



Biblical Hospitality Made Simple

How to share God's love with the
nations— **right where you live**



The Joy of Hospitality

Throughout God's Word, we see what it looks like to practice biblical hospitality.

God uses us, His people, to extend His love and hospitality so people of all nations will know Him.

Hospitality isn't always easy.

In a culture that prioritizes individual comfort, it can feel challenging to give up personal time and space to invite guests—and strangers—into your life.

But hospitality is far more simple than it may seem.

As you learn to put biblical hospitality into practice, your life will become richer with relationships.

You'll find more meaning and purpose in your service to God.

And you'll discover a life of deeper joy and beauty.



A look ahead

This resource is your guidebook to exploring and practicing biblical hospitality.

Here's what you'll find in the chapters ahead:

CHAPTER 1

Biblical Hospitality: What It Is, and What It's Not

Learn the fundamentals of biblical hospitality and discover what it looks like.

CHAPTER 2

The Biblical Precedent for a Life of Hospitality

Explore examples of hospitality throughout the Bible and in the early church.

CHAPTER 3

5 Principles of Hospitality

Discover the principles that can help you build a lifestyle of hospitality.

CHAPTER 4

Practical Tips for a Lifestyle of Hospitality

Learn simple, actionable tips for sustainable hospitality.

By the end of this guide, you'll have practical ways to share God's love and help welcome those who feel left on the outside.

What you'll need _____

- ▶ A journal to reflect and respond to questions
- ▶ A prayerful, humble attitude

Let's dive in!

Biblical Hospitality: What It Is, and What It's Not

Hospitality as a practice, not a gift

“They really have the gift of hospitality.”

At some point in your life, you’ve probably said this about another person.

Perhaps you felt wholeheartedly welcomed into the home of someone with this “gift of hospitality.”

Maybe you saw them host dozens of people at an expertly planned event.

Or maybe you really enjoyed eating the food they prepared.

These are wonderful things, and each one points to an expression of hospitality.

But what if hospitality weren’t a gift or calling that one person has and another doesn’t?

An invitation to practice hospitality

Some people are especially inclined toward generous acts of hospitality.

But all who follow Jesus are exhorted to live lives of biblical hospitality.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:13

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

Hebrews 13:2

If we're all to practice hospitality, then what does it look like?

Putting your hands and heart together

Whether it involves a simple meal on a holiday, a cup of tea over conversation, or a clean bed during a transition, hospitality is all about the kindness of your heart.

The critical difference between biblical hospitality and entertaining is attitude.

Anyone can cover the basics of hospitality by offering food or a place to sleep.

But practicing biblical hospitality isn't about practical acts like these. It's about offering a heart of love—receiving people with gladness and engaging them with both your hands and your heart.

We are to bring this attitude of love as we “offer hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:9).

Reflection questions

- ▶ **Who have you described as having the “gift of hospitality”? In what ways were they practicing biblical hospitality or entertaining?**
- ▶ **What unhelpful standards of hospitality have you been holding onto? Have any been unrealistically high?**
- ▶ **If you had no financial or material resources to offer, how might you still show love and kindness to others?**



The Biblical Precedent for a Life of Hospitality

Hospitality is deeply rooted in God's character.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible and in the writings from the early church, we see God taking the role of a generous host, inviting strangers to find their place with Him.

Hospitality in the Old Testament

The earliest narratives in the Bible show hospitality as central to God's plan for the nations.

In the garden, we see God hosting Adam and Eve, providing for their needs and looking after their comfort.

The theme of hospitality runs throughout Abraham's story too.

Abraham sojourned in a foreign land, packing up his tents and moving his family year after year. The Lord sustained him as promised.

Abraham reflected this spirit of hospitality in how he treated others, including the three strangers who suddenly appeared at his tent one day (Genesis 18). Abraham quickly welcomed the servants of God, washing their feet and feeding them a meal.

The Old Testament also documents how:

- ▶ Rahab welcomed the Hebrew spies ([Joshua 2](#))
- ▶ The poor widow of Zarephath fed Elijah ([1 Kings 17:8-16](#))
- ▶ The wealthy Shunammite woman hosted Elisha ([2 Kings 4:8-17](#))

Hospitality is an explicit command for the people of God. Tapping into their collective experience as foreigners in Egypt, God made it clear what kindness toward strangers should look like:

“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Leviticus 19:33–34

He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:18–19

Speaking through the prophets, God reminded His people that they would be judged based on how they cared for others:

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”

Isaiah 58:6–7

Hospitality in the Gospels

The Gospel narrative offers us rich examples of hospitality, embodied in Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus both practiced and received hospitality. He welcomed all sorts of people to eat with Him, from prostitutes to despised tax collectors. No one was excluded. He made sure all people knew they were welcome.

Take, for example, the astonishing act of feeding the five thousand ([Matthew 14:13–21](#)). It'd been a long day, and the disciples felt tired and hungry. The people had overstayed their welcome. It was time for the crowd to leave and let the disciples retreat to the familiar comfort of their own company.

But Jesus told the disciples, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”

He wanted the people in the crowd to be treated like insiders who belonged. So Jesus supernaturally equipped His disciples to do what they believed was impossible: provide an abundance of food to satisfy every belly.

Time and again, Jesus displayed abundant hospitality through everyday acts of welcome and supernatural provision.

But His greatest act of hospitality was opening wide the gates of the Kingdom of God, where all people—no matter where they come from or how they act and think—can call on His name and be welcomed in.

Hospitality in the Early Church

By practicing hospitality, Christians in the early Church helped spread the

message of Christ. God used their everyday hospitality as an unstoppable vehicle for church growth and evangelism.

Why was their hospitality so impactful? Because the way early Christians showed hospitality was different.

The practice in ancient Rome was to reserve hospitality for the rich and powerful. It was a tool for garnering favor and gaining something in return.

In the early Church, however, followers of Jesus quickly became known as the people who offered love and no-strings-attached hospitality to those considered the least important... to people who had no way to pay it back. Christians opened their lives and homes to strangers, sharing meals and resources to meet all sorts of needs.

More than just meeting needs, hospitality was seen as the practical way to show Christian love ([Romans 12:13](#), [Galatians 6:10](#), [Colossians 3:23–24](#), [Hebrews 13:1–2](#), [Hebrews 13:16](#)).

In the Church, those living on the fringes of society found a safe place to belong, be loved, and serve others.

Reflection questions



- How do you see the narrative of hospitality extending throughout the Bible?
- What biblical examples inspire you to live a more hospitable life?

5 Principles of Hospitality

A healthy view of hospitality can help you discover the freedom and joy you need to make it an ongoing part of your life.

In this chapter, you'll discover five practical principles to shape your perspective on hospitality... so you can be equipped to live it out.

Let's dive into the first principle...

1. Hospitality begins with God

We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:19

God has made you part of His family.

But at one time, you were estranged from God. You couldn't save yourself or pay off the debt of your sin.

Yet while you were still a sinner, God sent Christ to die in your place ([Romans 5:8](#)) and make a place for you in His eternal home ([John 14:2-3](#)). The Lord invited you into His household and made you into one who belongs.

This is the fullest embodiment of hospitality... the Lord God sacrificing His Son and overcoming the power of death so you could live through Him and find your place in His kingdom.

God's hospitality—His love and generous welcome—motivates us to love and welcome others:

Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Romans 15:7

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:9–11

Your takeaway

As God has loved you with extravagant, costly hospitality, offer hospitality toward others.

2. You're blessed to be a blessing

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 12:2–3

In His blessings to Abraham, God unveiled His plan to bless all the families on earth.

The Lord has never deviated from this plan. Throughout the Old Testament, God reminded His people that they used to be strangers and foreigners with no land. But God provided for them. As they wandered the wilderness, He gave them fresh manna every day and water in the dry land. Just as they received from God, they were to bless others with hospitality and provision.

Even today, this is how God asks us to live. The blessings He pours into our lives are meant to spill over to bless others.

Not only are others blessed when you use what God has given you to extend

hospitality. Your life is enriched too. As you bless others, you are blessed even more ([Acts 20:35](#)).

Your takeaway

Optimize the blessings in your life so they in turn bless others.

3. Perfection hampers hospitality

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Hebrews 13:16

Many people think of hospitality as offering a spotless home, a perfect meal, and a refined table setting.

But that's not hospitality. That's entertaining.

There's a time and place for entertaining. But if you hold yourself to this ideal, then you're unlikely to make hospitality a part of your daily life. Why? Because it's too high of a standard for an everyday practice.

Extending hospitality on a regular basis will feel impossible if it involves a thorough house cleaning and exceptional food.

But when you let go of perfection, hospitality becomes far more feasible. You discover the freedom to invite others into an untidy home where boxed mac-and-cheese is the main course. Instead of entertaining, you can invite someone to walk the dog with you, join you and your kids at the park, or hang out at a fast food joint.

That's what hospitality in real life looks like. There's no showiness. Just

kindness and a heart that welcomes others in Jesus' name.

Your takeaway

Invite others into your real, imperfect life instead of trying to entertain them.

4. Outsiders belong inside

“Then [the king] said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’”

Matthew 22:8–9

Most of us discover at a very young age what it feels like to be rejected and ignored. It's devastating.

God created us for community. Each of us is hardwired to seek a community, a sense of belonging.

Biblical hospitality is God's antidote for human isolation and loneliness.

Through hospitality, you extend community to those who feel alone and forgotten by the world.

Jesus told a parable about a king who invited his friends to a banquet he had prepared. When the friends made excuses for not attending, the king sent word out into the streets, inviting the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame ([Luke 14:21](#)).

Biblical hospitality goes beyond your friends. It calls you to go outside of your comfort zone to welcome those who are different from you. As you welcome them into your life, they experience the safety of belonging in a new community.

Your takeaway

Welcome outsiders into community and treat them as insiders, just as God has treated you.

5. There's joy in the mess

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

1 Peter 4:9

God made the world beautiful, yet humans have done a pretty good job of defiling it.

Despite the risk, He invited us into the world. Then He sent Jesus into our mess to save us.

Christ set aside His glory and dignity to become human, identify with us, and make us holy. There's not a single part of our messy lives that causes Him to grumble or turn away in disgust.

In the same way, we can embrace others no matter how messy their lives or the mess they bring into ours.

Biblical hospitality will cost you something. You'll be asked to give up your time and deal with others' chaos. When you invite people into your home, they'll spill things on your carpet and clog your toilet. Some people may show ungratefulness.

But if you cultivate love for others, you'll find joy in the mess. You'll laugh with others and cry with them. Your heart will open bigger than you dreamed possible.

Your takeaway

Cultivate love for others so you can experience the joy of hospitality no matter the mess it brings.

Reflection questions _____



- **Which principle(s) challenges your understanding of hospitality?**
- **List a few ways you can make hospitality a part of your life based on these principles.**



Practical Tips for a Lifestyle of Hospitality

Let's recap the five key principles of biblical hospitality:

1. Hospitality begins with God
2. You're blessed to be a blessing
3. Perfection hampers hospitality
4. Outsiders belong inside
5. There's joy in the mess

Now you're ready to explore tips and ideas to help you build a sustainable, regular rhythm of biblical hospitality.

Start small by choosing just 1–3 ideas from the lists that follow.

Some ideas may be more feasible for you than others. Consider the phase of life you're in—your specific circumstances and availability—as you explore these ideas. Work within your unique situation to establish a rhythm of hospitality that works for you and your household.

Hospitality outside the home

Many people think hospitality can only happen inside your home. But you can be just as hospitable outside your home too.

Consider some of the following ideas:

- Invite someone for a walk (include pets and/or kids!)
- Go thrift shopping or shop local with someone
- Encourage someone to work out with you
- Take someone out to eat after church
- Visit a bookstore with someone

Reflection questions _____



- › What are some additional ways you could show hospitality outside your home?

Hospitality at home

As you think about extending hospitality within your home, start by doing a home hospitality audit and going through the short checklist below.

Home Hospitality Audit

Identify the number of chairs in your home

Estimate how many people can fit into each room

Look for creative seating (i.e. floor cushions, piano benches, etc.)

Curate a collection of simple recipes you can quickly prepare for guests

Write down ideas for easy store-bought meals

Consider the following ideas for in-home hospitality:

- Invite someone over for dinner
- Host a crafting activity
- Organize a potluck
- Open your home to others for a holiday meal
- Teach or learn a skill from someone (i.e. how to make yogurt)



Reflection questions _____

- › List additional ways you could offer hospitality within your home.

Ongoing hospitality

Ready to scale up your hospitality? Here are some ways you can extend hospitality on a regular, ongoing basis:

- Host a Bible study
- Volunteer to host a small group
- Plan an informal monthly gathering
- Repurpose an extra room for overnight stays
- Volunteer to serve international students



Reflection questions _____

- › Write down other ways you could extend ongoing hospitality.



Take your next step

Biblical hospitality isn't always fun or easy.

But it will certainly enrich your life as you extend God's welcome to others.

As you seek to build habits of hospitality into your life, pray for God to:

- › Open your heart to welcome others
- › Give you joy and excitement to show hospitality
- › Fill you with grace for the messiness of hospitality
- › Provide more than you need so you can share it with others
- › Bless you with wonderful new relationships

When it comes to starting something new, many people get caught up in planning and preparing.

But the most meaningful step you can take right now is to simply start doing.

A simple way to show hospitality

Looking for an easy way to show hospitality in your local community?

Start your application now to [become an IFI volunteer](#) and extend hospitality to an international student near you.

You can make a difference by greeting them at the airport, serving as a conversation partner, offering a meal, and much more.



Learn more and apply now at ifipartners.org/volunteer