

# Hospitality

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 11 October 2020

Preacher: Andy Constable

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, evening again. If you want to turn your Bibles to 1 Peter, chapter 4. We'll be looking at a few verses from this book to launch our sermon on hospitality this evening.

Just want to remember, there is a little video testimony at the end. I may forget in the heat of the moment that's happening at the end, but you guys keep me right at the back. So 1 Peter 4, going to read God's word to us.

I'll pray and then get stuck in. Verse 7. This is God's words. The end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's very grace. Whoever speaks as one who speaks oracles of God.

[ 1 : 12 ] Whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amen. Let me just pray. Amen. Father God, I want to thank you and praise you for your goodness and faithfulness to us.

Thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us, even though we did not deserve it. Thank you for his love as vast as the ocean. Thank you for the opportunity we have this evening to open your word and think about hospitality.

Pray, Lord, that by your spirit you might take your word, plant it deep in our hearts and change and transform us, so that we might be more Christ-like in our attitudes and actions. Lord, we look to Jesus this evening and be changed.

In his name we pray. Amen. I still remember the smell when I came back from school to my house, my family home.

[ 2 : 26 ] It was a combination of deep blue cheese and BO. It smelled horrible like a rat had died in our house.

Where was it coming from, I thought? Well, sat in the living room was a middle-aged man who looked like he'd been living on the streets for the last decades.

Who is this, I asked to my parents. And they just turned around and said, this is Neil. He's coming to stay with us.

He's got nowhere to stay. He's had a rough life, but he's down in London and he's studying at the Bible College. They put an email out and asked, could anyone take him in?

And we said yes. Turned to my mom and dad as a teenager at that point. Does he have to stay with us, really? I mean, he smells. Yes, he's coming to stay with us. And we want you to make him feel at home.

[ 3 : 27 ] There's that old song that we sing called, Take my life, let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Basically, the song talks about handing over our whole lives to the Lord in service to him.

And if you read through the verses, the song talks about letting the Lord dictate our footsteps and our voices and our intellects and our hearts and even our silver and gold.

And we sing it as a prayer to say, Lord, do whatever you want with my life. But I wonder this evening if that's really true of us.

If you had a meal wanting to stay with you, would you take him in? Would you open your house to him?

This evening is not about our voices or our steps or even our money. This evening is about our homes.

[ 4 : 29 ] Can we sing, take my home and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee? Are we willing to practice biblical hospitality for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as it's set out in the New Testament?

I just want to look at this evening. And we're just going to have three questions in our brief time together. Firstly, what is biblical hospitality? What does that mean?

Why is it important? Secondly, who should we be showing hospitality to? And then why is this so difficult for us? What is hospitality? Who should we be showing hospitality to?

And three, why is this such a battle for us as Christians? So firstly, what is biblical hospitality? Well, you'll see in verse 9 of the text I read out that Peter encourages the believers to show hospitality to one another.

And the word hospitality in the Greek is a Greek word called philoxenia. And it literally translates as love of stranger. Love of stranger.

[ 5 : 47 ] Philo means love. And xenia means stranger. Don't ask me any more Greek. That's all I know. Love of the stranger. And this was important for the early Christians because traveling was dangerous.

And it was difficult to find a good place to stay at night. It's not like today where you have a travel lodge or a premier inn to go and stay in. Or if you've got a bit of money, the Hilton. They didn't have that. There were inns and there were motels.

But usually these were doubled up as brothels. They weren't good places to stay. So if you were a traveling evangelist, for example, 2,000 years ago, and you're traveling from city to city, you depended on other believers to take you in and to give you a night stay.

And you might not know anything about them. And they might not know anything about you. And so hospitality was love of the stranger. And so hospitality, biblically speaking, if you want a proper definition of it or biblical definition of it, it's not primarily inviting your friends or your family over. It's not primarily having the church members over who are your best pals. No. Biblical hospitality is inviting the stranger into your home.

[ 7 : 05 ] It's inviting the outsider into your life. And it's loving them well. Hospitality, I think, biblically speaking, is the principle of having an open home where anyone is welcome anytime.

It's the principle of opening up your home so that the world can see your life and your faith and your doctrine. And we see this through the Bible. It's not just one verse.

We see in the Old Testament and the New Testament. For example, in Leviticus 19, verses 33 to 34, the Lord says to the people, When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall do him no wrong.

You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself. In other words, if there's an outsider who comes in, don't reject them, but love them as yourself.

Because they were strangers in the land of Egypt. And now they have a home. Hebrews 13, verse 2 says, Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

[ 8 : 13 ] Romans 12, 13. Share with the saints in their needs and pursue hospitality. And even in Titus and 1 Timothy, one of the qualifications to be an elder is that of hospitality.

So this principle is not just for New Testament times, but it's for us today. We may not have as many travelling evangelists, and we may have good hotels to stay in, but opening our homes to people is an important and needed ministry.

It's important to open up our homes and our lives to fellow Christians, whether that's the stranger or the friend. And I think hospitality encompasses a whole load and range of activities.

It could include inviting someone over to have a cup of tea with you so they can talk through maybe their struggles and their issues and what they're going through. Could include having people over for a meal with us.

Could include having people come and stay with us. Hospitality includes inviting the believer in, but I think it also includes inviting the non-believer in as well and letting them see our houses and our lives.

[ 9 : 30 ] And notice here, hospitality is a universal command. Peter doesn't say to some of them, just a few of you practice hospitality. He says, all of you.

All of you practice it. Not just women. Not just married couples. Not just those who have money. Not just those who have big houses.

Not just the leaders. No, he says, above all, show hospitality to one another without grumbling. In other words, it's something that we all should be thinking about, no matter what our stage of life is. Now, of course, there's different stages of life. That looks like, hospitality looks different in different circumstances and scenarios. Some of us are sick. Some of us have just had a baby.

Some of us are older or whatever. But during our life, is our lives open? Are our homes open? Are we willing to share them with those around us?

[10:37] It's a mindset. It's a mindset more than anything else. And hospitality, I think, is important for two reasons. One, I think it's an amazing discipleship tool.

I think it's an amazing discipleship tool. Hospitality allows us to get people in our homes so that we can talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a chance to edify one another.

It's a chance to build one another up in Christ. For example, in my home, when lockdown restrictions are not happening, we have a single mum from our church and her two kids come over to us who have been saved miraculously from this scheme.

And they come and have dinner with us every Wednesday night. They come and eat with us. We have fellowship. We open the Bible. We pray. Sometimes we sing. And there's a chance for us as a family to model what biblical family looks like.

It's a wing of discipleship. I can teach her on a Sunday the scriptures. But how much better is it to see it in action? Hospitality is also a great evangelistic tool, I think.

[11:49] Because it allows us non-Christians to come and see what we're really like. To really see if we walk the walk and talk the talk. And to show them that it's not just a Sunday thing.

We are believers. And Christ impacts every area of our lives. Hospitality is about sharing our lives with people.

And where better for Christians and non-Christians to see that than in our homes? Our world is lonely, isn't it? Our world is craving authenticity.

Our world is looking for answers. Where better to show them the love of Christ than in a Christian home? Hospitality helps us fight against this insidious individualistic society and worldview that we have in the West.

That keeps people at arm's length. Which is not biblical at all. If you look at Jesus' life, this is exactly what Jesus did, didn't he?

[12:57] He opened up his life to people. He didn't just teach the scriptures on a Sunday. And say, you lot, you're on your own the rest of the week. What did he do?

He said to the disciples and to others, Come eat with me. Come drink with me. I'm going to walk with you. I'm going to be with you. I'm going to love you.

I'm going to teach you. And this is where I think hospitality is great. I already know some of us are thinking this. I don't have time to share my life with people.

It's all right for him. He's the pastor at the front, giving the advice. He's got lots of time on his hands to invest in people. That's what he does. He has to do it. I've got a job. I've got a family.

I've got a pet. How am I going to share my life with those around me? I get no time for myself, let alone anyone else, to invite them into my home or to show hospitality to others.

[13:58] This is where it's good. Think about it in this way. Think about how many meals you have in your week. I don't know about you, but I like to have four or five.

But usually it's three meals, isn't it? We have our breakfast. We've got our lunch meal. And we've got our dinner. Seven days a week, three slots. In my mind, that's 21 slots.

I don't think it's too difficult in our week to invite a new believer or maybe someone who's new to the city or even a non-Christian to one of those slots. To make time for the outsider.

To make time for someone suffering. To make time for someone struggling. One slot out of 21. I don't think it's that hard. See, hospitality can be planned if you make it a priority.

It's like anything in life, isn't it? You make time for the things you want to make time for. You make time to watch your box set and watch 10 hours of whatever it is on Netflix. Can you make time to love those around you well and open up your home?

[15:10] Let me ask you some questions. Do people really know you in this church? Yeah, they know on your Sunday, hey, how are you doing? I'm fine. But do they know you any more than that? That's not fellowship.

Have we invited people into our homes and into our lives? And don't use lockdown as an excuse. You've still got your garden.

You've still got walks. You've still got ways that you can serve people by cooking a meal and getting alongside people. If you're married, do you invite single people to come along and see your family and spend time with you?

If you're single, do you invite families to come and help them out and maybe offer with childcare? There's so many different ways that we can show hospitality to each other if we think about it creatively.

So that's the first thing. Hospitality is love of the stranger and opening up our lives to those around us. Who should we be showing hospitality to then is the second question. Who should we be showing hospitality to?

[16:10] The simple question on one level is, is everyone? I mean, Jesus couldn't show hospitality per se because he didn't have a house, did he?

He had nowhere to lay his head. But Jesus did a lot of eating and drinking with people, so much so that people called him a glutton and a drunkard. He was so busy out with people.

And in Jesus' culture, who you ate with and who you drank with was a sign of welcome. It was a sign of association. It was a sign of commitment. It was a sign of belonging. And meals are the same connotations today, I think.

What you eat, where you eat, who you eat with, tells the world a lot about you and your social circles, doesn't it? The meals of Jesus, therefore, represented something much bigger.

They represented a new world, a new kingdom, a new outlook. Who he spent time with shows us who we should spend time with too. And who did he spend time with?

[17:10] Well, everyone in general, but especially the poor. Especially the poor. Yes, he spent time with the religious leaders, but he also spent time with the prostitute.

He went to the Jew and he went to the Gentile. He spent time with the high and mighty, but he spent time with the lowly. He spent time with the respected and he spent time with the dregs of society. That was his life.

And what did he say in the Parable of the Good Samaritan when the lawyer asked the question, who is my neighbor? He said, this man, the Samaritan is your neighbor.

Your enemy. In other words, not just the Jew next to you, not just the guy that you respect, but even your enemy. Everyone.

Listen to what Jesus says in Luke chapter 14, verses 12 to 14, the parable of the great banquet.

Listen to this. He said, Then Jesus said to his host, When you give a lunch or you give a dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives or your rich neighbors.

[18:28] If you do, they may invite you back and so you'll be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite who? The poor.

The crippled. The lame. The blind. The blind. And then you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

That's astonishing when you think about it, isn't it? Don't invite your friends first and foremost. Don't invite your relatives. Don't invite the rich.

and they're respected. Don't invite your relatives. Don't accept your brothers and sisters. Try to ask, your chars == The chars You will regard to 24 minutes.

Don't echo my products from■■■ I Belliss. Don't command posic ■■■ the blessed Robert the last, and the lost. Not the first, not your favorite, not the found.

[19:33] The least, the last, and the lost. The broken, the struggling, the sinner. See, biblical hospitality is not primarily about entertainment. It's not inviting people to a party, although it can include that, of course.

Let's have a good time together. What's the root of the word hospitality? The root of the word hospitality is hospital. Our homes, as Christians, should be hospitals for the weak.

They should be hospitals for the lost, for the broken, for the outsider, and for the struggler. They should be places where Christ is present through our lives and our words, and we are offering up our lives in an ointment that soothes people's weary souls.

A lady called Rosaria Butterfield, who practices this in her home in America, writes this. Our homes are not castles, but incubators and hospitals.

Our homes are not castles, but incubators and hospitals. So the life that the Lord calls us to live is sacrificial and costly, and it even includes our homes.

[ 20 : 47 ] This is where it's difficult, isn't it? This is where it's difficult. And it means we're on my third point. Why is it such a struggle for us?

Why is hospitality such a battle for us as believers, particularly in the West? Listen to what Peter says here again.

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. It's almost like he already knows it's going to be difficult for them. It's almost like he knows it's going to be difficult for generations after him.

Practice hospitality without grumbling or complaining. Because he knows that when you invite another person into your home, it's going to be difficult, isn't it?

I mean, many of us, I'm sure this evening, are married. And we know this intimately. As soon as you get married, what happens? The love that you had at the engagement quickly dissipates as it moves into struggles and fights and battles, and your selfishness is exposed, isn't it?

[ 21 : 58 ] So inviting any other person into your home life is going to be a struggle, isn't it? Because you're bringing another sinner into an already sinful home. Here's one of the big reasons that we don't practice hospitality is this.

We're selfish. We like our me time, don't we? We like our own space. And we don't want to invite anybody else into that space that we have.

And people are annoying, aren't they? I know we're in a richer area over here. I'm a bit posh. But people are annoying, aren't they? Very annoying.

Very annoying. They do annoying things. They say annoying things. They get on our nerves. And so opening up our homes to those around us is going to be a battle, isn't it?

It's also a battle because it's costly. It's going to cost us something. You see, it's easy to preach a sermon. It's easy to lead a Bible study. It's easy to do a quiet time.

[ 23 : 08 ] But it's far, far harder to practice biblical hospitality. Because it's going to cost us financially. If you have extra guests at your dinner table, it means you have to factor in your budget extra money to spend on them, don't you?

So there's extra food. It's not like at the end of the meal you can hand them a bill and say, actually, that was 10 quid. And I want a five-pound tip as well. You have to budget for it.

It's going to cost us personally as we invite people into our home that we wouldn't usually spend time with, that we don't usually like. Or even our enemies. It means bringing people into our families.

It means sharing our time with them. It means hanging out with people we don't hang out with usually. It means taking people's burdens on. All of this saps energy and all of this is tiring. And so it attacks, doesn't it?

It attacks our me time. It attacks our selfishness. It attacks our self-centeredness. It attacks our self-centeredness. But it's necessary.

[ 24 : 16 ] We're going to live a life that's following the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, we've had everything at our home. We've had heating left on all night, which has cost us an arm and a leg.

We've had non-stick pans that we got for our wedding, scrapes and ruins. My wife has had to clean wee off the floor when she's five months pregnant, because one of our guests missed the toilet time and again.

I've had to chuck people out of my house. We've had people come back late in the night drunk.

We've had the police around our house countless times.

I've had a glowing thing of spit outside my house from someone's lungs they left on the floor, which wouldn't go away for months, even though I put boiling hot water on it. And my little girl used to walk past and say, oh, there's Colin's spit on the floor again.

We've had difficult and tricky conversations at night and everything in between. It's going to cost you your life. It's going to cost you your space.

[ 25 : 23 ] But it's also difficult because we're going to get hurt along the way as well. When we open up our lives to people and they come into our lives and they become part of our family, we're going to get hurt along the way because, again, they're sinners.

We're going to say silly things and do stupid things. I remember the first person that we had in our house, and he comes straight from jail.

He had professed faith in jail, come to Christ there. We managed to get in contact with him through another pastor. And he came to live with us for a year, and he had food with us every night. He did social stuff with us. He became part of our family. And then, slowly but surely, he began to go back to his old life. He dabbled back into drink and drugs.

And then he left our house completely. And they left us devastated as a family because we'd invested in him so much. And he'd become one of us. It felt like a slap in the face.

[ 26 : 25 ] But, again, opening up your life to people around you, especially people that are not like you, is going to be difficult because you can get hurt along the way. And, finally, it's difficult because it's going to reveal our idols, isn't it?

It's going to reveal the things that we really love in our lives. Because, again, your life is put on display when you open it up. When you open up your home to people, people get to see everything about you, your warts and all.

I know on a Sunday we like to give our Sunday best. When people come to your home and they see you 24-7, they see the real you. Not just the person who says, I'm fine, and that I'm walking in the Lord.

Again, who you are, warts and all. Can't hide anything. When you rub up against other people, when you're living in community, it reveals the idols of our lives.

It reveals what we love. I mean, I'm no good at hospitality. I'm saying all these stories, but I'm no good at it. I like my space. I don't like to be pestered too much.

[ 27 : 31 ] I'm a quiet guy. Let me sit in my room and read my books, and I'll be happy. But community is important, isn't it? Community is important for the building up of the body of Christ.

And so that we might grow in godliness. As community reveals our sinfulness and we grow in Christ. So let me end with this.

We've seen what hospitality is. We've seen who we should show hospitality to. We've seen why it's difficult. Ultimately, let me end with this. Hospitality is a joy. We miss out, the Lord says, when we are selfish with our time, when we are selfish with our money, when we are selfish with our homes. Hospitality is a joy because Jesus said this, it is better to give than to receive. It's better to give than to receive.

Question is, do you really believe that? That is not a principle I don't think we hold up on the West. We are taught from a young age, it is better to take.

[ 28 : 50 ] Than to give. But to be selfish is to be joyless. Why is it that in the West we are richer than we've ever been, and yet more lonely, and joyless, and depressed?

Maybe it's because we've shunned the life the New Testament calls us to in the pursuit of individual happiness. When you think of yourself first all the time, it's to live a life of misery.

To give it all up is costly. But in the end, you receive your life. When we hold the world loosely, because we believe everything is a gift from the Lord, it helps us to be ridiculously generous with everything that we have.

The problem is we're entitled, aren't we? We think the house we have, the car we have is ours. I've earned it. That's mine. That's not a biblical concept.

Everything you have is a gift. Your house is a gift. Your car is a gift. The food you eat is a gift. Your life is a gift.

[ 30 : 10 ] Your salvation is a gift. If we understood that as believers, the gracious hand of the Lord in our lives, how much more would we be willing to give up our lives for Him and those around us?

Ultimately, it's a joy. Because when we follow the Lord Jesus Christ in the way that we live our lives, we reflect the gospel. Why do we do any of this?

It's not a guilt thing this evening. I don't want you to go away thinking, oh, I need to do this, I need to do that. Any hospitality we do needs a flow from the heart that has been changed and transformed by the gospel.

The reason we open up our lives, the reason we live up our homes, is because we were God's enemy. We were lost in the world. We were strangers.

And yet through the Lord Jesus Christ, He has brought us in and He's brought us to the table, hasn't He? Christ has made His home in us even though we were sinful wretches.

[ 31 : 28 ] Are we doing the same with our lives? Do we say in response to the cross, take my home and let it be holy and consecrated, Lord, to Thee?

Let me end with a story I started with about Neil. Neil came to live with us for the next few years. He would go home during the week and come back at the weekends and do his Bible.

Of course, my dad sat down with him and said, you need to have a wash, son. He had a wash, did his Bible training and now he's happily married in England, serving in his local church.

That's the power of hospitality. Who could you bless by opening up your home to them? Let me pray. Let me pray. Father God, I thank you so much that although we were your enemies, lost in the world and strangers, that you, by your Spirit, drew us to your Son so that we might have our sins washed away and so that we might have eternal life and also a family to be part of.

Help us to use our homes and to use our lives to show biblical hospitality to one another without grumbling. We're sorry for the times when we'd be self-centered.

[ 33 : 06 ] We're sorry for the times that we're selfish. We're sorry for the times where we've neglected community. Help us to love one another well.

Help us to love our communities well, particularly the least and the last and the lost. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.