



SERVICE AND HOSPITALITY

“When we set out on a consciously chosen course of action that accents the good of others and is, for the most part, a hidden work, a deep change occurs in our spirits.

- Richard J. Foster

PREP

Check out the introduction video from Pastor Tim:
www.templebiblechurch.org/disciplines

Overview

One of the key things we see in the life of Jesus is a continuous lowering of himself to serve those around him. Our savior was a servant. We ought to follow in his footsteps.

Passages

Matthew 25:35-40 | Matthew 22:33-39

Matthew 20:26-28 | Matthew 5:38-48

Leviticus 19:33-34 | Philippians 2:1-4 | 1 Peter 4:8-11

Terms

Servant

A person at the disposal of another. (Douglas)

Hospitality

The practice of receiving strangers in order to offer provision and protection. (Baker)

Opening Question

- o *What is a way someone has served you without asking for anything in return? How did it affect you?*
- o *Who is the most hospitable person you know? What evidence in their life shows that?*

READING

by Suzanne Steeves

Growing up in my family's home, we often had friends and family around the table. My mom was notorious for making many feel welcome in our home. I learned at an early age the importance of being hospitable to those that God puts in my path. God has grown this desire to see others and make them feel significant when I'm with them through the years.

I've always enjoyed opening my home and serving others. When I was younger, I would often spend too much time worrying about the presentation or appearance of my home when having guests over. I think I wrongly compared my situation or abilities with others whom I had elevated in my mind as doing it so much better. God graciously has put women in my life that lived out hospitality with such humility and warmth demonstrating to me that the "things" we use to be hospitable—food, our home, decorations etc. are not what my focus needed to be on. My focus truly needed to be on the people God was bringing in my path and we thus invited into our home. I have learned and continue to learn to hold the "things" God has given us with open hands, being willing to open our home to whoever he leads us to do so with.

I've also learned that hospitality is lived out wherever I go. If I attend an event at my children's school or volunteer, I can share God's love with them by the way I greet others, engage in conversation with them and make them know that they are important by giving them my full attention with my eyes and ears. I've often discovered trials people are going through when I take the time to stop and talk with others. In addition, when I step outside to get the mail or my newspaper, I try to look out and around and see if any neighbors are out that I can say hello to and see how

they are doing. I've often fallen short in this when I'm being selfish and don't want to make the effort because I have lots going on or time is short or I'm just being lazy. I can also be hospitable with employees I encounter when shopping or running errands. If I truly believe God's love is for all, then by God's grace I try to be kind to everyone I encounter. I desire to be approachable and make others feel at ease in my company and demonstrate this by listening and tending to their needs so that they feel loved and cared for. I want them to see the life of Christ in me as we interact.

The gift of hospitality so beautifully displays God's care and comfort for the details of our lives. My hope is that as I allow myself to be a vessel that the Lord can pour his love and mercy through to others, that he will be glorified, and the door will be opened to be invested in another person's life. This can be exhausting if I rely on my own strength and efforts to do this, and I try to remind myself that the joy of the Lord is my strength. Only Jesus living his life in and through me makes it possible for me to be hospitable in whatever situation God puts me in. If I have a situation where I allowed myself to get in the way of being hospitable (in other words, I was too busy to care or caught up in my own problems), I try to learn from that and remind myself I am a work in progress until the moment I draw my last breath and can use that experience to surrender the next encounter to God. For me, being hospitable is a moment by moment dying to self and allowing Christ to express his life through me to others. I can't allow the enemy to play the "shame game" and keep me in a place of defeat. I've learned through many trials and errors that if I trust God to do his work, and he allows me to join him where he is working, there is such joy in serving others and displaying hospitality.

DISCUSSION

Service

The difference between hospitality and service is not stark. The two go hand in hand. Hospitality deals with the connection between you and others while service is about the actions toward others. Hospitality is an attitude while service is the action. Both are a discipline that puts us in the path of being Jesus' hands and feet.

- o *How do you practice serving others?*
- o *Serving others is not a small part of being a follower of Christ. How can we tend to downplay actively serving others?*

Matthew 25:31-40 & 22:34-39

Jesus was the servant king. He showed us what it ultimately looks like to love and serve others. Both of these passages take a look at the love of God and the love of others. Jesus wants us to see there is no separation of the two.

- o *What is the connection between loving (serving) others and loving Jesus?*
- o *What does it mean to love someone as yourself?*
- o *Who are the people that are hard to serve?*

Matthew 20:26-28

Take a moment to appreciate the fact that the creator God decided to serve that which he made. This is an incredible truth. We are to now discipline ourselves to be selfless servants as our savior did.

- o *Jesus told the disciples to lower themselves to each other. Why is this hard to do?*
- o *Jesus came not to be served but to serve. When have you been surprised by someone serving you that has authority over you?*

Matthew 5:38-48

- o *These verses speak to loving in response to those who are against you. What does the world say about how you should treat these kinds of people?*
- o *Verse 46 speaks about loving those who love you. Where have you seen people that do not follow Jesus love (serve) in this way? Do you see nonbelievers loving those that hate them?*
- o *In these verses we get the saying, "Go the extra mile." What does this look like? How can we do this?*

DISCUSSION

Hospitality

Around the world many cultures practice hospitality in different ways. The culture here in the US is starting to lack in the way of showing hospitality, especially to people we do not know. This is a discipline that has a lot of potential to show those around us that we are followers of Christ.

- o ***Why is it hard to be hospitable? What prevents us from showing hospitality to those around us?***

Leviticus 19:33-34

God expected his people to act differently. They were not to look down on those not like them, they were to be a hospitable people. Hospitality is expected of those in the family of God.

- o ***What was it like in your home growing up in regards to hospitality?***
- o ***What things in life divide people? What does it look like to love others in spite of what divides us?***

Philippians 2:1-4

We see a desire for unity in this passage. This unity comes from its members having the same mindset to count others as more significant and to look to each other's interests.

- o ***The secular creed is often to love yourself, take care of yourself, you do you, pursue your happiness, etc. As you read this verse and Paul's encouragement to value others above yourself, what does that mean to you?***
- o ***What are some practical ways you can put others first? How can you do this at home? At work? In your community?***

1 Peter 4:8-11

The charge in these verses starts with "above all." The body of believers should be loving more than anything else. Other aspects we see in Scripture are highly important, but a loving, hospitable, and serving church is one that understands what glorifies the Lord.

- o ***Children are not the only ones who grumble. When have you grumbled in showing hospitality?***
- o ***Who do you know that serves others with their gifts? How do they do this?***
- o ***How can we show hospitality in a way that magnifies the Lord instead of our own selflessness?***

CHALLENGE

This week, take on one or more of these challenges. This is not meant to be a finalized list of what it means to live out service and hospitality. This list is to give you opportunities for practice. Find ways to practice the disciplines in order to make them habits. Spend some time reading through the challenges and commit to the one(s) the Holy Spirit draws you to.

- o As a church body, we have ministries, groups or individuals that are in a vulnerable place or struggling. This could be widows from New Song, His Kids families, adoptive or foster families, elderly couples, lonely members. Consider as a home group making a meal for one of these.**
- o During the holidays, find out if there are any international students that cannot go home and have them over.**
- o Write cards to church members who have family deployed and let them know that you are praying for them.**
- o Bring a neighbor a plant/flower or goodies and get to know them more.**
- o Volunteer at one of the local food pantries or outreach ministries for those in need.**
- o Contact Tim Cartwright and see what your group could do to either serve the church or those in our community.**

RESOURCES

Crazy Love

Francis Chan

Love Does

Bob Goff

When Helping Hurts

Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

Unclean

Richard Beck

SERMON NOTES