

FOLLOW THE COURSE OF HOSPITALITY

Note to the speaker:

Highlight how hospitality may be shown and the rewards for doing so. Point out how a hospitable spirit reflects Jehovah's generosity

HOSPITALITY NEEDED TODAY (8 min.)

Basic meaning of hospitality: "The cordial and generous reception and entertainment of guests or strangers"

Greek word literally means "love of (fondness for, or kindness to) strangers" (*it-1* 1149)

We may feel uncomfortable around those we do not know. But "hospitality overcomes the tension and makes of the alien a friend" (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*)

Hospitality is taught as virtue from childhood in many cultures

Bible foretold that this quality would diminish in our day (2Ti 3:1-5; Mt 24:12)

Sadly, hospitality disappearing in many lands today (*g78* 5/22 9-12)

Yet, Christians are commanded to "follow the course of hospitality" (Ro 12:13)

It is a work of faith, especially when directed toward fellow believers (Ga 6:10; 3Jo 5)

It is a requirement of Christian elders (1Ti 3:2; Tit 1:8)

According to the Bible, inhospitable attitude is an indication of spiritual problem and has bearing on acceptability of one's worship (Isa 58:6, 7; *it-1* 1150)

Simple acts of hospitality affect lives

Elderly woman: "I have no fleshly family at all. . . . I take care of myself and have no help from anyone, and, believe me, there is many a time that I could use it. . . . Any attention, no matter how small, touches [me] very much. It is humbly appreciated" (*w79* 5/1 3; see also *w88* 2/1 30)

How can we display hospitality?

HOW GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE IMITATED JEHOVAH'S HOSPITABLE WAY THROUGHOUT HISTORY (15 min.)

Jehovah sets example by richly blessing and generously providing men and women with good things (1Jo 5:14, 15)

Jesus perfectly reflected Jehovah's loving, hospitable way by showing interest in the poor; displayed generosity by using his powers for the benefit of others (Mt 14:14-21; may cite other examples)

Although other peoples displayed hospitality, Jehovah's servants notable in this regard (*it-1* 1149-50)

Care for travelers integral part of living in ancient Israel

Warmly welcomed guests, encouraged them to stay (Ge 18:2, 5-7; Jg 13:15)

Eagerly ran to meet them (Ge 29:13, 14)

Woman of Shunem showed attention to Elisha's needs while he was her guest (2Ki 4:8-11)

Although living conditions and attitudes had changed from ancient times, hospitality still common among first-century Christians

Disciples encouraged to accept hospitality offered by those who responded favorably to Kingdom-preaching work (Lu 9:3-6)

Hospitality shown to Jesus, who had no home of his own (Mt 8:20; Lu 10:38)

Paul confident that Philemon would be hospitable, since this was his manner of living (Phm 21, 22)

Gaius commended for extending hospitality to traveling brothers (3Jo 5-8; *w88* 10/1 18-19)

Outstanding examples of hospitality manifested by early Christians (Ac 2:42-46; 16:15; *w86* 12/1 29)

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPRESS HOSPITALITY TODAY (17 min.)

Be mindful of material and spiritual needs of fellow believers (*w86* 1/15 21-3)

Do whatever is within your power and ability to do (Pr 3:27)

Do not show partiality toward those who may be better situated financially (Lu 14:13, 14)

Remember less fortunate ones—poor, elderly, shy, young ones

Not necessary to make sumptuous provision

Jesus counseled Martha to be concerned about spiritual portion and not be so distracted with elaborate material provisions (Lu 10:38-42)

When war, natural disasters, persecution, sickness, or other distressing anxieties plunge fellow Christians into need, individually we feel the urge to assist, providing real comfort—not just words of consolation (Jas 2:15, 16; *w86* 10/15 15-21; *w91* 7/15 19; may refer to recent *Yearbook* experiences)

Extend hospitality to visiting or traveling overseers (*w88* 10/1 18-19)

Paul counseled "widen out" in "tender affections" for fellow believers (2Co 6:12, 13)

Avoid cliques, associating only with certain few

Spend time getting to know brothers to become aware of their needs

Work with new ones in field ministry; teach and encourage them

Invite others to your homes for meal, refreshment, some association; can share things with others, provide or send gifts at times (Ac 16:15; Php 4:15-17)

Everyone has responsibility to create warm atmosphere in congregation, with elders taking lead (1Ti 3:2; w86 10/15 16-18)

Scriptural to give special consideration to our brothers (Ga 6:10)

While learning to improve this quality, learn also to accept hospitality appreciatively

Paul appreciated gifts that were given to him, yet did not take advantage of brothers (2Co 11:7-9; w92 12/1 28-9)

Need to be on guard against simony, accepting gifts in return for favors (w86 8/15 15-16)

In harmony with principle stated at Psalm 15:4b, we should not cancel an invitation simply because something better offered

Be alert to needs of those not related to us in the faith

Jesus set pattern of lovingly inviting disciples to 'follow him' in his ministry (Joh 12:26) and for any to come to him for spiritual refreshment (Mt 11:28-30; w89 7/15 17-19)

Love of "strangers" includes our neighbors to whom we preach

Willingness to meet "stranger" at the door in the house-to-house work is a way of expressing our hospitality

Like Jesus, we are inviting them to share a life of happiness, providing for their spiritual needs, giving our care and attention to them

Helping new ones who visit Kingdom Hall feel comfortable, by greeting them, expresses our care and attention

One woman said: "I have never gone to any religious meeting in my life where I felt so welcome." She described thoughtfulness shown by "total strangers" (*km* 3/78 4; or other examples showing importance of demonstrating hospitality at our meetings, such as w89 11/1 30; w88 6/1 6-7; see *Index* under "Kingdom Halls," subheading "experiences")

"DO NOT FORGET HOSPITALITY" (5 min.)

Showing hospitality results in blessings for all involved (Pr 11:25)

The hospitality extended by us depends on how strong our love is for others. Paul counseled all to "let your brotherly love continue" and then reminded us, "Do not forget hospitality" (Heb 13:1, 2; w89 12/15 17)

Who knows, you may be entertaining someone in whom Jehovah has pleasure

We should be hospitable because of deep love for Jehovah and fellow humans—showing this quality to all, preaching to our neighbors, and caring especially for those related to us in the faith

"Follow the course of hospitality" (Ro 12:13)

(Adhere closely to the outlined material, and observe the indicated timing of each section. Not all cited texts need be read. Source material in parentheses need not be mentioned)