



# *Hospitality*

**A Ministry of Encouragement**





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*Share with God's people who are in need.*

*Practice hospitality.*

Romans 12:13

*Offer hospitality to one another*

*without grumbling.*

1 Peter 4:9

*Do not forget to entertain strangers,  
for by so doing some people  
have entertained angels without knowing it.*

Hebrews 13:2

What a privilege it is to practice hospitality for the Lord's sake. It is one way to encourage both those who are believers as well as God's family. Hopefully, the following ideas will bring us to a deeper understanding of what true hospitality is, broaden our ideas as to whom we are to show hospitality and give some practical hints on how to more effectively show hospitality.

## ***WHAT IS HOSPITALITY?***

The words hospice, hospitable, and hospital are all from the same root. In Webster's dictionary, the word hospitable is defined as "given to generous and cordial reception of guests...offering a pleasant or sustaining environment, readily receptive: open." A hospice is a shelter, and a hospital is a place of healing. When we open our home in the true spirit of hospitality, we offer shelter, a pleasant environment, and healing.

The essence of hospitality is a heart eager to see the hand of God reaching out to others. We share the Lord with those to whom we open our doors. We give them him when we share meals in love and conversations of the heart in the shelter of our homes. Something more than eating happens when we practice true hospitality.

Honoring the Lord is the motivating factor behind hospitality. When we show love to one another, share with one another, and serve one another, God is pleased. Our primary goal in hospitality is to glorify God, and our secondary goal is to minister to others. It is very important, especially in a confessional Reformed tradition, to recognize that we're not alone, that we're not autonomous. Because we confess in community, it's important for us to live out our lives communally, in fellowship centered around the gospel.

Whenever we have each other over for meals, we get to know each other better. And as we get to know each other better, it's easier for us to minister to one another. We feel more comfortable with one another and more free to give and receive love.

We're instructed in Romans 12:13 to practice hospitality. The inspired words "practice hospitality" establish the importance of this ministry of encouragement for everyone. God expects people of all sorts to buy groceries, sweep floors, and welcome people into their lives. You may feel that hospitality is not one of your

gifts, but the Apostle Paul tells us to practice it. “Practice makes perfect,” we’re told. If we give hospitality the kind of attention we devote to learning to play a musical instrument, we’ll soon master this ministry of love and encouragement.

## ***PERTINENT QUESTIONS***

### **Q. What if getting things together wears me out or what if I am not a good cook?**

- A. Ministry takes effort, so you should expect to make an investment of time and energy to practice hospitality.

If you don’t think you’re a good cook, just consider your family. They are all healthy. They’ve survived somehow! Don’t let your pride trap you into thinking that you always have to impress your guests.

Remember that hospitality is not about drawing attention to ourselves. It’s about the joy we have in sharing our lives with God’s people.

### **Q. What about conversation?**

- A. If you’re not a natural conversationalist, instead of worrying about what to *say*, focus on what to *ask*. Develop the art of asking good questions. Try to avoid asking “yes” or “no” questions. They don’t make it easy for anyone to open up. Good conversation is often the result of being “other-oriented”—having a mind-set that thinks of others first. It is knowing how to make others feel comfortable by asking questions that tap into their interests and give them opportunity to share about themselves.

To have good conversation, concentrate on listening to others. Listen carefully to the words that are being said, to what your guest really means by these words, and to the truths God might be teaching you by these words.

As long as you keep the focus on your guests and on the Lord, you won't sense a need to make profound or clever statements. By asking probing questions, you communicate to your visitors how much you really care about them.

Here are some questions to get you started. As you practice, you'll find yourself thinking of other thought-provoking questions on your own:

- If you could travel free to any place in the world, where would you go, and why?
- What is the most enjoyable book you have read in the last year, and why would you recommend it?
- What would you like to be doing in ten years?
- If you could have any problem in your life resolved, what would you want to change?
- What is a recent truth you have learned from the teaching and preaching of God's Word? How have you been able to apply it?
- What are your best childhood memories?
- What popular movie has offered the most profound spiritual insights, and why?

**Q. What if my spouse or another family member doesn't enjoy having people over, or what if I don't have my own place?**

A. First, consider why your family may be reluctant to bring in guests. Is it because you are unpleasant to live with in your frantic preparations? Does all this gracious, open-house business count if we act like hellions the hour before

company arrives? Take a frank look at those moments just before the guests arrive—are you emphasizing “entertainment” or true hospitality? Sometimes this problem can be alleviated by careful planning so these temptations don’t arise right before our guests come.

Examine too, whether your spouse or family has reason to feel a bit jealous of the people you invite. Do you extend as warm a welcome to your husband when he comes home from a business trip? Do you rush to the door with a greeting when your dad arrives exhausted after a hard day of work? Perhaps more difficult than developing a welcoming attitude toward a guest is maintaining a spirit of invitation toward those with whom we live—our spouse, roommates, siblings or parents.

Might your spouse be traveling one of life’s bumpy roads? Is his job especially taxing, his physical health on the decline, his financial situation testy? We need to understand that there are seasons for hospitality. There are times when our lives are more flexible and God has given us more time and energy to build covenant relationships. There are other seasons when our lives are full from the burden of responsibilities or the weight of painful circumstances.

At times it is appropriate to remind your family of the benefits of hosting. For example, they can gain precious support from friends who have grown close because of time spent together, or they may enjoy a time of laughter that allows them to forget about the things that are making life difficult. But *you* must also be sensitive to your family’s needs, considering whether this time might be one of those seasons in which solitude is of great importance.

Although we have been talking mostly about hospitality in the home, sometimes the most heartfelt hospitality we can extend to a friend is over a cup of coffee in a restaurant, where you can share some of the deepest matters of the heart. So if

others in your household are not up to having company, you can still be hospitable by being open and inviting when you're outside your home. You can be hospitable anywhere you find yourself—not only in your house, condo, or studio apartment, but also in a restaurant, an office, the church parking lot, or an airport. For the Christian, being welcome means displaying the same spirit demonstrated by Christ—his openness and his eager reception of people and their burdens. This same Christ dwells in us and enables us. Like him, we can be hospitable in rooms without walls and in kitchens without counters. We each can develop the ability to put at ease all who come our way. This whole world is our home into which we can welcome God's image-bearers.

### ***Conclusion***

The ability God has given us to be hospitable is a wonderful gift because it brings healing and joy and love to many lonely souls in our world. Hopefully, the blessing of hospitality will become an integral part of your life in Christ. For he is the one who gives not only his home, but his very self to welcome us all.

## ***RECIPIENTS OF OUR HOSPITALITY***

### ***VISITORS TO RMCC***

*These are people who may live in Billings or the surrounding area who are visiting our church for a time or two or who may be looking for a church to join.*

#### **How to Show Hospitality:**

1. Sign up to be a HOST FAMILY. A Host Family provides a meal for in-town visitors the week after they first visit our church. This does not have to be a fancy meal. Soup and

sandwiches are great! The Hospitality Coordinator will call Host Families early in the week to see if they are available to host the following Sunday. If so, she will give them the names to a visiting family or individual to call and invite to dinner the next Sunday.

2. You could invite a visitor to your home for a meal, for dessert, or just for conversation and fellowship on Sunday or some other day during the week that works best for both of you.
3. You could invite a visitor to meet you for coffee, dessert, lunch, or dinner at a favorite restaurant.
4. Visitors might enjoy being invited to join your family for a “fun family activity.” This way you don’t have to think of anything new. Just ask them to come along on an outing that you were going to do anyway. As you know, “the more, the merrier.” (Ideas: picnics; camping trips; outdoor sports like hiking, biking, tennis; movies; videos; parlor games; just going out for a yogurt.)
5. Again, it is important to remember that visitors may not be able to join you, so don’t get discouraged if they turn you down. You never know how God will use your willingness to show hospitality.

### ***SOJOURNERS***

*These people are visitors who may be passing through town and are meeting with us for the Sunday morning service. Many of them seek us out and are looking for fellowship.*

#### **How to Show Hospitality:**

1. One way of doing this is by signing up to be a HOST FAMILY for out-of-town guests. It is important to realize that some visitors may be traveling, and they may be in a hurry to hit the road. If someone doesn’t accept your offer of

hospitality, please don't be offended. Just look at it as an opportunity to invite someone else to whom God wants you to minister that day. To sign up as a Host Family for out-of-town guests, contact the Hospitality Coordinator. She organizes the schedule so that each Sunday someone will be looking to invite out-of-towners home for a meal. Simple meals are great for fellowship.

2. If you find out that the sojourners will be in town for a few days, they may appreciate being invited to your home later on in the week.
3. You may find out that they are in need of housing for a night or two. If you can help meet that need, it may be a great blessing.
4. Also be aware of any impending church activities planned that you could invite visitors to attend. Some may even appreciate your offer to pick them up so they wouldn't have to come alone.

### ***SINGLES***

*This group of people includes those who are not married, single parents, widow/widowers, and college students. Be careful to consider the person's interests as well as his/her age when you invite them to join you in activities.*

#### **How to Show Hospitality:**

1. See ideas above.
2. Any family in the church would probably be blessed by an invitation to fellowship in your home. This type of fellowship promotes unity in the body and enables us to know each other better so that we can minister more effectively to one another.
3. We can use hospitality as a tool for evangelism.

## ***IDEAS FOR MENUS***

*You may find that the more simple the meal,  
the more relaxed your guests will feel in your home.*

*Helpful Hint:* To make the time more relaxing for you and your guests, do most of your meal preparations on the day or days before your guests come. This arrangement leaves you more time to fellowship with them instead of fussing with the meal. Remember, the main ingredient is not the food but the encouraging fellowship!

Soup and Sandwiches  
Spaghetti, Salad, and French Bread  
Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, and Chips  
Casserole and Bread  
Pancakes and Sausage  
Chili and Crackers  
Chef Salad and Muffins  
Fast Food Fried Chicken, Rolls, and Coleslaw  
Delivered Pizza and Salad

...just to name a few!

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