

Have you ever been treated to the gift of hospitality?

Connie and I travelled for two years, visiting nearly 350 churches. Near the end of our marathon, we were exhausted and had a service Decatur, IL.

- Decatur is a big Caterpillar town, and in the news was the 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, the church was going to be filled with UAW jackets – and we drove a Nissan and was going to Japan. Despite that, they wrapped us in God’s wonderful arms of hospitality.
- We knew B.G. Nevitt and his wife from suburban Chicago and we had a service with them in two churches in the two years of our intense journey: first in the northern suburbs and then in Decatur, Illinois.
- When we arrived at the hotel we were surprised to find a nice suite with fruit and candy waiting for us.
- After two years of constant travel and staying in varying degrees of hotels, parsonages, and parishioners’ homes, it was like an oasis – because it was a spiritual gift not just a nice hotel. The refreshment of the Holy Spirit through B.G. and his wife will never be forgotten.

I believe CIC has **two great needs** right now:

1. First we must **polish our Kidsmin**. You heard about that last Sunday: *invest* in training a great staff and *cleaning* up the downstairs facilities.
2. The second need **is more relational glue to hold us together**. There are about **640 people** who call us their home church, *but many still* are **not connected** to a small group or ministry; **they are audience and not participants**.

Therefore, the Lord has led me to **speak on hospitality** and give you some homework. **Nothing fancy**, just a simple look at what the Bible says about hospitality, sometimes called fellowship.

Hospitality

Let’s jump right in.

1. A Spiritual Gift.



Hospitality is *more than* opening your house to guests or providing a meal; **it is the Holy Spirit working through us to minister to another person.**

- It is **embracing the other** and bringing them close.
- **It 'seeks the best for someone else. It puts the other person's needs ahead of our own.'**¹

Hospitality is **often mentioned** in the Bible, **Peter even classifies** it as a spiritual gift:

'The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality (philoxenia) to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift (charisma) you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms (1Pe 4:7-10 NIV).'

- This is the **only use of the word** *charisma*, outside of Paul's writings. **Peter connects** *charisma* with hospitality and speaking the word of God (v. 11). Taking care of another is a spiritual gift.
- The **word hospitality** is a *Greek compound* that means to show love, *philo* to strangers *xenos*.

The earliest Christians were usually poor, and *hospitality cost money*. At that time **there were travelling prophets, teachers, and apostles**.

- By A.D. 100, there was so much **abuse of hospitality** that travelling ministers were limited to three days 'after which the person was expected to move on or to get a job and be self-supporting.'²
- One of the surviving **early documents** of the church is a manual on various **practical matters**, *such as* baptism and taking care of people. **Traveling prophets** had to 'walk their talk,' they could not demand food, and they could not ask for money, *otherwise*, they were to be considered **a false prophet**.³

We are to **exercise wisdom** in who we let into our homes. I **don't believe God asks us** to *open the doors* to people who may harm us.

¹ Delanne Williams, Zac Workun, Ken Braddy, *Welcome Aboard! Creating a Culture of Biblical Hospitality in Groups* (Brentwood, TN: Lifeway Press, 2024), p. 47.

² Peter H. Davids, *NICNT The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), p. 159.

³ Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), p. 29.

- Every bum I turned away knew this passage: ‘Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it (He 13:2 NLT)!’

Let’s answer the question, ‘why should I show hospitality.’ The Bible reveals various purposes for being hospitable. The first one we see is outreach.

2. Types of Hospitality.

1. Outreach. People will not care about the good news until they know you care about them. ‘As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector’s booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰ Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. ¹¹ But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such scum?” ¹² When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” ¹³ Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners (MT 9:9-13 NLT).”’

- The Pharisees had their ideas of holiness, purity, and how people should access God – through them, of course – so **Jesus being with sinners** was offensive to them.
- Yet **Matthew did the right thing** as a brand-new believer. He brought **his fellow sinners into his house** to show mercy and to introduce them to Jesus.
- **Showing hospitality reveals the Christian faith and the character of God’s people.** Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (Jn 13:34-35 NIV).”
- **Someone who used her gift of hospitality was Edith Schaeffer in Switzerland. In one six-week period, she hosted 187 people staying varying lengths of time.⁴ Their ministry, L’Abri, became a place for thinking people to explore Christianity and experience hospitality. She wrote, ‘What would you do if you knew someone who had an STD was asking to spend the night – between your nice clean cotton sheets?’**



Hospitality to unbelievers is missional – carrying the Good News to others.

⁴ Edith Schaeffer, *L’Abri* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978, 14th printing), p. 154.

The second purpose for hospitality is community.

2. Community. Hospitality is the **relational glue that holds the church together**. The **earliest believers enjoyed** great fellowship: ‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47 NIV).’

- ‘Hospitality **creates a sense of belonging** ... (it says) “There’s a place for you here.” Hospitality tells people, “We need each other.”’⁵
- This is **the reason for today’s message, we need more relational glue to hold us together**. We have **so many cultures here**.
- **On the one hand, it means we are doing something right**. As John envisioned before the throne there ‘was a great multitude that no one could count, *from every nation, tribe, people and language* (Re 7:9 NIV).’
- **On the other hand**, this means that we must make a greater effort to reach out beyond our current friends. It is **easy to develop cliques**, or tribes, which *subtly say* ‘you are not a part of my group.’
- **Through hospitality** ‘we *discover opportunities* to serve them’ and pray for miracles. *How do you know what your brother or sister needs unless you are close enough to listen to them and know them?*

Not only does showing hospitality hold the church together, it helps us grow spiritually.

3. Spiritual Growth. Hospitality in a small group is **the best way to grow** in your faith. Think of Abraham’s example when he entertained his three guests.

- He had them rest under a shady tree.
- He offered to wash their feet.
- He prepared a good meal.

One of the messengers then said, ‘I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son (Ge 18:10 NLT)!’ Think about **the importance** of that simple statement.

- **First, there is accountability** – ‘I am coming back next year, be ready.’

⁵ Williams, Workun, Braddy, *Welcome Aboard*, p. 49.

- A healthy **home group** will gently hold each other accountable *and* encourage discipleship.
- **Second**, Abraham **had to grow in his faith** – ‘Sarah, will have a son.’ He was 100 years old when his son, Isaac, was born (Ge 21:5). **After so many years, Abraham had to really believe again for this miracle to happen.** This meal forced Abraham to have faith for a son.
- **Experts say** that ‘Of the people who attend small groups, 73% say they are being discipled, whereas only 37% of those who aren’t attending small groups say they are being disciplined.’⁶

There is one more reason to make time for relationships in your calendar is obedience.

4. Obedience. No one likes to do something because they must. However, we are commanded to show hospitality.

For example, Paul taught that...

- ‘So a church leader must ... enjoy having guests in his home (1Ti 3:2 NLT).’ It is **not an option** for church leaders; we must entertain.
- But **every Christian should entertain**. ‘Always be eager to practice hospitality (Ro 12:13 NLT).’
- **Widows were not allowed** on the list for financial help *unless* she was known for showing hospitality (1Tim 5:9-10).

Jesus also taught ‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (Jn 13:34-35 NIV).’” **Love is a verb** and not just an idea or feeling. *To love*, we must be **close enough** and **engaged enough** to know their needs, their desires, and **take them upon ourselves to help**.

Let’s summarize so far.

Why should we show hospitality?

- Reach out to the lost.
- Make the Christian community strong.
- Help us grow spiritually.

⁶ Brian Mosley, ‘Doing Life Together: Are Your Small Groups Fulfilling Their Purpose?’, in *Outreach* (May / June 2025), pp. 96-97 (p. 97).

- Obedience.

Right now, all **the extroverts** are thinking, 'yeah, preach it,' while all **the introverts** are like, 'oh, no! Not for me.' **I am not asking you to change who you are, I am just asking you to risk a little more relationship at CIC.**

Use who you are and what God has given you to connect.

- The **widow of Zarephath** (1Ki 17:10-16) was so poor, but she gave what she had to Elijah. **God blessed her** with enough food during a famine.
- The **Shunammite woman** (2Ki 4:8-10) was so wealthy she had an addition built to her home so Elisha could stay there. God blessed her with a son.
- **Mary was commended** for sitting at Jesus' feet, *but I guarantee you* that at dinner time **Martha's hospitality** was greatly appreciated as well (Lk 10:38-42).

If you have been around **CIC for a while**, you already have your relational reservoir all filled up. **Please make space for our newcomers.**

Let me share about two opportunities for hospitality.

3. Small Groups.

Ideally, **here at CIC, hospitality** would be done in small groups, **but we don't have as many as we need. It just is not in our DNA yet.**

- So **please get involved** with a Bible study, the men's groups, women's Bible studies, or Pathfinders – an *ad hoc* fun events group.
- If you are **interested in leading a small group** please let me know.

If you **are in a small group or ministry**, it is easy to develop some bad habits.⁷

- When the **group is successful** it reaches its maximum size and becomes ingrown.
- The **group's success can** make 'assimilation of new people very difficult.'⁸ When **a group succeeds** in praying, serving, doing life together, there is *little room for more*.
- **Experts recommend switching up the small group every two years.**

⁷ Williams, Workun, Braddy, *Welcome Aboard*, p. 51.

⁸ Small 'Groups are also sometimes responsible for driving people away from church when biblical hospitality isn't high on their priority list', Williams, Workun, Braddy, *Welcome Aboard*, p. 52.

If there is one thing we **learned from our Covid-19 drama**, it is that connection and community are vitally important.

- We don't need another class to transfer information, or a 'second sermon.' There are many places to get great content in our homes today – YouTube, Bible.com, etc.
- We **don't want** to be a part of an audience; *we want to participate*.
- **We need relationships that bring connection and transformation.**

A second opportunity is homework. Consider it a first step in showing hospitality this summer.

5. Dinner for Six.

Dinner for Six

Dinner for Six is a group you form with others that meet for three meals. You share one meal in June, July, and August.



- Your group can be three couples, six singles, or any combination that makes a group of six.
- Take the month of May to pray and look around for a group. Ask yourself, 'who does God want me to reach out too?'
- You can have one host home or rotate among you. The host can cook a meal or go to a restaurant. It is totally your choice.
- After the meal, please pray for one another.

As a courtesy, please send me an email (randalhackland@gmail.com) with the names of your dinner for six participants. For fun send me photos of your dinner for six so that we can post them on social media (if you want).

Conclusion.

Our church in Tokyo was only 20 people. We had a meal together every Sunday following church. We served one another, **rejoiced with each** other's success – weddings, babies – and we **cried with each** other through Alzheimer's, fraud, and

[failed relationships. I have never experienced such close relationships and hospitality.](#)
[We really do love one another.](#)

Zacchaeus felt the opposite; he was an outcast among his Jewish people. He had **betrayed them** to become a wealthy tax collector for the Romans.

Then, one day, he was curious to see this Jesus everyone was talking about. 'He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. ⁵When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today." ⁶Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. ⁷But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled. ⁸Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!" ⁹Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost (Lk 19:3-9 NLT)."

[Jesus welcomes sinners still \(Lk 15:2\).](#)

As sinners we were outcast and far from God, but because of Jesus' blood shed on the cross, we can be welcomed into God's family.

'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (Jn 1:12 NIV).'

Pray.