

The Do's and Don'ts of Christian Hospitality

2 & 3 John Overview

(preached Pine Grove 9/25/16; Sunday PM)

Introduction

It was during the Great Depression that many traveling preachers had much success.

People were down and out and the gospel offered hope when nothing else did, so many men traveled the US during that time preaching and teaching..

However, these preachers lived off the hospitality of the people to whom they ministered...

Not being able to afford lodging, they simply spent the night with any family that would take them in...

And even though most families were very poor, they saw housing the preacher a great privilege and often brought out the best silverware and food to serve him..

On one such occasion, a preacher stopped in rural town in the New Hampshire...

He preached twice that day in the morning and evening before making his way to the hosting family to get a good meal and a bed for the night...

Well, the hostess had a great meal.

And she even cooked an apple pie for dessert, but she didn't have the customary warm piece of cheese to go with the pie that is traditional in the northeast...

It was just too expensive on their tight budget.

So, she apologized over and over again to the preacher, but he assured her that it was no problem...

He was grateful for what he had eaten....

However, a young boy of the house just hated to see his mother grieved, so he asked to be excused and went and retrieved a nice piece of cheese and brought it to the preacher...

The preacher smiled and accepted the cheese, thinking that the boy had gone above and beyond to make him feel at home...

He put the whole piece in his mouth and looked at the boy and said...

“That was mighty nice and hospitable of you to take cheese from your own supply and give it to me.”

The little boy looked up and replied, “Oh know, I didn't get it from my room, I got from the mouse trap.”

Though it was clear hospitality, it was not sanitary hospitality...

Now, we come to two books tonight, and though I planned to include Jude as well, there was just too much in these two short letters of John to cut them off...

So tonight, we are going to look at 2 and 3 John, and then next week, we will look at Jude before finishing with Revelation in 2 weeks....

I have entitled tonight's overview of 2 and 3 John....

The Do's and Don'ts of Christian Hospitality

And each book is going to give us some guidelines of what Christian hospitality is and how to practice it or refuse to practice it...

Here a few quotes about hospitality...

"Some folks make you feel at home. Others make you wish you were."

"Treat your guest as a guest for two days; on the third day, give him a shovel."

"Hospitality isn't about your house, it is about your heart."

To most people's surprise, hospitality comes from two Greek words that means love of strangers...

You can certainly practice hospitality with people you know, but hospitality in its purest form is hosting people that you don't know well or even at all...

But it is an important practice in the life of the church...

In fact, it is commanded...

Hebrews 13:2.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

1 Peter 4:9

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Titus 1:7-8 even makes hospitality a qualification of church leadership...

7 For the [d]overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,

And the listen to Jesus' words in 14:12 when he was an invited guest to a party...

12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. 13 But when you give a [h]reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, since they [i]do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Needless to say, Christians are to be hospitable people...

They should show hospitality and practice hospitality both to their fellow believers and to strangers...

Yet, hospitality is not to be practiced without discernment...

Instead, Christians are to be informed by the Scriptures even in matters of showing kindness and sharing a meal in their home....

And there is no better place to look for hospitality guidelines than 2 and 3 John...

So, let's take a quick look at these books tonight, and we will start with some background on each book...

2 John is the second shortest in the Bible with just 245 words.

3 John is the shortest with 219 words...

Both of these books were letters written by John to two different individuals...

The recipient of 2 John was simply an unnamed lady and her children...

The recipient of 3 John was a man named Gaius, making these books along with Philemon as the only personal letters contained in the Bible...

It appears that both letters were written close together in the late 80s or early 90s AD..

Both of these were probably written close to the date of 1 John while John was ministering in and around Ephesus...

But what separates these letters from 1 John is that these were addressed to specific people in specific church areas...

The lady of 2 John and Gaius of 3 John apparently were members of churches where John has ministered or was an elder...

John clearly cared for the recipients of both letters as he expressed his thankfulness to both of them, yet he had instructions for both of them as well...

So, let's begin with 2 John tonight...

What I want to do is read this letter from beginning to end, taking a few breaks at times to make a few points and then we will move to the next section....

In what will be a brief overview...

So let's read verses 1 to 4 to get us going...

I have entitled this section of 2 John....

I. Hospitality Is Motivated by Truth (1-4)

1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, 2 for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: 3 Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

John simply opens the letter by addressing this lady and her children...

And take note what he says....

John loved her in truth and for the sake of truth...

I have said it before but truth unites at the same it divides...

For those in the church, we are united and bound by truth...

The truth of the gospel...

The truth of the Bible...

The truth of Jesus Christ..

The truth of salvation in Christ alone...

Well, John was bound to this lady by their common love of the truth...

And then he adds this in verse 4....

4 I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.

So, not only does this lady love the truth, her kids love the truth....

Now, this is going to be important in a minute by simply see that John is giving us the basis of hospitality....

It comes from a love of the truth...

If you are opening your home to an unbeliever, you do it to help them get to the truth...

If you are opening your home to a Christian brother or sister, you do it to enjoy fellowship with them in the truth...

If you host a missionary or pastor in your home, you do it to be a part of spreading the truth in the world....

A love of the gospel truth is the foundation for hospitality...

Now, let's move to the second part of this letter in verses 4-6....

II. Hospitality is Motivated By Love (5-6)

Verse 5...

5 Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

John simply continues with his letter reminding this lady to be filled with love...

She had heard this before.

Most likely from John's first letter, but he still reminds her and us that love is also a basis for showing hospitality...

We host people and care for them because we love them, and we love the truth that we share in common with them...

However, there are limits to hospitality, and so the letter takes a turn in verse 7....

I entitled this...

III. Hospitality is Limited to Truth Teachers (7-11)

Verse 7...

7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

9 [a]Anyone who [b]goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

Though much could be said here, John's point is this...

Lady if a teacher passes through town and needs to stay at your place, don't welcome him in if he doesn't have a correct view of Jesus Christ...

In other words, hospitality stops when the receiver of it is a deceiver of the truth...

It seems best to assume that this lady was hosting any teacher that came to her house, regardless of what they taught...

In fact, she may have assumed that all were the same as long as they talked about Jesus, but John lets her know that not every teacher is equal...

And some are actually opposed to Christ...

In those cases, hospitality is not expected...

In fact, in those cases, it is forbidden...

Long story short, Christians should not do anything to advance the teachings of people who are Christians...

When a Mormon comes to your door, talk to him and it is okay to invite him in and even offer a bottle of water, but don't let him spend the night....

Don't feed him dinner....

Limit your conversation to his need of salvation and send him on his way...

Don't give him money and don't do anything to help his ministry unless you become what John says in verse 11....

“a participator in his evil deeds.”

2 John then ends with John promising to come to this lady and visit with her himself in the near future...

In what I have entitled...

IV. Hospitality Is the Practice of Believer (12-13)

Here at the final two verses of 2 John....

12 Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that [c]your joy may be made full.

13 The children of your chosen sister greet you.

John simply ends this gentle rebuke with a promise to come and see this sister in the Lord in the near future...

And notice what is the outcome of hospitality...

The end of verse 12...

Joy...

Simply put, it brings happiness to spend time with fellow believers in the truth and show love to them....

So, there is 2 John, now let's move to John's 3rd letter....

In John's 3rd letter, it begins in a very similar fashion to his second in that he addresses the recipient in a similar way...

Look at verses 1 to 4 with me in what I have entitled...

I. Hospitality Done Right (1-8)

1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. 2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. 3 For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. 4 I have no greater joy than [a]this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

Here is John once again stressing how he and Gaius are tied together in truth...

John loves him in the truth...

John is glad to hear that Gaius is walking in the truth...

And then he adds, ***“I have no greater joy that this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”***

Gaius is not John's biological son, but he is his spiritual son, and John adds that seeing someone you love walking in the truth brings no greater joy...

I can identify with that, and so can many of you who have children who are saved and living lives of faith...

There is great joy in that...

Your greatest prayers for your kids are not a big house, a good job, or even a great spouse, your best prayers for your kids is that they would walk in the truth...

That they would live lives of obedience to God....

Look, I want my kids to live right beside me the rest of my life and eat dinner with me every night, but if God calls them and their family away to walk after Him, they will have my blessings....

Because his wings will shelter them better than mine ever could....

So, Gaius is a man living a life that bring glory to God and joy to John...

Verse 5....

5 Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and [b]especially when they are strangers; 6 and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. 7 For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing

from the Gentiles. 8 Therefore we ought to [c]support such men, so that we may [d]be fellow workers [e]with the truth.

As we said in 2 John, hospitality is anchored in truth and done in love, but now we get a description of what hospitality is...

It is love extended to strangers in the home, and Gaius is a great example of hospitality is done right...

John says that Gaius was a model of how to treat strangers...

Now, this could include random strangers, and I am sure that Gaius was kind to them, but the next verses are going to tell us that Gaius was kind to Christian strangers who were traveling and teaching the truth...

Because in verses 6-7, John tells Gaius that word has got back to him on how well Gaius receives these strangers and sends them on their way....

Men, who were out spreading the gospel for the sake of Jesus' name...

Doing it according to verse 7 without any pay...

And so John writes that it was good for Gaius to show them hospitality and take part in what they were doing,

even becoming a fellow worker with these men in their ministry...

Hospitality gets lost in our day because of the presence of so many hotels and restaurants that didn't exist for centuries in church history...

Now, we expect missionaries and teachers to get a hotel and eat alone and we miss out on the blessings of sharing our homes with them...

And so people object, "well, we don't even know them. They can just get a hotel."

Well, Gaius didn't know them either, but he knew Christ and he knew that these men were spreading the gospel in Jesus' name and so they were welcome guests in his home...

We went to seminary at the Master's Seminary in southern California, and every year, the church and the seminary shot the Shepherd's Conference.

Which is conference attended by over 5000 pastors from around the world...

In fact, every continent but Antarctica is represented at every one and 1000s of men from across the US as well...

And guess what the church does to support the conference?

The members of Grace Community Church opens their homes to these men for 5-7 days....

The families bring these pastors, missionaries, and lay people in to their homes and feed them and give them a bed and get to know them each year....

You can do hospitality in 2016; you simply need to be willing to act more like the church than the world...

The world tells people to get away and stay in a hotel and don't inconvenience me....

The church tells people here is my home and it belongs to the Lord and it is open to serve your needs unless you are a false teacher spreading lies...

Gaius is a model for doing hospitality right...

He took in these men who preached truth and he sent them on their way to do the Lord's work, and he became a part of what they were doing...

But John then moves to verse 9, where we are going to see....

II. Hospitality Done Wrong (9-11)

Verse 9...

9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept [f]what we say. 10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.

In verse 9, John tells Gaius that he had written to the church on a previous occasion on possibly the subject of hosting and extended hospitality to these travailing gospel teachers, but a man Diotrpehes had rejected John's letter...

And by rejecting John's letter, he had rejected John's authority as apostle, and by rejecting John, he had rejected Christ who had given John the authority to lead the church...

And we know why he did that because John writes in verse 9 that Diotrpehes was a man who put himself first..

He was a man who rejected all authority and was self centered...

And therefore, he was the opposite of hospitable...

Because hospitality says this...

My needs are nothing compared to your needs..

My convenience is nothing compared to making sure you are comfortable and cared for....

Diotrephes had the attitude of so many in the world...

The world revolved around him, so that is going to create problems and prevent hospitality...

Look back at John says in verse 10...

Diotrephes not only rejected John's authority on hospitality, he accused John evil of him, and worse yet, he stopped showing hospitality to anyone...

And he forbid anyone in his church to show hospitality to the point that he threw hospitable people out of the church...

Look, it is one thing for someone to be disobedient to God, but when they prevent obedience from others, it has to be corrected.

And John was coming to correct it, but in the meantime, he simply condemns what Diotrephes was doing...

He was the opposite of hospitable; he was selfish, egoistical, and arrogant...

And in case you are wondering what John thought about him, John did not bite his tongue...

Verse 11...

11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

In case you want to clean that up and pretend that the Bible would never judge a man's heart, you are wrong..

John simply says that Diotrephes is an unsaved man.

By their fruits, you will know them, and since Diotrephes fruit was rotten, so was his heart...

And John simply uses him as an example of hospitality done wrong...

Listen to what John wrote in his first letter...

1 John 3:16-17...

6 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his [g]heart [h]against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

Diotrephes had shut up his heart to a brother in need, and it was evident that the love of God was not in him...

How serious in the practice of hospitality....

It is so serious that a refusal to do reveals a heart that is lost and does not contain the love of God in it....

In case you were wondering, your attitude toward hospitality reveals if your salvation is real or not...

Let's finish off the book in verses 12-15 i what I entitled...

III. Hospitality Summed Up (12-15)

12 Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

13 I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.

15 Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

Demetrius was most likely the one who carried the letter from John to Gaius, so John testifies that Demetrius is a trustworthy believer...

And then John ends the letter in a very similar way to 2 John...

Noting that he had more to say, but that was all he was going to write in hopes that he could speak the rest face to face...

And that is a good summary of hospitality....

Because hospitable people look forward to seeing other people...

They look forward to sharing their home...

They look for opportunities to share meals...

And they consider it a blessing and not an inconvenience to support the work of the Lord by supporting His people in the world...

Conclusion

Let me end the night with a few quick principles...

#1 - Hospitality is commanded and not optional.

The phrase, "well, I am not that hospitable" is not a viable option.

If you are a Christian, you are to be hospitable...

Your condition of your home has nothing to do with your hospitality...

If you keeps you dry and well fed, it will work for someone else...

Look, every Christian should own an air mattress or 2 or 3...

Every house has enough room for an extra family for a few nights....

Bodies don't take up that much space; we just need to stop using that excuse...

#2- Hospitality is love for strangers.

I know in 2016 that the thought of having someone you don't know in your home scares you.

And I am not saying that you pick up hitchhikers and bring them home...

John was concerned mainly with Christian workers who were in constant need of shelter and food due to the conditions of the culture in which they lived...

But we aren't limited in our hospitality to just Christian workers...

I think hospitality extended to unbelievers is a great way to bring the gospel into their lives...

If all we ever have over are fellow believers, we limit ourselves and stifle the spread of the gospel...

Share your table with unbelievers and model what a Christian home looks like...

Also, be alert even to Christian pastors and evangelists in these days...

As we know, not every Bible toting man is not the same...

Some traveling evangelists are more harmful to the church than a Muslim because of the false teaching they spread...

If you don't know what someone teaches, ask them and quiz them before you give them a meal or a bed...

Because you don't ever want to be a part of spreading error in the church....

And look, it is hospitable to have fellow believers over...

There is nothing wrong with that at all, and in a rural area like our own where we don't see each other often, it can be very helpful and encouraging...

Finally,...

#3 - Hospitality is rewarded.

You never know how much your act of kindness may impact the kingdom of God...

A nice bed and/or a nice meal are often great encouragement to Christians who often experience much discouragement in their ministries....

Look, we as southerners understand hospitality, but often we practice it out of pride to show off our beautiful landscaping or to show off our cooking skills or to show off our superior decorating skills...

God wants you to practice it to show off your love for the truth and for those who are committed to sharing the truth with the world...

And as the truth goes forward, you will be tied to that truth, and God will reward all those who love the truth and help those who spread the truth...

Let us pray...