



Hospitality: What is the greatest commandment?

Jesus is about to be asked a question. An important question, one that's answer will expand the hearts of Christians for centuries, shape theologians for millennia and challenge philosophers in their thinking from around the globe. And yet the impactful words of Jesus are prompted by a scheme of malicious entrapment. Within his answer he not only shapes and determines the direction of faith for all believers for all time, he simultaneously demonstrates the very principle he is outlining.

Read: Matthew 22:34-40, Leviticus 19:18, 33-34

Questions for Reflection:

1. What does Jesus mean by "all the Law and the Prophets"?
2. How are you loving the Lord your God?
3. Who is your neighbor? (Read Lev 19:18, 33-34) What are their names?

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously - no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be real and costly love, with deep feelings for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner - no mere tolerance, or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses ... for in him also Christ 'vere latitat' - the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden.

-C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory

Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,
Reveal who you are.
Set the world right;
Do what's best—
 as above, so below.
Keep us alive with three square meals.
Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.
Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.
You're in charge!
You can do anything you want!
You're ablaze in beauty!
 Yes. Yes. Yes.



Hospitality: Seeing the Imago Dei

Think back to what it was like to be separate from Christ. Remember what hopelessness felt like? Being unable to shake the nagging darkness, wishing that it would give way to light. Never daring to hope that maybe meaning and purpose could be yours and that friendships could be based on more than affinity and proximity. Jesus was a stranger. An intimidating stranger, untouchable. Knowing your own dirt and knowing that it couldn't be hidden from him meant that the only honest option to get to know this stranger was absolute vulnerability. It was a terrifyingly appealing option. And then, somehow, you were more and more inclined to it. The image of God that you saw in another person or in the Word or heard about captivated you. You were drawn by the Spirit of God.

Read: Ephesians 2:19-22

Questions for Reflection:

1. What foundation did the prophets and apostles build?
2. How have you experienced being "a member of God's household" (Eph. 2:20a)?
3. What could hospitality look like towards other members of God's household?

The gospel is absurd and the life of Jesus is meaningless unless we believe that He lived, died, and rose again with but one purpose in mind: to make brand-new creation. Not to make people with better morals but to create a community of prophets and professional lovers, men and women who would surrender to the mystery of the fire of the Spirit that burns within, who would live in ever greater fidelity to the omnipresent Word of God, who would enter into the center of it all, the very heart and mystery of Christ, into the center of the flame that consumes, purifies, and sets everything aglow with peace, joy, boldness, and extravagant, furious love. This, my friend, is what it really means to be a Christian.

-Brennan Manning, [The Furious Longing of God](#)

Prayer:

Lord, you have separated me from separation and opened my eyes to see wondrous things in your Word and your world. Would you continue to cultivate in me a posture of seeing, seeing myself in light of you, seeing your image in others and seeing how you are building us together as your dwelling place? Amen.



Hospitality: Welcoming Jesus

When you have a guest in your space, there is an effort to make things comfortable to them. Maybe tidy parts of it up a bit. Take out the trash that smells a few days old. Find a place for pillows that is somewhere other than the floor. Hide the dirty dishes, or at least organize them. Make sure there's toilet paper on the roll. That kind of thing. It may be an age old question, but how would Jesus feel walking around the rooms of your heart? Are there closets off limits to look in? Is the meal being prepared something that considers his presence? Or rather, how would you feel hosting him in the interior of your heart? Are the memories hung on the walls one that you'd rather take down than leave up for him to see? What would your conversation revolve around? He comes in, sits down and starts a conversation with you, what questions is he asking?

Read: Luke 19:1-10

Questions for Reflection:

1. How did Jesus end up at Zacchaeus' house?
2. How has Jesus ended up at your house?
3. What is the narrative others have about you in regards to Jesus?

You know, the truth that Christ desires my companionship, that He loves me, wants me to be with Him, wants to be with me and waits for me, has done more to transform my quiet time with God than any other single fact. Don't let Christ wait alone in the living room of your heart, but every day find some time when, with your Bible and in prayer, you may be together with Him.

- Robert Boyd Munger

Prayer:

Reflection: Take a few moments to quiet yourself and visualize what the interior of your soul must look like as you prepare to host Jesus.

Response: Lord God, I invite and welcome your presence in my life, rearrange the furniture of my soul as you see fit. Amen.



Hospitality: Keep on Loving

In the Christian life there are many things that have been thought about and argued over for hundreds and thousands of years. And there is the difficult simplicity of loving each other. It can be complex and it can be simple. Who is your neighbor? Look around you. Who is the stranger? Look around you. How should each person be treated? As though they have Christ in them and bear the immortal image of God because they do. Continued encouragement to be faithful in the practical expressions of love and patient faith easily fall of deaf ears amidst the drama filled pages of life.

Read: Hebrews 13:1-3

Questions for Reflection:

1. Who are the prisoners being referred to in this passage (Hebrews 13:3)?
2. How have you continued to be loved?
3. What practical tools do you have to love and welcome others?

Food cannot take care of spiritual, psychological and emotional problems, but the feeling of being loved and cared for, the actual comfort of the beauty and flavour of food, the increase of blood sugar and physical well-being, help one to go on during the next hours better equipped to meet the problems.

-Edith Schaeffer

Prayer:

Give us eyes to see the deepest needs of people.
Give us hearts full of love for our neighbors as well as for the strangers we meet.
Help us understand what it means to love others as we love ourselves.
Teach us to care in a way that strengthens those who are sick.
Fill us with generosity so we feed the hungry, clothe the naked and give drink to the thirsty.
Let us be a healing balm to those who are weak and lonely and weary by offering our kindness to them.

May we remember to listen, to smile, to offer a helping hand each time the opportunity presents itself.

Give us hearts of courage that we will be brave enough to risk loving our enemy.

Inspire us to go out of our way to include those in the margins.

Help us to be welcoming and inclusive to all who come to our door.

Let us be God's hospitality in the world.

Amen.



Hospitality: Who's Coming for Lunch?

Hospitality is simple. It's practical. It is a meal with a stranger. Going on a run with a friend. It is walking across the street to take out someone else's trash. It's having those people over for dinner or inviting someone with you to the coffee shop to demonstrate to them that they are seen and they belong. It can be surprising where it comes from. Sometimes a prophet for one nation is pursued by and welcomed into the home of someone from an entirely different cultural background. What they have in common is lunch. And lunch can lead to a relationship. A person who has the heart to invite people in in practical ways is making space for what God is doing.

Read: 2 Kings 4:8-37

Questions for Reflection:

1. What similarities to the Gospel do you see in this story?
2. Whose life have you kept popping up in over and over?
3. Is there anyone you need to text about grabbing lunch together?

"We show hospitality to strangers not merely because they need it, but because we need it, too. The stranger at the door is the living symbol and memory that we are all strangers here. This is not our house, our table, our food, our lodging; this is God's house and table and food and lodging. We were pilgrims and wanderers, aliens and strangers, even enemies of God, but we, too, were welcomed into this place. To show hospitality to the stranger is, as Gordon Lathrop has observed, to say, "We are beggars here together. Grace will surprise us both."

-Thomas G. Long, [Beyond the Worship Wars](#)

Prayer:

Father, would you give me new eyes to see the strangers and to extend to them what you have given me?