

Today, I want to share what Christian hospitality is and how we practice it. Hebrews 13:1-2 says, "Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." In these verses, you may wonder who showed hospitality to angels. In Genesis 18, once Abraham sat at the entrance of his tent, he saw three strangers. He welcomed them and showed them hospitality. Abraham is an example of hospitality.

The writer of Hebrews teaches us that the standard for Christian life is love and the love that is being talked about here is to show hospitality to strangers.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God specifically commands his people to practice hospitality. The most evident text is Leviticus 19:33-34, "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." In other words, I am the Lord your God who made a home for you and brought you there with all my might and all my soul. Therefore, you shall love the stranger as yourself. The words "I am the Lord your God" are the motivation for hospitality.

Also in the New Testament Jesus talks about the hospitable behavior in Matthew 25: 35-36, "for I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Jesus Christ died for sinners to make everyone who believes a member of the household of God. We are no longer strangers and sojourners. We have come home to God. Everybody who trusts in Jesus finds a home in God. The Christian view of hospitality is really quite simple. Christian hospitality is the response to God's saving grace. As we welcome strangers and treat them as valued guests, we can respond to God's grace.

As a Christian, how can we practice hospitality? First of all, we have to open our hearts. The New Testament teaches us that Christianity is the religion of open mind, open hearts, and open doors. When we open our hearts as well as our homes, we are practicing Christian hospitality.

Many people choose to focus on what they don't have instead of focusing on sharing the blessings of God. As we open our minds, we can be ready to welcome the invited and the uninvited into our lives and our living space.

Hospitality may come less naturally to you, but you can be hospitable. Becoming hospitable is something you can develop and learn over time. Like most things in life, hospitality isn't done the first time. But when we do it over and over, it truly becomes a comfortable part of our nature. You can begin with prayer. Pray that the Lord Jesus would help you become more focused on people and relationships than on tasks. Pray that you might have Christ's interest and the interests of others at heart. Ask God to make you more friendly and more interested in your neighbors, coworkers, and relatives.

Hebrew 13:3 says, "Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were

being tortured" The writer of Hebrews says that our responsibility is to keep love to our family and friends and to extend love to strangers. We live in an era in which communication seems simpler than times of the past. A coworker is one email away, a friend is one text away, and a loved one is one video chat away. However, according to Psychology Today, in the last 50 years, rates of loneliness have doubled in the United States. In a survey of over 20,000 American adults, it was found that almost half of the respondents reported feeling alone, left out, and isolated. Further, one in four Americans shared that they rarely feel understood, and one in five people believe they rarely or never feel not close to people.

Chronic loneliness has become the norm in our society. We all interact with people at work, at church, at school, and in our communities. But how many of these people are outcasts that go unnoticed? Take some time out of your day to stop, look around, and show kindness to others. Your uplifting word, kind action, or the invitation to the table may change someone's life forever.

Christian hospitality isn't about glamorous table settings or platters of picture-perfect food. Hospitality is about practicing servanthood. More importantly, hospitality is about loving others through Christ and making people feel special at work, at church, or at school.

As you seek to obey God in practicing real Christian hospitality, God will bless you, and it will become easier to communicate with genuine warmth, to be more approachable, and to become an inviting disciple of God. Today let us open our minds and practice Christian hospitality.