

Hospitality: Every Christian's Calling

 by PAUL S. JEON

Beginning in 2020, a group of married couples at our church began meeting each year around Valentine's Day to host a fun celebration—not for one another, but for the singles in our congregation. One couple offers their home, which is transformed so completely that guests rarely recognize it. The space takes on the atmosphere of a Michelin-starred restaurant—warm, inviting, and festive. Another couple manages the planning, purchases food from several stores, instructs the servers, and organizes the evening's entertainment. Still another uses their culinary skills to prepare a multicourse meal that rivals anything found in a fine-dining restaurant. The evening is filled with laughter, smiles, beauty, good food and drink, and a memorable sense of belonging.

The fruit of these moments is not always immediately evident, but over time their significance can surface—as I discovered a couple of years ago. I began to meet with a young man who was walking through a long season of depression and distrust stemming from a violent and traumatic event. Progress in counseling had been slow. Then, one afternoon, he shared something unexpected. He had attended the most recent Valentine's dinner. No one asked probing questions. No one offered spiritual

*Paul S. Jeon (MDiv, PhD) is the assistant professor of New Testament and pastoral theology at Reformed Theological Seminary (Washington, DC) and lead pastor of NewCity Church. He is also the author of two books, *Introducing Romans* and *True Faith*.*

advice. They simply welcomed him in, served him an unforgettable meal, and included him in the laughter and rhythm of the evening. “That dinner,” he said, “was the first time I began to feel a healing presence. It also reminded me of the feasts of heaven that Jesus has promised.”

We live in a time of contrast—increasing digital “connection” and growing personal isolation.¹ Many carry a quiet burden of loneliness, shame, or persistent disconnection. Even within the church, people often feel unseen, unknown, or excluded. In this context, the seemingly simple—but often overlooked—practice of hospitality can make a world of difference. It offers more than comfort; it embodies the truths of the gospel in a way that is visible, tangible, and deeply personal.

While counseling and discipleship often take place in structured, formal settings, hospitality offers a space where truth can be experienced. It invites people into shared life—into something more personal than programs or appointments. It invites them into a sense of family, relationships marked by safety, vulnerability, laughter, hope, and healing. This is, after all, God’s redemptive aim: to form one new people in Christ Jesus. In this context, generous meals, unhurried presence, and the exchange of stories become channels of care and renewal. Relationships are formed and deepened. And for many, the gospel begins to “click” through the ordinary act of being welcomed to the table.

I write as someone who has received hospitality in meaningful and life-giving ways. I recall a couple who invited me, and several other students, into their home every Monday during my seminary years. Week after week, they provided us with a feast and sent us home with leftovers. I also write as a concerned pastor who has noticed how rare this practice is becoming, particularly among Christian leaders. Even though Paul clearly lists it as a basic qualification for leadership (1 Tim 3:2), an ordained minister recently told me that he didn’t believe hospitality should be required of elders. This disconnect raises important questions about how we understand care, community, and the nature of gospel-shaped ministry. A shared table or a welcoming home offers rest to the

1. MIT professor Sherry Turkle observes, “We are lonely but fearful of intimacy. Digital connections and the sociable robot may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship.” Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (Basic Books, 2011), 1.

weariness, a sense of belonging to the excluded, and renewed hope to the hurting who long for relief. It is one way ministry moves beyond what is said to what is seen and experienced—an important reality for embodied souls, designed by God to receive care through both word and deed.

Given its importance and our growing isolation from one another, this article considers the Christian's call to hospitality. I will begin by describing its biblical foundations. I will then address common misconceptions that hinder our hospitality and close by discussing the particular opportunities it affords those in vocational ministry.

Let's begin.

Biblical Foundations of Hospitality

Hospitality, as Scripture presents it, differs from what we often mean by entertaining. Entertaining is usually selective. It involves friends or business associates and is carefully managed and shaped by comfort, presentation, and familiarity.

Biblical hospitality, by contrast, is marked by generously opening your home to others. It moves outward rather than inward, seeking the good of others and inviting people into shared life rather than curated experiences. For the church, this practice bears quiet but significant fruit: It cultivates belonging, strengthens trust, and gives visible shape to the grace we proclaim. Through such ordinary acts of welcome, the church learns to live as the family it confesses to be.

Hospitality fulfills God's command. In the New Testament letter to Titus 1:8, we hear the Bible's specific call for church leaders to pursue hospitality: "He must be hospitable, one who loves what is good." The Greek terms for *hospitable* and *good* both begin with *phil* (meaning "love"), making the relationship between God's character and the character he forms in his people unmistakable. But the call does not end there. Since hospitality is grounded in the gospel itself, the New Testament speaks of it not merely as a virtue to admire but as a practice to obey for *everyone* in the church. Paul exhorts us to "seek to show hospitality," framing it as an active pursuit woven into ordinary Christian

Hospitality offers more than comfort. For many, the gospel begins to "click" through the ordinary act of being welcomed to the table.

To continue reading this article, visit ccef.org/jbc to purchase the individual journal issue or subscribe to the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* .

The Journal of Biblical Counseling

(ISSN: 1063-2166) is published by:

Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation

1803 East Willow Grove Avenue

Glenside, PA 19038

www.ccef.org

Copyright © 2026 CCEF

All rights reserved.