

# *Biblical Hospitality*

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*... Given to hospitality* (Romans 12:13; I Timothy 3:2).

The current idea of hospitality has been limited in our day to the idea of simply *entertaining company*. This, however, is *not* the idea being conveyed in the Bible, which carries with it the concept of using our homes as a ministry base to supply the needs of others.

Our word *hospital*, the root for *hospitality*, greatly helps us to understand the word better. A hospital is a place where those in need – those who are hurting, wounded and broken – go for aid in healing and recovery. The believer’s home is for more than the modern concept of “entertainment” – it is Heaven’s embassy of ministry, a place of comfort, rest and healing; a haven where weary souls are soothed, refreshed, consoled and calmed.

Interestingly enough, William Tyndale’s Bible translated “*given to hospitality*” as “*diligently to harbor*” (Romans 12:13). Now there is a rich, restful word – “harbor.” It is defined as:

a place of security and comfort – *Merriam-Webster*

any shelter or safe place – *Wordsmyth*

a place of refuge and comfort and security – *Mnemonic*

an asylum; a shelter; a place of safety from storms or danger – *Webster’s 1828*

The believer’s home is to be a place of security, comfort, safety and refuge to those who are hurting. It is a “*sane*”-asylum from an insane world; a shelter from the dangers of the storms of life – a heavenly respite, a divine breath of air.

Little wonder that the *Bible in Basic English* translates “given to hospitality” as “ready to take people into your houses.” Hospitality is love-in-action, as can be seen from the first part of Romans 12:13, which instructs its readers as to “*distributing to the necessity of the saints.*”

*Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality* (Romans 12:13).

Hospitality must be seen in the light of its context: *distributing to necessities*. Biblical hospitality, then, is not an act of mere “entertainment,” but rather the divine ministry of reaching out in love to others in need. Hospitality is more than coffee and a doughnut, or a dinner party. It is not a luxury, but a necessity. It will not be learned from Emily Post, Martha Stewart or Rachel Ray. It is learned from the Lord. Hospitality is the spiritual opening of our hearts that then extends to the opening of our lives and homes.

The Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia* (*Strong’s Greek Lexicon* #5384), which is a compound word: *philos* (#5384 meaning “dear” or “friendly”) and *xenia* (#3578 meaning “lodging” – so translated in Philemon :22). This compound word can be translated as “dear or friendly lodging.” It is about someone in need of a friend – and not just a friend, but a *PLACE of friendship* – a place that is *DEAR*.

Just who might be in need of such a dear lodging-place? A single mother and her children; one struggling with addiction or depression; an abused or abandoned spouse; a hurting neighbor; a youth who has lost their way; a financially distraught couple; a desperately grieving widow; a child whose mother works nightshift; a rejected pregnant teenager; a broken-hearted divorcee; a lonely senior citizen; a mentally handicapped youth, etc.

Hospitality is not about the giving of one’s evening to another for “entertainment;” it is about the selfless life of Christ in us, giving of our life, time, home and resources to another in need. It is becoming a vessel of mercy; a conduit of our Father’s great love to those who are hurting.

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