

Be My Guest

by John Bjorlie

The sermon emphasizes the importance of hospitality in building Christian community and provides practical applications and encouragement for overcoming excuses and obstacles.

Scripture: Job 31:32, Matthew 10:40, Luke 14:12, Romans 12:13, 1 Timothy 3:2, Hebrews 13:2, 1 Peter 4:9-10

Topics: "Christian Community", "Hospitality Ministry"

Description

John Bjorlie preaches on the importance of hospitality as a crucial element in building Christian community, promoting close, brotherly love, and combating superficial relationships. He emphasizes the biblical teaching on hospitality and challenges believers to consider how they can serve one another better. The sermon highlights the perils and joys of hospitality, encouraging believers to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves in their interactions. Through the study of 'The Hospitality Commands,' believers are urged to move from knowing the doctrine to actively practicing hospitality as a form of obedience to God.

Transcript

An overseer "must be...given to hospitality" (1 Timothy 3:2).

"Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Peter 4:9).

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers" (Heb. 13:2).

After reading such verses, have you ever moaned and muttered, "Why don't we do more to serve one another?" Perhaps the way I have worded that question too easily invites an excuse. We already have bushels of alibis, such as, "We can't have travelers stay over at our home because the hide-a-bed is broken." Or "We can't have that family over for supper because their monstrous toddler may attack our Precious Moments figurine collection (priced at \$5,231.95)." So on second thought, let me reword the question. Not "Why don't we..." but "How can we do more to serve one another?" If you and I are willing to voice this bold querie, then we might also be bold enough to read the book that pulls together the answer.

The Hospitality Commands is a compact book and study guide (only 64 pages) that confronts you with obvious biblical teaching. Alexander Strauch has marshaled the principle passages to show the importance of hospitality to any Christian fellowship: "Hospitality is a crucial element in building Christian community. Hospitality may well be the best means we have to promote close, brotherly love. It is

especially important in churches where people really don't know each other or where relationships are superficial, Sunday-morning-only relationships." And what congregation has not struggled with arm's-length relationships? The society about us considers hospitality a form of entertainment, not a vital necessity.

Many homes once functioned as a kind of all-purpose hospice. In generations past, the home was a center for health care, nurturing, learning, business, and fellowship. One by one, these functions have been farmed out to state institutions, day care providers, restaurants, motels, etc., until the home is a faint image of its former self. To keep believers from succumbing to society's mold, Strauch marshals persuasive scriptural arguments. The book nicely lays out the doctrine behind the commands in the first chapter, and then comes the obvious "therefore." The second half of the book is a hands-on manual.

Strauch has not hidden the fact that hospitality has its perils as well as its joys. Chapter 3 is entitled, "Hospitality: A Launching Pad for the Gospel." With any foray into enemy territory, there is a cost to count. Christ sent us forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." How we need this exhortation in the area of hospitality. If we would survive the ordeal of battered host and hostess syndrome, we will need savvy.

That thou mayst injure no man, dove-like be,

And serpent-like, that none may injure thee!

Strauch has read the fear in our eyes, and tells us that the joys are on the heavy end of the scale.

This study has no shockers. We have always known that the growing, living church is active in hospitality. However, there are some things we know, but do not do. And there are some things we know in an ethereal way, but when the time comes to explain to others what the Bible actually says about the topic, then the ideas under our thinking caps escape from our mouths like a vapor, failing to translate into something tangible.

Strauch sites one veteran hostess, Helga Henry, who made it beyond the theoretical: "Christian hospitality is not a matter of choice; it is not a matter of money; it is not a matter of age, social standing, sex, or personality. Christian hospitality is a matter of obedience to God." If we have been hiding under a pile of excuses, alibis, exonerations, exemptions, and justifications, then it is time to "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." We recommend this book about hospitality, in the hopes that it will be used by God in this pick-me-up process.

"The stranger did not lodge in the street: but I opened my doors to the traveler" (Job 31:32).

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