His apostles when 5000 people were fed with only two fish and five loaves to go around... with leftovers gathered afterward. We certainly don't need to worry about feeding one more mouth, when the opportunity to show hospitality arises. Let this fact sink in: God is very good at multiplication!

Reflection:

1. Recount a moment and write down your own "empty pantry" experience, when someone came along to provide for your need.

2. How have you shown gratefulness for the bounty God blessed you with at a time when you shared generously with others, despite your own need?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I rejoice in the miracle of Your provision when I only saw the lack. Thank You for reminding me that You are the giver of one blessing after another.

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DAY 3:

READING: 2 KINGS 4:8-10

A HOME AWAY FROM HOME: A LESSON ON GENEROSITY AND ITS BLESSINGS

“Think of our home as your home, too!” is like beautiful music to the ears of a guest. After all, there aren’t many hosts who make open invitations. But that’s exactly what the Shunnamite woman and her husband offered to the prophet Elisha—a meal whenever he happened to be passing through. But there’s more! They also built a fully furnished room for Elisha’s use!

The wealthy Shunnamite couple showed hospitality to Elisha and his servant, Gehazi, out of their generous hearts and in recognition of Elisha’s godliness. Because of this, God blessed them with their greatest longing—a son. The child grew up but died. Yet another miracle, a blessing, happened when Elisha breathed life into the child and raised him from the dead.

There are many who practice generosity only to look good to others. Some have the means to be generous yet create false narratives to mislead people about the scope of their generosity.

God sees our hearts and will not bless the hands of impostors. If we invite people to our homes because we feel burdened to return someone’s generosity to us or expect to be repaid with the same in the future, we will experience unnecessary stress. We also dishonor God by turning hospitality into a transaction or just simply returning a favor.

Reflection:

1. What life lesson have you learned from regularly opening your home to guests without a hidden personal agenda?

2. How do you see yourself extending an invitation of hospitality to your boss or someone of authority?

Prayer:

Dear God, I praise and thank You that I have a home to call my own and enjoy! May my home be a sanctuary for many for Your glory and honor.

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DAY 4:

READING: LUKE 10:38-42

A KITCHEN ROCK STAR: A LESSON ON PRIORITIES AND CHOICES

When Martha and Mary sent for Jesus, their brother, Lazarus, was sick. “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus,” wrote John (11:5). Expecting Jesus’ arrival, Martha probably felt the pressure of hosting. Jesus was known to travel with His disciples, so preparation for a group, not an individual, was most likely on her mind.

Martha sounded like she went “super hostess,” taking a lot longer in the kitchen than she usually did in preparing her usual daily meals. Because of this, she will always be remembered as the sister who didn’t choose the best, the one who didn’t “sit at the Lord’s feet and listen to His teaching” (Luke 10:36).

In fairness to Martha, she chose to do the dirty work—the side of entertainment that we tend to overlook. We often sit at tables commenting on the taste of the food and its presentation, not realizing that preparation comes with hard labor, taking a lot of time and skills to produce meals. How many of us often walk away from actual work and focus on the social aspect of entertainment? That’s the fun part!

Remembering to focus on simplicity and the importance of relationships will help us with our priorities and choices. Let’s find the right balance so we get to serve the best of ourselves too, not just the meal!

Reflection:

1. How do you honor God rather than seek to impress men like the world does?

2. What tip on “finding the right balance” could you offer someone?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to entertain with simplicity and humility, looking forward to the fellowship that will be shared around the table and not the praise I would like to hear “for a job well done.”

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DAY 5:

READING: LUKE 19:1-10

WHAT'S MINE IS NOW YOURS! -- A LESSON ON RESTORATION AND JOY

The orchestra section was full, so there was no vantage point available from which to catch a glimpse of the celebrity passing by. Zacchaeus, the tax collector, wasn't the tallest guy in town, so he climbed up a sycamore tree. Noticing Zacchaeus, Jesus called him down and invited himself to Zacchaeus' home for dinner!

Social protocol tells us that inviting oneself, which Jesus did, is rude. But not to Zacchaeus! He excitedly went home to prepare a banquet to remember—after all, Zacchaeus was a wealthy man from his “tax collection” job.

Zacchaeus' joy upon hearing Jesus express His desire to come to his house, and his haste in going home to prepare, gives us a picture of the acceptance Jesus is looking for in Revelation 3: “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (v.20). Zacchaeus widely opened the door of his heart to Christ, admitted his wrongdoing and committed to return with interest what he had taken from people.

The fellowship between the Savior and the sinner-turned-changed-man is always a cause for rejoicing. As Luke said in the parable of the prodigal son, “It was fitting to celebrate and be glad...” (15:32).

Reflection:

1. What would it take for you to entertain someone you are at odds with in order to reconcile?

2. Write about your own experience of being judged by others because you entertained “unlikely” guests.

Prayer:

Father, help me to be joyful, not annoyed, at self-invitations, and to see the privilege of entertaining people as a means of giving You glory for Your blessings in my life!

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CONCLUSION

The practice of hospitality can be done in many ways, such as opening our homes for lodging and/or preparing meals. Remember, God Himself instructed His people, the Israelites, how to treat the sojourner and the poor, who are in need of receiving goodness from others. In the New Testament, Jesus reminded His disciples of the very same thing: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me...As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Luke 25:35, 40).

We do not need to be super hosts and hostesses, overwhelmed and stressed because we expect to receive rave reviews from our guests. What we need is to live up to what a true believer in Jesus Christ is called to be: generous and compassionate. These are the lessons Christ modeled for us to live by. Let's bring glory and honor to God and use our homes, our time and our energy for Kingdom Work!

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