

Blueprint: Hospitable
Quest
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What is the quintessential man? What is the archetype of a faithful Christian leader who is worthy of being followed, listened to, and respected? That's the question that we're seeking to answer this semester at Quest.

As Rob mentioned last week, society and culture give us plenty of answers to this question. Society says that a man should be strong yet tender, a provider yet involved in the life of his family, a fighter and yet a lover. A man should be a scratch golfer, his walls should be adorned with trophy bucks and five pound bass, he should be a titan of industry who drives a big truck or a nice sports car. All of these depictions are not necessarily bad by themselves, but they only scratch the surface of true Biblical masculinity.

Surely there must be a better way. Surely the measure of a man is not how big his house is or the university his children get in to. And sure enough, the Bible gives us a blueprint, a CAD design, for what a man should be.

And today, we're looking at a characteristic that might seem a little bit out of the ordinary, especially given modern archetypes of masculinity. In both 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, Paul says that an elder, a leader, the kind of Christian man we should aspire to be, should be hospitable.

Now, I don't know about you, but when I hear the word "hospitality," I think of a few things.

First, I think of the hospitality industry:

I think of a nice hotel, where the linens are clean, the bellhops are efficient and polite, and to go above and beyond, they might hand you a warm cookie when you check in.

Or, I think of a gourmet restaurant. A five course meal, with steak cooked medium rare plus as the Good Lord intended it (let the church say "Amen,") with a waiter who checks on our table enough, not too much, to create a perfectly pleasant culinary experience.

Next, when you think about hospitality, you might think about your mother. I remember the days when we'd host a family gathering or a party, and how she was hospitable to our guests. She'd serve nice food and drinks, make sure the house was perfectly clean, and provided activities throughout the evening so that no one grew bored.

All of these things could aptly be described as showing hospitality, but is that what Paul is encouraging us to do? To be good bellhops, waiters, and mothers? I sure hope not, and I don't think so.

The Greek word for “hospitality” is a compound adjective comprised of two individual adjectives that we see throughout the New Testament.

The word “hospitality” in Greek is “philoxenos,” which is a combination of philos and xenos.

You might be familiar with the word “philos,” because it derives from one of the common Greek words for “love.” Philo means “brotherly love,” and its derivative “philos” means a beloved person, someone that is dear to you.

You might be a little less familiar with “xenos.” A person who is xenos is a stranger, a foreigner. It’s where we get the common political insult “xenophobia,” which is a fear of the stranger or foreigner.

So, Biblical hospitality does not mean serving nice food or making sure that Chip and Joanna Gaines decorated your house. Instead, philoxenos simply means “loving strangers.” That, according to Paul, is one of the marks of a good man. The New testament professor **Joshua Jipp** defines Christian hospitality in this way: **“Hospitality is the act or process whereby the identity of the stranger is transformed into that of a guest.”** A person who is different, a stranger, now becomes the object of brotherly love.

Can I be honest for a moment? I’m the first to admit that when I look at the qualifications for an elder in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, I see how far I have to go. But this view of hospitality is especially difficult for me. Maybe it’s just me, but I find it much easier to love the people I already love. It’s easier for me to love people who think like me, vote like me, dress like me, have the same sense of humor as me, have a similar golf handicap as me, make a similar amount of money as I do, root for the same teams I do, and find me likable. It’s easier to show brotherly love to people that are like brothers to me.

And that’s not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, Paul commands elsewhere in Romans 12:13: Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. In other words, he says that we must love and show hospitality to the people that we already love. Respect your wife, take care of your friends, be compassionate to your children, and show kindness to other Christians.

Sociologically, this is how we are trained and wired. We are naturally attracted to people that are not strangers to us. Humans have evolved this way, and part of the reason we have survived is because we are a tribal species. Jonathan Haidt, a Professor of Ethical Leadership at NYU and a prolific author, argues that tribalism has allowed humans to come together and compete with others to create society as we know it. It was our tribalism, argues Haidt, that brought us out of the jungle, but it’s our tribalism that creates conflict with other groups. He says that in modern society, we still have an evolutionary pull towards tribalism, but it plays out in different ways than it did with our ancestors. We no longer war against neighboring tribes to survive. Instead, he says, sports, politics, and religion are all now a way of playing war in a tribal nature without hurting anyone.

But remember, Paul argues that the mark of a remarkable man, of a Christian leader, is to rise above our natural animalistic tendencies. The call of Christ is deeper. Listen to what Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5: 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Paul’s qualifications for an elder are simply an echo of Jesus’ commands. Jesus says, “Do you want to be perfect? Do you want to be the cream of the crop? Do you want to be worthy of the call of the Gospel? Then don’t just show brotherly love towards your tribe; show love towards those outside your tribe.

Hospitality in this light might not sound particularly radical, or particularly difficult. But, and I cannot stress this enough, our hospitality can be one of the brightest lights we as Christians can shine, because it is so counter-cultural in our modern age. This is true for many reasons, but I’ll highlight two:

A. We live in an age of Cancel Culture. You might have heard this phrase thrown around quite a bit over the last couple years, but the basic idea is that instead of loving people who are different, culture wants to “cancel” the outsider. Believe the wrong things? Cancelled. Vote for the wrong candidates? Cancelled. Post something on social media that is guilty in the court of public opinion? Account deleted. Life ruined.

Now, this may seem a bit drastic, something only the fringes of society believe is a good idea. But a recent Pew Research study found that 58% of Americans believe that “cancelling” someone is a just way to hold people accountable for their actions. Certainly people should be held accountable for particularly egregious sins, but think about the overall cultural impacts: We now live in a world of condemnation without forgiveness, a culture with a robust theology of sin, but no theology of grace.

You might not have led a public outcry against a person you want to cancel. I hope that you have not. But we are still guilty of buying in to these underlying assumptions. I have seen family members torn apart over political affiliations. I have seen long-time friends cut ties because of differing stances on vaccines. I have seen interpersonal cancellations because someone who was once a close friend is now seen as an outsider, a stranger, a foreigner.

This is why hospitality is so radical. It’s a way that you can preach the Gospel loudly. Simply by showing brotherly love to people who think different, act different, believe different, you can do much more for the sake of the Kingdom of God than any sermon I could ever preach. You

might not be able to inspire people from a stage like Rob Renfro. You might not be able to go on multiple mission trips every year like some here today. But you can be friends with someone on the other side of the political aisle. You can eat a meal with someone from a different socioeconomic background. You can listen, and although you might disagree, still love them. This is how we as Christian men can preach the gospel.

The second reason hospitality is so counter-cultural in our modern age is:

2. We live in an age of unprecedented loneliness. I spoke about this last semester in the context of covenantal friendships, so I won't spend too much time on it. But remember, humans are naturally a tribal species. Unfortunately, many people, especially young people, are completely isolated. Some 20% of Millennials do not have a single friend. There is a website called rentafriend.com, which offers non-romantic, platonic friends, that you can rent to be your companion for \$40/hour. People are literally paying money for friends. Why? Because they feel like an outsider, a stranger, a foreigner.


It's almost as if Paul was predicting the future. It's almost as if he knew that some day down the road, it would be important for Christians to see past their differences, seek out the lonely people, and love them as Christ has loved us.

But what does this look like? How can hospitality be practiced in our busy, distracted, stress-filled 21st century lives? It's easier than you think. Three ideas of how hospitality can be practiced in your day-to-day lives:

1. Be a Good Neighbor

There's a great book that I'd highly recommend called *The Art of Neighboring* by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon. The book challenges Christians to return to a time not too long ago in our nation's history, where the neighborhood was the locus of social activity.

Pathak and Runyon's thesis is simple: "When Jesus was asked to reduce everything in the Bible into one command he said: Love God with everything you have and love your neighbor as yourself. What if he meant that we should love our *actual* neighbor? You know, the people who live right next door."

The most convicting part of their book is what they call the "chart of shame."  PICTURE HERE. Basically, your house is in the middle, and each neighboring house has three lines. The first line is for the names of your neighbors. The second line is for any relevant information that you can't just observe from their driveway: where they're from, what they like to do, what they studied in college. The third line is some in-depth information that you would know after connecting with the person. Their views of God, what they're afraid of, what motivates them.

It's convicting, to be sure. But the solution to filling out the chart is to show hospitality. Invite your neighbors over for a cookout. Bring them Christmas cookies. Learn their name and their

story. Maybe later on down the road, you can invite them to church or to Quest, but you don't have to lead with that. The purpose of being a good neighbor is not just to share your faith; it's to be a good neighbor.

2. Be a Good Mentor.

Each one of you has some expertise, some wisdom, some knowledge, some experience that someone else needs to hear. In your workplace, I can promise there is someone younger than you, less experienced with you, who is craving mentorship. We have ample opportunities here at the church, and more coming in the next few years, for you to be a good mentor to young men.

Mentorship is fundamental to our faith, because to follow Jesus is to be a disciple. In the Ancient Near East, the process and concept of discipleship was closely related to that of apprenticeship. In these days, young men did not go off to universities or trade schools to study for their career; instead, they were mentored by an older man, often their father. Their father would show them, teach them, correct them, and encourage them.

In an age where far too many boys grow up without a father, we have the unique opportunity to step up and help the younger generation. After last week's Quest lecture, many of you said to me something like, "That would have been a great lecture for anyone, not just Christians. I wish the men at my workplace could've heard that." Guess what? They can hear it through you. Teach them, shepherd them, mentor them.

3. Be a Good Listener.

If our tribalistic tendency is to argue, to try and convince others why we are right and they are wrong, then hospitality should be primarily about listening. I know I struggle with this. When someone is talking, explaining their position on something, my tendency is to immediately begin formulating my response. I heard a preacher once say that there's a great acronym to keep in the back of your mind during these, and all, conversations:

WAIT: Why Am I Talking? Ask yourself this, why am I talking? Is it because I think my ideas are so wonderful that the person just has to hear them? Is it because I want to dominate this conversation? Is it because I view this person as less intelligent than me?

We all want to be listened to. And sometimes just listening helps a person more than you could ever realize. It can even open their eyes to faith. You'll never know what hospitality can do to convert the least likely people.

Take Rosaria Butterfield for example. In the 1990s, Rosaria was living her dream. She had completed her PhD and was teaching at a major university. She had risen through the ranks and was a well respected far left activist. Butterfield was a proud lesbian and hated Evangelical Christians. One time, the Promise Keepers came to town. I'm sure many of you are familiar with

the Promise Keepers, an Evangelical parachurch organization devoted to call men back to courageous, bold leadership. For Butterfield, this was the manifestation of everything she hated. A conservative Christian Patriarchal organization was now filling stadiums to teach men toxic masculinity. So, Butterfield did what activists and scholars do: she wrote an op-ed torching what she saw as the horrors of the Promise Keepers. In the next few weeks, her mailbox was full. Half were appreciative of her work exposing the group. The other half, not so much. Hatred and vitriol spewed from the Promise Keepers apologists. But one letter fit in neither category.

It was a letter from a conservative Presbyterian Pastor named Ken Smith. He didn't stereotype her, acknowledged some of the truth in her article, and then, he invited her to dinner. Butterfield didn't think much of it, and then remembered that she was writing a book at the time about how evangelicals are psychopaths, so she thought this could be a great opportunity to get some fodder for the book.

She arrived at Smith's house one evening for dinner, and was shown nothing but respect and hospitality. Smith and his wife served food that fit into her strict diet. They knew Butterfield was also an environmental activist, so they were careful about their electric usage. Above all, Smith listened. He didn't preach a Gospel of hate and call Butterfield to repent. They talked openly about sexuality and politics. Soon, a genuine friendship developed, all because Smith listened.

This friendship bloomed for months, and Butterfield felt loved not just by Smith, but by the God he believed in. A year or two later, Butterfield accepted Christ as her savior. She turned from her sinful ways, married a pastor, and now tours the country preaching about the powers of hospitality.

“Radically ordinary hospitality—those who live it see strangers as neighbors and neighbors as family of God. They recoil at reducing a person to a category or a label. They see God's image reflected in the eyes of every human being on earth. They take their own sin seriously—including the sin of selfishness and pride. They know they are like meth addicts and sex-trade workers. They take God's holiness and goodness seriously. They use the Bible as a lifeline, with no exceptions. Those who live out radically ordinary hospitality see their homes not as theirs at all but as God's gift to use for the furtherance of his kingdom. They open doors; they seek out the underprivileged. They know that the gospel comes with a house key.” Rosaria Butterfield

Missiologist Alan Hirsch says this, ““If every Christian family in the world simply offered good conversational hospitality around a table once a week, we would eat our way into the kingdom of God.” That's a missional strategy I can get behind.

In closing, we're not just called to show hospitality because the Bible tells us to and because it's a missional strategy to reach people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are called to be hospitable because it's what Christ has done for us. We were once outsiders. We were far from God because of our sin and our guilt. But in Christ, God has broken down the dividing walls. We, who were once outsiders, are now friends, sons, and brothers.

Paul writes in Colossians 1: 21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Hospitality is not just good food and nice decorations. Paul says hospitality is the Gospel. We, who were once strangers, have been shown the love of Christ. And we are called as men to go and do likewise.