

The Christian Home

Lesson 11: The Home Open to Others: Hospitality and Witness -- 1 Peter 4:8–10; Romans 12:9–13

There is a phrase we use without thinking: “a man’s home is his castle.” It conjures a comforting picture, a drawbridge we can pull up against the world, a private refuge where we finally get to close the door and be left alone. And there is something good in that. Home should be a place of rest. But somewhere along the way, many of us turned the castle into a fortress. We pulled up the drawbridge for good. We decided that home was the one place we did not have to give anything to anyone, and we filled it with our own comfort and closed it to the world. The Bible has a very different vision of the Christian home. It is not a fortress to hide in. It is a harbor with the lights on, a place that takes people in.

“Show hospitality to one another,” Peter writes, and then he adds three words that expose most of us: “without grumbling.” God knows that opening our homes is inconvenient. It costs time and money and energy. It means people see the dishes in the sink and the mess in the living room. So He does not merely command hospitality; He commands cheerful hospitality, the kind that welcomes people not as an intrusion to be endured but as a gift to be enjoyed. The early church turned the world upside down in large part around dinner tables, breaking bread from house to house, and the smell of that welcome drew outsiders in.

Notice the order in Peter’s words. “Above all,” he says, “keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” Then, “show hospitality.” Then, “use your gifts to serve.” Hospitality is not really about matching tablecloths or impressive cooking; it flows out of love. It is love with the door open. Paul says the same in Romans: let love be genuine, outdo one another in showing honor, contribute to the needs of the saints, and (there it is again) seek to show hospitality. The open home is simply what love looks like when it spills out past the family and onto the doorstep.

And here is the wonderful thing: an open home is one of the most powerful tools for the gospel that a Christian possesses. People who would never walk into a church building will sit at your table. The lonely neighbor, the struggling coworker, the new family at church, the college student far from home, the brother or sister going through a hard season, all of them can be loved, welcomed, and pointed to Christ across a meal in your home. This lesson is about turning the Christian home outward, from a private castle into an open harbor, so that the love we have received becomes the love we pour out. Read these verses slowly, and let God open the door of your home a little wider.

Group Discussion: Many of us treat our homes as private refuges, places to retreat from people rather than to welcome them. Scripture pictures the Christian home as a place of open-hearted

hospitality and witness. Why do you think hospitality has become so rare, even among Christians, and what might a church and its homes look like if we recovered it?

Personal Reflection: Think honestly about your own home. Is it more like a fortress, closed and private, or a harbor, open and welcoming? What keeps you from opening your home and table to others, whether fear, busyness, the cost, or the worry that it is not nice enough?

Read 1 Peter 4:8–10; Romans 12:9–13

Study Questions

1. Peter writes, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8), placing love first, before he ever mentions hospitality or serving. Why does Peter make earnest love the foundation of everything else, and what does it mean that love ‘covers a multitude of sins’?
2. Peter calls for love that is ‘earnest,’ a word picturing love stretched out and strenuous, not casual or convenient. Where is your love for others (in your church, your neighborhood, your family) more polite than earnest? What would it look like to love someone strenuously, including bearing with their faults rather than keeping a record of them?
3. Peter commands, “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:9). Biblical hospitality (literally ‘love of strangers’) is more than entertaining friends; it is opening one’s home and life to others, even those who cannot repay it. Why does God command hospitality, and why does He specifically add ‘without grumbling’?
4. Many things keep us from opening our homes: the fear that it is not nice enough, the cost, the inconvenience, the desire for privacy, simple busyness. Which of these most holds you back? What would it take to move past it and open your home to someone this month, not perfectly, but genuinely?
5. Peter continues, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10). How does seeing ourselves as ‘stewards’ of what God has given, our homes, resources, time, and gifts, change the way we think about using them for others rather than only for ourselves?
6. Everything you have, your home, your table, your skills, your time, was given by God and is meant to be stewarded for others, not hoarded. What is one specific resource or gift God has given you that you could begin using to serve and welcome others this week?
7. Paul fills out the picture: “Let love be genuine ... Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor ... Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality” (Romans 12:9–13). What do these marks of genuine love reveal about the kind of community God intends His people to be, and how is the open home a base from which much of this love flows?
8. Paul says to ‘seek’ to show hospitality, to go looking for opportunities to welcome and honor others. Who, specifically, is God placing on your heart to welcome, honor, or serve, the lonely, the new person at church, a struggling neighbor, someone different from you? What is one concrete step toward welcoming them?

9. The open Christian home is one of the most powerful instruments of witness and love the church possesses; people who would never enter a church building will sit at a believer's table, and Jesus said the world would know His disciples by their love (John 13:35). How does opening our homes in hospitality serve both the building up of the family of God and the spread of the gospel to outsiders, and why might a shared meal accomplish what an argument never could?
10. Look back across both passages, the primacy of earnest love, the command to hospitality without grumbling, the stewardship of our gifts, and the open home as a base for witness. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth about the open, hospitable home that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Hebrews 13:1–2, do not neglect to show hospitality, for some have entertained angels unawares; Acts 2:46–47, the early church breaking bread in their homes with glad hearts as the Lord added to their number; Luke 14:12–14, inviting those who cannot repay you; Matthew 25:34–40, welcoming the stranger as welcoming Christ Himself; Acts 16:14–15, Lydia opening her home to Paul and his companions