

Open House

Be Hospitable to One Another – 1 Peter 4:9

It has been said that a man's house is his castle.

Unfortunately, some of us take that to the extreme and build a moat around the house and a gate to protect the entrance. Okay, so maybe we don't go to that extreme, but we do put up an eight foot fence around the yard. We have also made the front porch small and the back deck big. We park the car in the garage or around back, and the only time we venture out into the front yard is to get the paper. We have essentially shut ourselves off from the world around us. Do you know your neighbor?

Why do you think so many people have essentially closed themselves off to their neighbors?

It is really hard to put my finger on why we have come so far from sitting on the front porch and talking to each other. I can remember an older house we lived in as kids. It had a huge front porch that we would often sit out on and talk with the neighbors. It was not a problem for them to come up on the porch and talk. If someone were to come up now, we would think they were selling something. Sad, isn't it?

Peter and Paul call us to be hospitable to one another. Check out 1 Peter 4:9 and Romans 12:13.

How would you define the word "hospitable"?

The Greek word is actually two words put together. You may recognize one of them. The word is *philoxenos*. *Phileo* is the idea of brotherly love like as in Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. The second part of the word, *xenos*, means foreigner, alien, or guest.

We normally think that hospitality means to be friendly to our friends and having our friends over to the house so that we can have fun together, but Jesus talks about that kind of friendship in Matthew.

Read Matthew 5:43-48.

Jesus is preaching to the multitudes. He is essentially explaining the principles behind the law that was given to Moses so many years before. He works through the "beatitudes" in the first part of the chapter and then comes to this famous passage of loving your enemies. I find this particularly challenging because the love we are to have is *agape* love which is the highest form of love, but that is another "one another". Here we want to look at the argument that Jesus provides. In verse forty-six, He challenges His hearers with a question, "How easy is it to love those who love you?" Jesus then hits them hard by comparing that kind of love to one of the groups of people who were despised by the Jews-tax collectors.

"Be hospitable to one another without complaint."
1 Peter 4:9

"...contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality."
Romans 12:13

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Matthew 5:43-48

How often do you strike up conversations with strangers? Why is it so hard for some?

Jesus concludes this thought with these words, "therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." This is a powerful and challenging statement.

What do you think he means by this statement?

The word "perfect" carries with a meaning of being complete. Jesus is calling us to be complete in our love. We are not to show partiality to friends and family. We are to have the same kind of love for our loved ones as we do our enemies. This carries over into our hospitality. It is easy to be hospitable to friends and family. Okay, maybe family is a little harder, but the idea is that our hospitality should not be selective. It should not exclude any certain group or people.

Come back to 1 Peter 4:9. We are called to be fond of guests. This may include missionaries or groups coming in to stay, providing dinner to those needing the help, and offering your home as a place to gather.

Notice the attitude we are to have. We are to be hospitable without complaint. The idea of hospitality loses something when we complain about it.

Have you ever complained about being hospitable? Why?

For me, it usually boils down to being self-centered. I open up my home to have people over, but then complain about how it is one more busy night or I had planned to do other things or we do not have the money or something. Whatever it is, I am complaining. I am trying to find excuses to not have to obey what God has called me to do. I would rather keep to myself and not have to spend the time, energy, or money on someone else. I am being self-centered and some of you are too.

Imagine what would happen if we really practiced this. I am not talking about feeling obligated to invite someone over because they had you over last month. I am talking about really opening our homes to each other. Just brainstorm with me a bit. There would be:

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| - less conflict | - less wasted time | - more encouragement |
| - less loneliness | - less TV | - more God talks |
| - less seclusion | - more fellowship | - more compassion |
| - less sin in the camp | - more accountability | - more networking |
| - less discouragement | - more connecting | |

Can you imagine the possibilities? And simply because we would be hospitable to one another. It could potentially change not only us or our church, but the community, the city, and even the world. Being hospitable to one another binds us together as one body of believers. Then the watching world will know us by our love for one another. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that?

Now here comes the action. Invite someone over. Open up your house.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

