

Craig and Nancy Parker: A Testimony on Hospitality



Shortly after we married in 1975, Nancy and I decided to put into practice I Peter 4:9 *“Be hospitable to one another without complaint.”*

We began hosting people for meals in our tiny 4th floor walk-up apartment in Worcester, Massachusetts. From that humble beginning we have welcomed people in the seven homes we’ve had in Virginia, Germany, New Hampshire and Boston. In 1984, in Germany, we began to have people live with our family. Since then, we have had over 110 friends live with us (has to be for at least a month). We have also hosted thousands of dinner guests and countless overnight guests. They have come from every state in the United States and from at least 20 nations. As Nancy often says, *“You can’t out give God.”* We have been blessed immeasurably by all the people who have come through our home.

Here are some thoughts on hospitality:

Hospitality Principles:

1. Resolve to be the most hospitable person you know
2. Invite people, personally, individually, regularly
3. Host a regular open table - weekly, biweekly, or monthly
4. Accentuate your geographic assets (We live next the airport, stay with us; we live next to a great park - bring your kids)
5. Treat every guest as a guest of honor, celebrate their arrival
6. Share photographs and mementos that tell your story
7. Give people a tour of your home (make it beautiful, keep it presentable)
8. Keep a guest book (record states and nations represented)
9. Set boundaries (time to come, time to leave; private spaces)
10. Have some simple dinner conversation questions:
 - What was the lowlight of your day, the highlight of your day, who is the hero of your day?
 - Tell me about yourself. What is your life story in a nutshell?
 - Tell me about your family, your work, your interests.
 - What do you love to do for fun?
 - What is one of your fondest childhood memories?
 - What is a childhood challenge that you faced and had to overcome?
 - How did you choose your career? What do you like best about it?

Hospitality Questions:

1. How hospitable am I? Do I welcome people to my life or home?
2. How reluctant am I to have people over? Why?
3. How available is my couch or guest room for people to stay over?
4. How often do I have my neighbors over for a meal?
5. How diverse are the guests who have come at my home?
6. How presentable is my home that people could show up at any time?
7. How perfectionist am I about my home? Do I worry about damage?
8. Have I ever had a slumber party at my home? Could a group of travelers stay at my place?
9. Am I known for hospitality so that people recommend me to others?
10. How open am I to having people stay with me who are in a jam?
11. How do I make people feel special when they show up at my home?
12. How prone am I to have meals with people from my church or fellowship?
13. Do I look forward to opportunities to meet and welcome new people?

A Brief Bible Study on Hospitality

Genesis 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine (for Abram and his band of men).

Nehemiah 5:17 Moreover, there were at my (Nehemiah's) table one hundred and fifty Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us.

Job 31:32 "The alien has not lodged outside, For I have opened my doors to the traveler.

Luke 2:7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (But there was room in the stable - an inn keeper will still always find room, just like in the Samaritan story)

Matthew 9:10 Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.

Matthew 11:19 "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'

Matthew 25:34-36 "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in..."

Luke 10:38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.

Luke 14:13 Jesus said, "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed."

John 21:12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."

Acts 16:15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Acts 16:34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

Acts 28:2 The natives showed us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and received us all.

Romans 12:13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Romans 12:20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Titus 1:8 an overseer...must be hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled

Philemon 22 And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

Hebrews 13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

1 Peter 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

3 John 8 ...We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.

The New Testament Greek word for hospitality is philoxenia - "the love of strangers" (the opposite of xenophobia)