

Hospitality

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“Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” 1 Peter 4:9

Some people just have a gift when it comes to entertaining. When you arrive at their home, everything is perfect. You're greeted warmly and immediately offered refreshment. The table is set with beautiful matching dishes and linens. Fresh flowers and candles make you feel like the guest of honor. When you sit down for a meal, it's not only delicious, but visually stunning in its presentation. The conversation is pleasant and light. When you leave you say, “Wasn't that a lovely evening?” And it was.

That's what a lot of people think of when they hear the word “hospitality.”

When Susan and I were young parents, we spent a lot of time with Jim and Rosie, who had a toddler the same age as our daughter, Melody. Rosie would never win any prizes for housekeeping, and dinner usually consisted of something off the value menu at Taco Bell. We both lived in tiny apartments with second-hand furniture. Immediately the little girls would scatter toys from one end of the apartment to the other, and a fight between them was pretty much guaranteed before the night was over. But their home was a place where we always felt welcome, comfortable, and accepted. And they felt the same way in ours. During those years of our lives, we became like family to one another. *That* was hospitality.

So many factors work against hospitality today. Our lives are crammed with more activity than ever before. We move so frequently that our closest friends are actually only acquaintances. And many of us are sensitive to this ever-escalating standard of perfection, and are therefore uneasy about having guests in our homes because we don't feel we have “that gift.”

Throughout the Bible, in both Old and New Testament God commands his people to be hospitable—not only to friends and family, but even to total strangers. The reasons are three-fold.

First, hospitality allows us to model what God has done for us—invite us into his family, in spite of our unworthiness.

Second, hospitality is the most natural way for people to observe the day-to-day life of a God-honoring family.

Third, hospitality is a powerful way to keep from yielding to the natural gravity of a self-centered life.

When life is too full of self, there is no room for hospitality. The joy of receiving God's hospitality fades quickly if it doesn't flow out in our own hospitality to others. For the people of Tri-Lakes Chapel, hospitality is an

essential part of our strategy to reach our God-given mission—to see biblical community established on every street in the Tri-Lakes region.

Summer is a great time to revive this biblical pattern of living. Start thinking today about which neighbors you will connect with while the days are longer and warmer. You will be blessed, and you will be a conduit of blessing from God to them in the process.