

## 5 Scriptures That Show Why Hospitality Matters to God

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My mother enjoyed talking to people and had a knack for throwing parties. Yet, she did not often invite people into our home because she was worried it was not presentable enough. Toys were usually scattered across the floor, and even on a good day, when my mother would rush through to clean and rearrange, our house still seemed, well, cluttered. Our small house struggled to contain five people and their possessions. Despite all of this, though, my mother modeled hospitality because she made herself available to others.

Anyone could fall into this way of thinking. Hospitality is typically presented as something that housewives do by maintaining a spotless home and preparing scrumptious meals from scratch. Men often feel confused as to how they can be hospitable, since welcoming others is usually ascribed to certain roles and activities. Single individuals who have limited living space may also struggle to know how to show hospitality.

Yet, as my mother showed, hospitality is not only something a person does, it is a position of the heart. Anyone can host a party, but it takes a hospitable person to truly welcome others, loving them as oneself.

Such an act and attitude stems from a keen awareness of God's character. He cares about hospitality and calls His followers to display the same type of concern and love

that He has shown us. The following passages show us what it looks like to be hospitable, and why it matters as a follower of Christ.



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## 1. Leviticus 19:33-34

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

The Israelites had long lived as sojourners in Egypt. They were the foreigners and suffered as slaves. By God’s power and mercy, they were set free and given a new land to dwell in as their own – the **Promised Land**. Yet, the Lord never intended for them to forget how they had lived in Egypt.

Since they had once been foreigners living in a strange land, they knew the heartaches and struggles sojourners faced. God wanted them to not just tolerate the foreigners in their land, but to welcome them as natives and “Love them as yourself” (Leviticus 19:34; also see Deuteronomy 10:19).

When Jesus told the parable of the **Good Samaritan**, He showed what loving others as oneself looks like in practice (Luke 10:25-37). The Samaritan man was the outsider in this story, yet he reached out to help the Jewish man who was hurt. He expressed hospitality by washing the Jewish man’s wounds and paying for his shelter in an inn, despite the social stigma.

Welcoming others in love and embracing them as neighbors is the essence of hospitality. The Lord gave the Israelites this command as part of His **covenant** relationship with Israel, but the principle of it still applies to believers

today. We are meant to welcome others – including those we may deem as outsiders – just as the Lord has welcomed us.



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## 2. Matthew 25:40

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

The Lord cares about how we treat others, even going so far as to base the evidence of our **faith** on how well we cared for and welcomed others in need. Part of **Judgment Day** will include an evaluation of our hospitality (Matthew 25:34-40; also see Luke 14:12-14).

In the sheep and goat judgment in **Matthew 25**, Jesus explains how He will separate believers from unbelievers. Then, turning to His sheep at his right, He will say:

“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matthew 25:34-36).

Whatever we do for others, whether feeding them, giving them something to drink, inviting a stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, or visiting those in prison, we do for the Lord Jesus (Matthew 25:40). Our good deeds do not save us. Rather, they testify that we are genuine followers of Christ who care for others as He commands. The lack of such fruit points to unbelief (Matthew 25:45).

If we examine each of these acts that our Lord mentioned, we notice that all of them – not just inviting the stranger – requires being available to the needs of others and a willingness to give of our time and resources. This is the heart of hospitality: standing with open hands, ready to serve others and make them feel at home. And when we welcome others in love, we serve the Lord.



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### 3. Romans 12:13

“Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”

As the early Christians traveled, they needed places to stay. Other members of the church would open their homes to care for strangers and travelers on their journeys. Of course, doing this was not easy. Providing food and shelter for others was costly and could have caused raised eyebrows among the neighbors. Hence, the Apostles repeatedly encouraged Christians to practice hospitality to their fellow saints (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9).

We find examples of such hospitality throughout the Bible. People like **Zacchaeus**, and the sisters **Mary and Martha** welcomed Christ into their homes for food, fellowship, and rest (Luke 10:38-39; 19:5-6). When Paul and his fellow workers traveled, they were likewise invited into people’s homes. For example, Lydia requested that the Apostle and Silas reside in her home while they were in Philippi. The Lord had opened her heart to respond to the gospel message, and in response she opened her home to fellow believers (Acts 16:13-15). Other saints in **Scripture**, like Gaius, were also known for their hospitality (Romans 16:23; 3 John 1-8).

Our Lord has given these examples and instructions in His Word to remind us that the church is meant to be family. We should welcome brothers and sister in Christ into our

homes and lives because we are all members of God's family, even if we are strangers. By doing so, we accomplish God's will of the lonely being placed into families and believers receiving the gift of community despite the loss of some or all familial ties by following Christ (Psalm 68:6; Mark 10:29-30). Welcoming others should be a regular practice for believers.



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#### 4. Hebrews 13:2

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

When we invite the foreigner, stranger, and sojourner into our homes, we never know who we might be entertaining. Although this brings a need for caution and **discernment** since we do not want to invite wolves disguised as sheep into our homes, there is also a sense of wonder to this mystery. For **Scripture** specifically tells us that we could end up showing hospitality to angels.

The verse in Hebrews is a reference to the Old Testament when Abraham entertained angels (and possibly the Lord). He had seen the Lord appear “near the great trees of Mamre” (Genesis 18:1). Directly after, he saw three men nearby and invited them to rest and receive food and drink (Genesis 18:2-5). Abraham even prepared the best calf from his livestock for these strangers (Genesis 18:7-8).

At least two of the men were angels, because we are told this in the next chapter. Abraham's nephew, Lot, also invited these angels into his home, though he did not at first realize their identity (Genesis 19:1-2). He showed hospitality to these messengers, even while others wanted to hurt and exploit them (Genesis 19:4-7, 9).



Abraham and Lot welcomed strangers, not knowing who they were, but did so out of kindness and generosity. Their actions stand out from the violence of the men in Sodom depicted in the account. Just as Abraham and Lot opened their homes and resources to others, believers should do the same and show hospitality to the stranger.



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## 5. 1 John 3:1

“See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don’t recognize that we are God’s children because they don’t know him.”

The greatest reason hospitality matters to the Lord is that He is a hospitable God. All people, because of sin, are estranged from God. We do not deserve His mercy or love, yet the Father sent the Son into the world to save us, transforming sinful strangers into beloved children. Jesus bought us the right to be called sons and daughters of God (John 1:12).

Even today, He continues to welcome the lost and hurting. The Lord stands with open arms and heart ready to receive anyone who places faith in Christ’s death and **resurrection**. He is the king pictured in the parable of the wedding banquet. Those who responded to His invitation were brought in for the feast, celebrating the extravagant hospitality of the King (Matthew 22:1-14). He is also the father in the parable of the **prodigal son**, who ran to meet his estranged son (Luke 15:11-32). He welcomes us too, estranged rebels as we are, and throws a grand party in honor of our homecoming.

Believers are the banquet guests and the **prodigal son**. We are brought into the family of God and receive all we need for life and godliness (Galatians 4:4-7; 2 Peter 1:3). All of

this is because Jesus gave us Himself, offering us the bread and drink that gives eternal, abundant life – His sacrificial atoning death on the cross (John 6:53-58).

We can understand, then, why hospitality matters to the Lord. He models it through the salvation He gives and the daily grace He imparts to strengthen us in our Christian walk. Since we are meant to imitate our Lord, we should strive to be hospitable, welcoming strangers and giving of ourselves for the sake of others.