

13.

Seek to show hospitality

Romans 12:13b

“Practice hospitality. Why? This is a worship service, not a seminar on successful living. What does hospitality have to do with God? If it doesn’t have to do with God, it is simply of no interest in a church that aims to be God-centred and God-saturated. The mark of a God-besotted Christian is that you always answer the question why you do something by referring to God as we know Him in Jesus Christ. Another way to put it would be: *when we practice hospitality we experience the thrill of feeling God’s power conquer our fears and our stinginess and all the psychological gravity of our self-centeredness. And there are few joys, if any, greater than the joy of experiencing the liberating power of God’s hospitality making us a new and radically different kind of people, who love to reflect the glory of His grace as we extend it to others in all kinds of hospitality.*”

- John Piper

1. The Gospel empowers the believer to live with a new heart. Our old heart struggles to consider others. Ezekiel called it, “a heart of stone” (Ezek. 36:26). When we receive this new heart from the Spirit, we care for others. This new ability to care was regarded as an evidence of genuine new birth by the early church. List the practical ways Paul told his readers how they could tell whether a widow was a true follower of Christ in First Timothy 5:10-

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2. Apparently, the writers of the New Testament were concerned that believers would lose their interest in showing hospitality. How do we know this based on Hebrews 13:2 and what amazing motivation did they give to urge believers to keep showing hospitality?
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When Kim and I were just Kim and Kim’s husband, we were often invited over to other people’s places to share a meal. When we had Tyrone, the number of these invitations dropped off significantly. By the time we had four children it became uncommon for us to be invited out at all. When we were renovating our old house, one of the things we insisted on was an outdoor entertainment area where we can host

our large family with another large family. In the meantime when Kim and I want to show hospitality to a large number of people we have used our church building. Quite a few years ago, Kim cooked and catered for 95 people when we put on a surprise lunch for those attending our church one Sunday morning.

3. But it's not only those who don't get invited to others' places for a meal who might be tempted to sulk. What does First Peter 4:9 command?

The word Paul uses which is translated as *hospitality* is *philozenos* - *philo*= a kind and considerate love shown to others, and *zenos* - strangers, unfamiliar people. The hallmark of Christian community is not just how we treat each other, but how we treat people who are visiting and not likely to stay long.

4. What is the link between hospitality and the spread of the Gospel? (Note Matthew 10:11-13)

We want our homes to be hospitable. We also want to make our spiritual home hospitable by looking out for visitors, serving them, and inviting them back. All growing churches are churches which reach out and are hospitable.

Amen.