

The Parchment

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Practicing Hospitality

A couple weeks ago I spoke from 1 Peter 4:8-10: *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.* If you read the passage closely, you will notice that the first way to "love deeply" is to "offer hospitality." Hospitality is providing a space (could be physical, temporal, social, emotional, or spiritual) where relationships can grow and others can be refreshed and nurtured.

In the class I took at Fuller Seminary last week I felt particularly convicted of how many Christians have much more knowledge than they put into practice. Jesus' Great Commission is for disciples to "make disciples of all nations," baptizing them, and "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded them" (Matthew 28:18-20). He does not say, "teaching them everything" as if knowledge becomes the end goal. Rather, Jesus wants them engaged in "teaching them to OBEY everything..." In other words, knowledge should be put into practice.

Back to our passage, especially verse 9 on hospitality. Here is a simple instruction we can all follow. But how do we do it? At the end of the sermon I collected responses

from small groups on how we can practice hospitality. Here's a representative list from the small groups:

Say "hi" to people you don't know

Listen to others

Eat lunch with those you don't normally eat with

Smile at others and show interest in them

Talk to new people

Invite friends to come to church

Hold open the door for a stranger

Open up your home; it doesn't need to be perfect

Add them on Facebook

Provide snacks; coffee and tea

Give up more time for people

These are really just a start, but just imagine if we could at least practice some of these regularly in our Sunday worship service. Our service would become an even more hospitable place to worship God and fellowship with others. If we have some barriers (in the sermon I shared three: difficult people, narrow circles of friends, and inadequate resources), we can overcome these by asking God for help. We may be shy, or even anxious, about reaching out to others. But we can certainly take small faith steps to practice "loving neighbor" as an expression of loving God. Each one of us can do something on the items on the list above. Give it a try!