

The Parchment

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Offer Hospitality to One Another

Last Sunday we discussed the importance of drawing on God's love so that we can love one another. Of all the "one-anothers," the most important one is indeed to love one another. On an intellectual level no one would debate the need to "Love your neighbor as yourself." But how do we do it? The rest of the "one-anothers" are actually practical ways we show love to one another.

The "one another" for this week comes from 1 Peter 4:9, "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." Hospitality literally means the "love of strangers." Those traveling in the ancient world needed a place to stay and food to eat. There were no Hotels or Motel 6's on every corner. Who would provide for this need? Christians learned to practice opening up their home to other believers for gatherings or housing. We can apply this literally, inviting others into our homes, especially those whom we do not know very well. I have a vision where newcomers are taken in by the old-timers, or where families "adopt" a student away from home.

On another level, hospitality is leaving room not just in your house for someone, but also in your heart. Peter says that we should offer hospitality to one another without grumbling or complaining. This means we do it sincerely, with a heart

of love. To receive someone in your heart does not necessarily take having them over for dinner. It is the willingness to take interest in others, see their need, and take care of them. Look around the chapel during worship service. How many of us can say that we have welcomed every single other person into our hearts? Even in our weekly fellowships we may still be "strangers" to one another.

However, there is a risk in opening up your house and your heart to others. Lori and I have always had an open home policy. We like having people over for dinner or going out and just connecting. One night, when we were at our old church, we invited one of the new graduates over for dinner. I had barbequed some of my best steaks, thinking that I would have some leftover for lunch. But he kept eating and eating, until all my leftovers were gone! This is a humorous example, but if we are to be hospitable, we take the risk that someone may stay that extra day, or talk that extra hour, or may cut into our hobby or even homework time.

Whatever the personal risks, hospitality is the way of love and the way to build up the community in Christ. If you want to discover the blessing of loving others, start by inviting others into your home and heart.