

18. Learning to Show Hospitality to One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to greet one another so that each Christian feels loved and accepted by other Christians. Today, we will focus on the topic of showing hospitality to one another. In 1 Peter 4:8-9, Peter said, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.” To be “hospitable to one another” means *to show love to one another and make one another feel comfortable in our home, church or any other place*. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to show hospitality to others. This is best done by our own example.

One thing that we notice about 1 Peter 4:9 is that we are to help people learn to be hospitable without grumbling. The word “grumbling” means that we *choose to do something secretly while not speaking about it openly*. Some people will never complain about doing something openly. However, if they have an inner attitude of grumbling or complaining, people will be able to recognize their attitude even though they never hear any words. This means that we want to help people learn to have a thankful attitude for the opportunity to show hospitality. We want to help people see hospitality as an opportunity for ministry to others and not as a duty to be performed.

In these verses, we also see that we are to have a fervent love for one another as Christians. We see that this love will cover a multitude of sins. Then, we go on to read that we are to be hospitable to one another. At first someone might say, “Why are these two verses put together?” Actually, they show us various ways to show this fervent love to one another. First, we see that that we show fervent love by covering a multitude of sins. Many times, Christians have burdens; sometimes these burdens are a result of their own sins. Here, we see that fervent love will cause us to use hospitality and invite such Christians into our homes.

As we spend time fellowshiping with them in our homes and helping them feel comfortable, they will often share their burdens with us. If these burdens are the result of their own sin, our love will cause us to cover their sins by not telling others about the struggles that such individuals may be having in their lives. A key principle that we see here is that fervent love will cover a multitude of sins while a lack of love will cause people to talk about those sins (Christians often try to disguise their gossip by calling them prayer requests). We show true hospitality and Christian love by covering sins instead of telling others about them.

Many times, the burdens that Christians have are not related to sin at all. Instead, they are related to the circumstances of life. A person has a family member die or another person loses their job. Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” These people also need other Christians to minister to them and encourage them. This provides another opportunity to show hospitality in our home. As hurting people experience hospitality in our homes, they know that someone cares and understands what they are experiencing in life. They experience that fervent love in the context of hospitality.

However, the opportunities to show fervent love are not limited to times when people have

burdens. When we use our homes as a place to make other Christians feel comfortable, we will find that we have many opportunities to help people in their spiritual growth. Sometimes, this may be in the form of a regular Bible study. Other times, it will just be the opportunity to discuss questions together as we sit around a table sharing a meal. Acts 2:46-47 shows us that this is one of the key ways that the early Christians ministered to one another and to those who were not yet Christians. These verses say, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Here, we see that the early Christians used their homes both to minister to Christians and also to reach others for Christ. This caused the Christians to be filled with joy and it caused family members that were not Christians to have the opportunity to meet other Christians and be drawn to Christ by their love.

In Titus 1:8, we read, “But hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled.” Then, in 1 Timothy 3:2, we read, “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach.” In both of these verses, we see that one of the qualifications for a spiritual leader is to be hospitable. These verses teach us several important things about helping our children learn to show hospitality to one another. First, this is a qualification for anyone that wants to be a spiritual leader. Since one of our desires should be to help our children become spiritual leaders, we can begin helping them to become qualified for spiritual leadership in this area while they are still children.

Second, if we are a spiritual leader, we are to be a model for our children by our example of how to show hospitality. This means that our children will grow up in a home where they regularly see other people in our home and we are able to show them how to show hospitality by our example. If we regularly have people in our home and make them feel comfortable, our children will learn from our example how to make others feel comfortable in their homes as they become adults. People learn best by having an example to follow. 1 Corinthians 11:1 says, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” We provide that example when we regularly invite people into our home and help them to feel comfortable while they are in our home.

Third, Titus 1:5 says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” In this verse, we see that Titus was to help potential spiritual leaders develop the things that were lacking to help them qualify as spiritual leaders (a key distinction to notice is that the purpose of these qualifications was to show Titus how to qualify people for spiritual leadership not how to disqualify them). James 1:4-5 show how we help people become qualified in areas where they are not yet qualified when those verses say, “But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” Here, we see that if our children lack wisdom, we are to help them learn to ask the Lord to give them wisdom. In the same way, we encourage them to ask the Lord to show them how to be hospitable.

However, hospitality is not something that is to be done just by spiritual leaders. In Romans 12:3-

8, we see that every Christian has been given one or more spiritual gifts to serve one another in the body of Christ. After giving this list of spiritual gifts, Romans 12:9-16 goes on to speak about the actions that all Christians are to show to one another as Christians. Romans 12:13 says, “Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.” This verse shows us that one of the things that we are all to do as Christians is to show our love to one another by being given to hospitality. Here, we see that every Christian should have a great desire to show hospitality to other Christians. This means that we have to work with our children to develop this desire in their lives.

Then, in Hebrews 13:1-2, we read, “Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.” Here, we see that Christians are to even reach out to strangers and invite them into their homes. Aquila and Priscilla invited a stranger from Alexandria that they met in the synagogue at Ephesus into their home. Acts 18:26 says, “So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” Here, we see that Aquila and Priscilla used their home as a place to teach Apollos about the death and resurrection of Christ. As a result, he placed his trust in Christ. Acts 18:27-28 tells us the results of this ministry of hospitality. Those verses say, “And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.”

Later, this same Aquila and Priscilla used their home as a place of ministry in the city of Rome. Romans 16:3-5a says, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.” Whether it was using their home as a place for a Bible study with strangers or using their home as a place for a church to meet, Aquila and Priscilla show us that it is very effective to show hospitality in our homes and use them as a place of ministry to others. Whether that ministry of hospitality involves ministering to one person, a family, a Bible study group or the whole church, the Lord will work through our lives as we look for opportunities to show hospitality to others.

The Lord is the One who gives us the opportunity to show Christian love by showing hospitality to one another. As you help your physical and spiritual children learn to show hospitality to others, the Lord will help them develop and expand their ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to show hospitality to others by your own example.