

Hebrews 13:2 | “Being a Welcoming Community, Part 2”

*October 6, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown*

You can turn in your Bibles this morning to Hebrews 13, verse 2 today. *[pauseeee]*

Last week, I started a short series on becoming a welcoming and deepening community.

And this series comes out of our desire as a church to grow in being a more welcoming church to newcomers, and being a church that deepens in its relationships with one another. *[pauseeee]*

Last Sunday I preached out of James 2, showing how we are to welcome all kinds of people.

Now today, I wanted to continue that idea of being a welcoming community by talking about *hospitality*. *[pauseeee]*

What is hospitality? *[pause]*

The dictionary defines it as “the friendly reception and treatment of guests or strangers.”<sup>1</sup>  
*[pause]*

Put another way, you could say that it’s love shown to others often in the form of food, drink, lodging, or provision. *[pauseeee]*

For many years, Francis Schaeffer and his wife Edith ran a house of Christian hospitality and study in Switzerland called L’Abri [which means ‘shelter’]. *[pause]*

They opened their hearts and homes to hundreds of people [over the years] seeking Biblical answers to life’s challenges. *[pause]*

In her book, *What is a Family?*, Edith offers this counsel: ‘Every Christian home is meant to have a door that swings open.’<sup>2</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Could that be said of our homes? What about our church?

Are we a hospitable bunch? *[pauseeee]*

Let’s READ Hebrews 13:2 to see what God’s Word says about our duty in regards to hospitality. *[READ]*

Many modern-day Christians don’t realize this, but there is actually an emphasis on hospitality in the Bible. *[pause]*

Job says, “The sojourner has not lodged in the street; I have opened my doors to the traveler.”<sup>3</sup>  
*[pause]*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/hospitality>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.family-times.net/illustration/Hospitality/200048/>.

<sup>3</sup> Job 31:32.

Especially back in the Old Testament time, hospitality was vital, for inns were not as common, and where there were inns, they were not good places to be in. *[pauseeee]*

So back then, hospitality to traveling strangers was so important that it became a custom and was also seen as a duty. *[pause]*

Nowadays, we have more available places for people to stay, and we even have the “hospitality industry”.

Yet amidst that, we as Christians are still called to show hospitality to others, as we see God instructing us to do so here. *[pauseeee]*

Now as we think about this passage, I am completely aware that this instruction concerning hospitality is *primarily* about the hospitality that we should have in our homes.

But I also believe that this verse can apply to us as a church. *[pause]*

The Bible talks about the church as a family, and this is our “family gathering place”, here in this building.

So in a way, this is our “home”. *[pause]*

As we gather here as a church family, how do we treat guests, visitors, and strangers that walk through these doors?

That’s something that I would like for us to consider this morning. *[pauseeee]*

Now what does this passage show us about hospitality?...First...

### **I. Hospitality flows out of love for others.**

It is no coincidence that the verse right before the instruction on showing hospitality is about showing love. *[pause]*

Verse 1 says, “Let brotherly love continue,” and then it goes on into verse 2 saying, “Do not neglect to show hospitality.” *[pauseeee]*

Love and hospitality go hand-in-hand, you cannot separate them. *[pause]*

Even in 1 Peter, right before Peter talks about hospitality, he talks about love. *[pause]*

Listen to this, and note the similarity...

“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”<sup>4</sup> *[pause]*

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 4:8–9.

There it is once again...

Love commanded, and then hospitality commanded. *[pause]*

Also, in 3rd John, John commends his readers for their hospitality towards some people, who were strangers to them.

And he says that these men “testified to your love before the church.”<sup>5</sup> *[pauseeee]*

As you can see, hospitality flows out of love for others.

Why else would you care for people in such a way? *[pauseeee]*

Love is really inherent in the practice of hospitality. *[pause]*

Certainly people could show hospitality with the wrong motives, but generally, those who are hospitable are loving. *[pauseeee]*

When talking about loving your neighbor, Jesus gives the story of the Good Samaritan.

And what does the Good Samaritan do?

He sees a person in need, and provides for him by binding up his wounds, bringing him to an inn, and taking care of him.<sup>6</sup> *[pause]*

In a way, he was showing that man hospitality by providing for him, and Jesus is teaching us that that is an example of loving your neighbor. *[pauseeeee]*

Hospitality is loving because it takes the sacrifice of your time, your money, and your resources for another person.

And it takes a certain intentionality to think about another person, and then to do it. *[pauseeee]*

Let’s just take the simple idea of having someone else over for dinner as a case study. *[pause]*

It takes love to invite someone over for dinner, for you are showing that you are thinking about them, care about them, and want to spend time with them. *[pause]*

It takes love to do this because you have to spend money and time thinking about and making food for them. *[pause]*

You also typically clean up your house before they come, so that’s more time spent in love. *[pause]*

You see?

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<sup>5</sup> 3 John 5–6.

<sup>6</sup> See Luke 10:29–37.

Inherent in hospitality is love, so that our love for others *will* actually overflow into more hospitality! *[pauseeeee]*

As Christians, we all want to get better at loving others.

Well one way that we can be more loving is to show more hospitality. *[pauseeee]*

Are you showing the love of hospitality? *[pause]*

Do you regularly invite others over to your house? *[pause]*

It doesn't always have to be a meal, but it could be just to spend time with others. *[pauseeeee]*

Some people use the excuse that their home or apartment isn't set up for hospitality, for it's small.

But the Bible isn't requiring you to accommodate an army of people—what about having even 1 person over? *[pauseeeee]*

We should also apply this to us as a church...

Are we showing the love of hospitality to people who come in here? *[pause]*

Do they feel our welcoming love? *[pause]*

May our love for God and others grow more and more, for when it does, our hospitality-love will grow. *[pauseeee]*

John 13:35 says, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

So since love is a prime character trait that Jesus' disciples ought to have, we should be regularly evaluating our lives, asking the question, "Am I being loving? In what ways can I be more loving?"

And hospitality is to be one of the avenues of love that we think about. *[pauseeee]*

May we not neglect it! *[pause]*

*That's what this verse says, and what we will talk about next...*

## **II. Hospitality is not to be neglected.**

In your busyness, is there a certain project or task that you keep neglecting? *[pause]*

You know, it's that task that you really don't want to do, and it often doesn't make the top of the priority list, so it keeps getting pushed to the side. *[pause]*

Well unfortunately, hospitality is one of those things that gets neglected in some Christians' lives. *[pause]*

This is why the author of Hebrews calls us to not neglect it, for we have a tendency to do so! *[pause]*

Hebrews 13:2 says, “Do not neglect to show hospitality.” *[pauseeee]*

The truth is that it's very possible and easy to neglect to show hospitality.

But why is that? *[pause]*

Because it takes time, effort, sacrifice, and intentionality. *[pause]*

Peter had to even say to show hospitality “without grumbling”<sup>7</sup> because it's not always the easiest, most pleasant thing to do. *[pause]*

It takes the sacrifice of your money, your time, your resources, your comforts, and your energy. *[pause]*

You need to clean up the house, get things together, buy food, do laundry, make beds, and spend time with people.

Or it may make you want to grumble because the person you have over isn't the most pleasant. *[pause]*

You see, it's not always easy to be hospitable.

Some people may even overstay their welcome, but love drives grumble-free hospitality. *[pauseeee]*

The Bible says here to not neglect it. *[pause]*

As I just mentioned neglecting hospitality may come from not wanting to be burdened with the hard parts of it.

But neglecting it may also come when we are simply inattentive to it and overlook it. *[pause]*

For some in this room, it's not that you don't want to show hospitality, it's just that you keep neglecting to even think about it! *[pause]*

It's not on your mind, so you don't do it, but the Bible says the same to you: “do not neglect to show hospitality”. *[pause]*

Put it on your mind! Intentionally do it! *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Peter 4:9.

Others of you may say, “I just don’t have the gift of hospitality.” *[pause]*

But did the writer of Hebrews say this to only those with the gift of hospitality?

No, he said it to every Christian! *[pause]*

Now some people may be better at it than others, but *none* of us are allowed to neglect it. *[pauseeee]*

Even Romans 12:13 tells us to “*seek* to show hospitality.” *[pause]*

That word ‘seek’ is the Greek word for pursuing something or striving after something.

So we are to pursue, seek, and strive to show hospitality, and that means we must use effort to do so. *[pauseeee]*

Hospitality cannot be taken lightly, or else it will be thrown to the wayside. *[pause]*

We can often come up with things that we think are more important, yet we must stick it in our minds that *hospitality is important*. *[pause]*

In fact, it reflects God’s character. *[pause]*

In one of Jesus’ parables, God is described as a man who gives a great banquet and invites and compels people to come in, so that the house would be full.<sup>8</sup> *[pause]*

God is the perfect example of One who is hospitable. *[pauseeeee]*

Christian: hospitality is important—do not neglect it. *[pause]*

Do not make excuses and push it to the side, always saying, “Another time.” *[pause]*

Do not let it continually slide to the end of your to-do list, but bring it up to where God wants it in your life. *[pauseeee]*

Sit down this week and when you plan your schedule, include hospitality in it. *[pause]*

You could even start small, and then grow over time, as you get the hang of it. *[pauseeee]*

This is a reminder, too, that as a church we should not neglect hospitality, either. *[pauseeeee]*

*There’s something else here in Hebrews 13:2, and it’s that...*

### **III. Hospitality is to be shown to people you don’t know.**

The verse says, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.” *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>8</sup> See Luke 14:15–24.

There's a word that's thrown around a lot in our day and it's "xenophobia", which means the fear of strangers. *[pause]*

That word is attached to people as a label all the time. *[pause]*

I typed in 'xenophobia' into a search engine to see how often it was used in recent news articles, and it was all over the place...

Article after article used the term to denounce something. *[pause]*

Well the word used here for hospitality to strangers is the opposite of xenophobia.

It's the Greek word, "phil-o-xen-ia", which means "love of strangers". *[pauseeee]*

So the verse here is telling us to show love to strangers—people you don't know well. *[pauseeee]*

One theological dictionary said this of hospitality...

"Strangeness produces mutual tension between natives and foreigners, but hospitality overcomes the tension and makes of the alien a friend."<sup>9</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Hospitality actually takes someone you don't know and treats them as if they were your friend. *[pauseeee]*

Back in Deuteronomy 10, it tells us that God "loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt."<sup>10</sup> *[pauseeee]*

When we show love to strangers, we are reflecting God's character, and we are also remembering that we are strangers and pilgrims in this world.<sup>11</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Our natural tendency as people is to avoid or neglect the person that we don't know. *[pause]*

We often live with a "stranger danger" mentality. *[pause]*

We were told as kids to not talk to strangers, which is probably a safe instruction for kids, but as adult Christians, if you don't talk to any strangers, that's unbiblical and wrong to do. *[pauseeee]*

We must understand that God commands us here to show hospitality to strangers. *[pause]*

**It's not optional.**

It's not only if you feel up to it.

No, it says, "do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers." *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>9</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 662.

<sup>10</sup> Deuteronomy 10:18b–19.

<sup>11</sup> See 1 Peter 1:1, 17 & Phil. 3:20.

We are to show love to even people that we don't know. *[pauseeee]*

This means that we as a church should be active in loving the strangers who walk in these doors. *[pause]*

The visitors and guests that arrive should feel our love for them, even though we don't know them. *[pause]*

We shouldn't avoid them, and no visitor should feel neglected, or else we are neglecting to obey this verse. *[pauseeee]*

No guest or visitor who comes here should sit there, and not be talked to.

Rather, they should feel so loved and welcomed by us that they feel like an honored guest, and that we are treating them as if they were our friend. *[pauseeeee]*

So what does this look like for a church to show hospitality to strangers? *[pause]*

It means that we are friendly and welcoming, making an effort to greet and talk to a visitor.

Not just saying "hi", but showing that you want to get to know them and are interested in *them*. *[pauseeee]*

You could invite them out to eat for lunch after church to get to know them.

Or even invite them over to your house for lunch. *[pause]*

Wouldn't it make such an impact on a visitor to know that people wanted to get to know them so much that they were invited somewhere after church? *[pause]*

Even if they don't choose to go with you, they still know that you cared! *[pauseeee]*

If we have a fellowship lunch downstairs, or even some other event, you could say, "Hey, we have lunch downstairs after the service. Did you want to go? I'll be there and you can sit with me, if you want." *[pause]*

Make sure to explain the details, for remember that they don't know anything about the event or our church. *[pause]*

Tell them that if they have any questions about our church that you'd love to answer them, or that you'd find the answer, if you don't know it. *[pauseeee]*

These are all ways of a church showing hospitality to strangers. *[pause]*

It's intentionally showing love and care in that we want to make them feel welcome. *[pauseeee]*

These are also great ways to *connect* a visitor into the church, as they get to know our church more and could possibly determine to stay and commit here. *[pauseeee]*



Way too often, we think on a very basic level of just greeting a new person, but we must think deeper, and think about how we can show them love. *[pause]*

Consider what a visitor would want to know, or is thinking or experiencing. *[pausee]*

We typically think in terms of what we already know, instead of putting ourselves in a new person's shoes and considering what they may want to know. *[pauseeee]*

Does the visitor know where the bathroom is? If not, tell them. *[pause]*

Do they have a baby? Show them where the nursery is, if they want to utilize that. *[pause]*

These are all simple, yet impactful ways that we can show hospitality to strangers in our church home.

But will we do them, or will we neglect this instruction of God? *[pauseeeee]*

Hospitality is to be shown to people you don't know—do you do that here in this church? *[pause]*

Do you do that in your homes? *[pauseeee]*

*The final thing that we find in this verse is that...*

#### **IV. Hospitality can bring unexpected blessings.**

In Hebrews 13:2, it says, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” *[pauseeeee]*

Isn't that interesting? *[pause]*

The Bible is making the point that some people have actually shown hospitality to angels, and didn't know it! *[pauseeee]*

When you look for examples of this in Scripture, there are a couple places that it may be talking about...

Gideon showed hospitality to an angel by preparing a young goat and unleavened cakes, yet it seems as though Gideon had an idea already that it was an angel.<sup>12</sup> *[pause]*

Lot showed hospitality to angels when they came to Sodom, but that incident did not turn out very pleasant.<sup>13</sup> *[pause]*

The most likely story that it's talking about is of Abraham in Genesis 18. *[pause]*

Abraham lifts up his eyes and suddenly sees 3 three men standing there.

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<sup>12</sup> See Judges 6:11ff.

<sup>13</sup> See Genesis 19.

So he runs to them, bows down, and invites them to rest and eat. *[pause]*

He quickly goes and has Sarah make bread, and then he gets a calf prepared and brings along curds and milk, too. *[pause]*

He even stands by them while they eat, showing them great honor. *[pause]*

Talk about hospitality to strangers! *[pause]*

He insisted on these strangers staying, he provided a hearty meal, did it quickly, and even let them eat, while he stood to the side.

And then what do we find about these 3 men, who were strangers to Abraham?

One of them seems to be a theophany of God, and the two other ones are angels. *[pause]*

Abraham even gets a special blessing during this visit, as the Lord promises that Sarah will have a son by that time next year. *[pauseeee]*

Unbeknownst to him, Abraham had entertained angels, and what a blessing he found when he did so! *[pauseeee]*

This is what the author of Hebrews is encouraging and motivating us with in order to get us to be more hospitable with strangers...

You never know who you are welcoming—it could very well be someone surprising. *[pauseeee]*

Now this verse seems to imply that we could actually be hospitable to angels, but the truth is that we wouldn't even know it anyway if we did, for we would be doing it unknowingly. *[pause]*

But the principle that we see here is that we could experience unexpected blessings from unexpected people when we show hospitable-love. *[pauseeee]*

Abraham kindly treated his visitors, and it was revealed that they were angels, and he got a great blessing from that encounter.

So also, we must understand that hospitality towards strangers could bring unexpected blessings. *[pauseeee]*

Now we don't do this in order to get, but we are to simply be hospitable, and God will bring the blessing.

And the truth is that even if we aren't blessed now, God promises to bless our hospitality in the future. *[pause]*

Listen to Luke 14:13–14, “But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” *[pauseeee]*

We are to just remain faithfully loving and generous and leave it all to the Lord. *[pause]*

What it comes down to is this...

As Christians, we are to be people who overflow with such loving, regular hospitality that we aren't even always fully aware of who we are caring for, for we treat all kinds of people with love. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus even makes an amazing point in the book of Matthew that welcoming strangers, who are Christians, is actually seen as welcoming Him.<sup>14</sup>

And by doing so, we reveal that we love Christ and belong to Him. *[pauseeee]*

So fellow brother or sister in Christ, let's be generously hospitable to people, and you never know what God may do through our simple acts of hospitality. *[pause]*

Maybe that person you have over will become a pillar in our church someday, and you played a part in making them feel welcome. *[pause]*

Maybe that person you have over will encourage you, or even open up a door for you. *[pause]*

Maybe that person that you have over will be so impacted by your love that they are led to look further into the Bible, and then believe in Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

Hospitality can bring unexpected blessings, but we must be willing to show it to unfamiliar people. *[pauseeee]*

So let's show hospitable love, and see what God will do! *[pauseeee]*

*This one verse in Hebrews shows us that...*

**Our homes (and church) should overflow with hospitality towards guests.**

If you remember, we did a recent survey of our church, and there was a specific question that we asked, which relates to what we talked about this morning. *[pause]*

We asked something like, "How many times have you invited a new person to do something outside of church in the past year?"

And the survey result was that 56% of the people who responded have not invited a new person to do something outside of church in the last year. *[pauseeee]*

We definitely have room to grow, don't we? *[pause]*

All of us could get better at this—myself included.

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<sup>14</sup> See Matthew 25:31–40.

But just imagine the difference it would make if every single visitor who walked through these doors over the next few years was invited by at least 1 person to do something. *[pause]*

It's that kind of connection that often impacts a person to stay here and get connected or not.

But we don't do this just to get more people in our church—we do it out of an overflow of love for others. *[pause]*

Our love should boil over into hospitality, so that our homes and our church becomes a place that people feel welcomed and loved, even as strangers. *[pause]*

Wouldn't it be great if hospitality was so ingrained into our church culture here that it became a normal, regular occurrence? *[pause]*

That it became so normal that for someone to not do it was abnormal. *[pause]*

In that way, we would be following the Lord's command here, for we wouldn't be neglecting to show hospitality. *[pause]*

In this way, we can show the love of Christ for people, for we have been so loved by Him. *[pause]*

It's Christ who is the perfect Host, who invites sinners to a lavish feast of grace and blessing now, and we even get to experience a part of this when we partake of the Lord's Supper this morning.

But He also promises to eat and drink with us someday in His kingdom.<sup>15</sup> *[pause]*

He is the true hospitable One, who has provided us with all that we need, especially forgiveness and eternal life through His shed blood on the Cross. *[pause]*

So as Romans 15:7 says, "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

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<sup>15</sup> See Matthew 26:29, Luke 22:30, & Revelation 19:9.