



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Biblical Hospitality

Essential Elements

Luke 10:25–37

Jeremy Anderson | September 11, 2022

It's a privilege to be here with you this morning to open God's Word as we conclude our series on Essential Elements. I invite you to open your Bibles to two different places. First, Luke 10, then Leviticus 19. By way of introduction if you don't know me, I serve as our campus pastor out in Shabbona, in our Indian Creek campus, as well as being one of the student ministry pastors here at Sugar Grove on Wednesday nights.

Over the past five weeks, we've spent time in Acts 2 where we've looked back at life in the early church to see what things were essential to them. Our goal has been to bring those essential elements into today's church by asking ourselves individually and corporately, "Are these things essential to us and how can we make them essential in our lives?" Today we'll turn our attention to the final essential element.

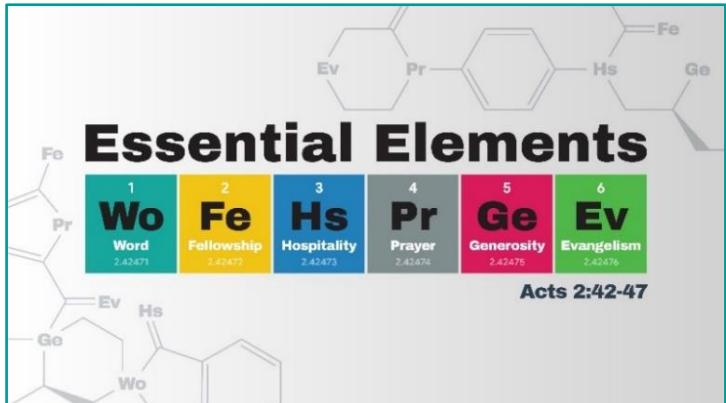
Last week Tim introduced us to the essential element of fellowship, which is kind of the other side of the coin for today's element. He told us that the basis of our fellowship and faith is to serve one God; we're all saved by grace and not by works. He then challenged us to not build barriers that would inhibit the fellowship we have as God's people, but rather to look outside ourselves, valuing and honoring those around us. Today we'll look at the flip side of that coin with the essential element of hospitality.

I know right away that some of you are checking out and thinking this isn't for you. When we think of hospitality, we think of throwing parties and having big celebrations. People who are more extroverted are good at this, so those of us who are introverts may well be thinking it's for them and not for us. Or perhaps you don't have a lot of space in your home, so you think you don't need to be hospitable. I'd encourage you to bear with me this morning, because as we turn our attention to God's Word, I think we're going to learn that a spirit of hospitality is what God expects from all of us. No matter who you are, what your personality is, where you live, what you've got going on in life—God expects you to be hospitable.

As we look at Acts 2—as we've done throughout this series—we're told that the early church was regularly attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes. They were receiving their food with glad and generous hearts. So just in that little snippet, we see how biblical hospitality is put into practice beyond the walls of the church.

Now, when we come on Sunday mornings, we have hospitality teams out in the parking lot, in the foyer and here in the sanctuary. They're here to serve and make your time here a little easier, to break down some of the barriers that might rise up when you come to church on Sunday. But it gets real when we take that fellowship and hospitality outside these walls. As we follow the model of the early church, we do life in each other's homes. In light of this, I want to ask you a question. When is the last time somebody invited you to their home for dinner? No agenda. It wasn't part of a church program or function; it wasn't a family event. A friend just said, "Hey, why don't you come over for dinner."

When was the last time you invited somebody to your home for dinner? Some of you are thinking, "It was this week. We do this all the time." For others, the wheels might be spinning right now, thinking, "I actually couldn't tell you the last time I did that. I couldn't tell you the last time somebody invited us over. It's been a while."



When we look at the early church, we're told that day by day this was happening. Day by day the church was gathering in each other's homes. Day by day people were seeing each other. Day by day they were sharing meals together. Day by day they were inviting people into their lives to do life together.

Some of us today have turned our modern homes into impenetrable fortresses where the moats and fences around them are nothing more than our busy schedules. "I'm just so busy, I can't have people over. We don't have time." We're pulled in all different directions, yet God's Word tells us that as the church, as His people, being hospitable is what life is all about. We're expected to do it; it is essential.

The meaning of biblical hospitality

So what is biblical hospitality? I argue that biblical hospitality runs deeper than throwing a good party. I don't think when God calls on people to get together and be hospitable that they're thinking, "Hey, have the nicest spread. Make the most delicious desserts." Peter and Paul are talking about something altogether deeper than that. The problem is when we look through the New Testament for this word 'hospitality,' it would only pop up about five times. You'll see it in 1 Peter 4, 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, Roman 12 and Hebrews 13. Unfortunately, in none of those passages do the authors go into much detail about what hospitality is. Instead, they just say, "Do it. Be hospitable. Show hospitality toward others."

So let's look at the word we translate as hospitality in the context of New Testament times. It gives the idea of extending love to strangers or being generous to guests. So while the word hospitality may only pop up a handful of times, those principles are woven throughout the Scriptures, from the very beginning all the way to the very end. So being hospitable is part of what God calls us to do.

In Luke 10, Jesus is giving us the parable of the Good Samaritan, which I believe most of us are very familiar with. In this parable, Jesus captures the principles of hospitality, giving us a picture of what living it out looks like:

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷ And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Here we have this man challenging Jesus, "What about gaining eternal life?" Jesus responds, "Well, doesn't God's Word have something to say about that? What does the Law say about inheriting eternal life?" The guy answers Him correctly. That's the beauty of the situation. The challenge comes in when he pushes a little farther: "Who is my neighbor?" That's what the parable is there to answer. Jesus begins to tell him a story:

³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Now, as Jesus tells the story to reveal who this neighbor is—who our neighbor is—did the Samaritan throw a big party? Did he grill up some delicious steaks and burgers? Did he bake up the most beautiful desserts? Did he put them out in such a way that we would say, "This person is so hospitable!"? No. But did he show hospitality? Did the Samaritan in this parable extend love to a stranger? Yes. Was the Samaritan in this parable generous to a guest? You bet. So while our culture tells us that this idea of hospitality is really about entertaining and throwing good parties, the Bible calls us to something a little bit different.

The man correctly answered Jesus about what the Law said. In Mark 12, Jesus answered the same way when He was questioned by a scribe about the greatest commandment. He went back and quoted the Law:

²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

We get to the meaning of biblical hospitality when we looked at the Samaritan's response and Jesus' response. It's easy for us to identify the command that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. That's the great *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6. But do we really know where the second commandment comes from? We've read Jesus' words in the Gospels and are familiar with His teaching. It's almost second nature for us to say, "Love God, love your neighbor." The second command comes from Leviticus 19:33-34 where we read this:

³³ When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ³⁴ You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

In this commandment, we see principles of hospitality surface. We need to remember that this commandment was given to God's people as a nation. It wasn't given in the sense that Moses or the other rulers of the people were in charge of seeing that the sojourners were given what they needed. Rather, it was commanded as the standard for all God's people, with the expectation that it would be applied on the basis of individual families. So when the sojourner comes to your field, it is your responsibility to treat them as the native among you, not doing them any wrong.

Treat the outsider like an insider.

This shows us the first principle of biblical hospitality: we should treat the outsider like an insider. Implied in this idea of hospitality is to look beyond those who are just in our inner circles. It's easy to be hospitable toward our best friends and family. But God has called us to be hospitable even toward those outside our circles. He calls us to treat the outsider like an insider.

A few years ago when my wife and I bought our home, one of the non-negotiables for us was some space to have people over. We like to host people. My wife is Italian, so she loves to cook and is good at it, so we like to have people over, have dinner and play games. Like many of you, we have a big table in our dining room. It's a regular thing for us to sit down around that table for our meals, just as the Anderson family, . But there are times when we invite guests to come over to our home, inviting them to sit at that same table. We'll treat those outsiders like insiders. They share the same blessings and benefits that are shared with my wife and our children. That's the principle that's in play here.

Some of you have been to my home, and no, we don't think of you as outsiders. We want to treat you like one of our own. That's what God calls us to when He talks here about the sojourner, the stranger. Literally these are people who eat different than you, look different than you, talk different than you, live different than you. They are the ones you should treat as if they're one of your own. Treat them like they belong, like they're the same.

The problem is somehow we in the church have forgotten how we're supposed to treat the insider. So many people leave churches because they've had bad experiences. Let's be honest, the church is made up of sinners, people who fall short. We bring our own baggage and shortcomings; we will wrong each other; we will sin against each other. But that should not be the norm in the church. For us to understand how we're supposed to treat the outsider, we should first know how we should treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. I would encourage you to read Romans 12:9-20 later. Here Paul gives us a little glimpse into the church and how we ought to be treating one another as we do life together.

He says, "*Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*" I love that. If we're going to compete at Christians, I want to outdo you in showing you honor. Can you imagine what the church would look like if we were all doing that, if our desire was to outdo each other in showing honor and giving ourselves to serving other people? Paul goes on to say, "*Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit.*" Think what the church would look like if this was true.

In my own home growing up, my brothers and I would have been a lot different if we had lived by this principle. Even now with our two-year-old, if he grasped this principle our home would look different. Then applying this to the church, what picture of community would that send to others about what God's people are like? Paul goes on to speak of not repaying someone evil for evil, and blessing those who persecute you. He talks about rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep. In other words, we are in this together, all the time. It's not just when it's convenient or when times are good. It's doing life together, being there for each other in all seasons of life. He continues by saying we should not repay evil with evil. Rather if our enemies are hungry, we should feed them. If they're thirsty, give them something to drink.

Our responsibility is to treat the outsider like the insider. It's God's responsibility to deal with people's hearts. So let's stick to what we've been called to do: extend the same love, dignity and respect, the same care, concern and generosity, that we show our family and friends, extending that outward to other people. Hospitality is treating them as if they are one of our own.

Love your neighbor as yourself.

At the end of the command we're told to love our neighbor as ourself. That was the point of the whole parable Jesus gave in Luke 10. Who's your neighbor?

We know if we've been around church or are familiar with this parable at all, that our neighbor is not just the person who lives next door. Our neighbor is not just the person sitting next to you in the pew right now. Our neighbor is not just the person who's bubbly and smiling and makes you feel like a million bucks on Sunday when we get together. Your neighbor is not just the person who's easy to get along with. There was a reason Jesus talked about the Samaritan who showed compassion. That was the person they would trip up over time and time again. "The who? You mean the person we don't talk to? You mean the person we've parted ways with? Where we wouldn't even walk through their land? That's my neighbor?"

In our minds, Christians, we know our neighbor is that grouchy person we have a hard time being around. It's like they always have a storm cloud over their heads. Your neighbor is that person who lives down the street from you who always has something to complain about. Your neighbor is that difficult person who, when they walk in the room, you're thinking, "How can I get out of this one?" When you see their name pop up on your phone, you're thinking, "I am busy." Your neighbor is that lazy coworker that you're always covering for and who drives you absolutely up the wall. Your neighbor is also the person sitting in this room that you don't know. Maybe they're visiting here for the very first time. Your neighbor is the cashier at the grocery store, your Uber driver. It's these people we're called to be hospitable to. It's not just those in the church, but even the outsider. That was the Samaritan, the unthinkable one, the one we would never cross paths with. That's the model God has given us to follow. Your neighbors are those whom God brings into your life.

The model of biblical hospitality

If we're honest, we can't replicate the hospitality God shown us. However He has given us a model, not a three-step process. It's not "Here's how to plan a good party. Do this, this and this. Rather, God has set an example for us.

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ today, you have experienced the immense hospitality God has shown you. He has called you to model that to others. Leviticus 19:34 says what? Why are we supposed to treat the outsider like an insider? Because we were once the outsider. We were once the stranger and the exile.

We don't often associate ourselves with Egypt today. But surely, as believers, we can associate ourselves with the realization that we were once enemies of God. "Once I was dead in my trespasses and sins. Once I was a slave to sin. I was an enemy, a stranger to a holy God." But no longer. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:19, "*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*" That change didn't just happen willy-nilly. That wasn't God just saying, "Nah, we'll just forget about all that stuff." There was an action that took place. God intervened in our lives by sending His Son. We read, "*God loved the world in this way: He sent his one and only Son...*" (John 3:16 CSB). Romans 5:8 tells us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. When we remember that, it will change the way we show hospitality toward other people.

Hospitality involves action

There is no way I can be as hospitable as God has been to me. There's no way anybody else is farther off than I was from a holy God. Yet He has brought me close by His love and affection, as well as by His sacrifice. So He calls us to follow a model that involves action in our own lives. According to the Scriptures, it's not the thought that counts; it's the action.

James 2 gives us an example. Talking about faith and works, he says, "What good is it to tell your brother, 'I hope you have some food today,' if you're not willing to give him some food? Or to clothe them when they're cold or have no clothes." In other words, we're called as believers to be the tangible means by which God meets some of those needs. We're to be hospitable and follow the model God has given us.

Our hospitality is not merely entertainment. It's not throwing good parties. Rather, it's helping meet the needs of other people around us. It's going to involve action and, at times, it's going to be costly. But how can we outgive God? How can we outdo what God has already done in our lives? Who am I to not show hospitality to my neighbor? If God has done all these wonderful things for me, how can I not extend that hospitality to someone else? I must remember that I was the stranger and the alien. If I can just share a little bit with others, then they will get a picture of our good and glorious God. If I can just show a glimpse of what He does for us, then glory be to God.

What if I don't know about the needs? I come in and out of church every Sunday, but I don't know what people's needs are. We're a big church. I get that. That's why here at Village Bible Church we have what is called a benevolence fund. Anyone can give to this at any time. This fund doesn't support the ministries of the church, but is reserved to help meet the needs of people when they come to us. So you might not always need to know when a stranger has some need, but you can provide resources to meet those needs through that fund.

We're kicking off our small groups right now as we start our fall series through the book of Ecclesiastes. If you're not in a small group, I would encourage you to get in one. In our small groups, we live out these essential elements. We open God's Word. We study it together. We pray together. We meet in each other's homes. We fellowship with one another. We show hospitality toward each other. We rejoice with those who rejoice; we cry with those who cry. We do life together. We do these essential elements in small groups. So join a small group if you're not in one.

Let's figure out what biblical hospitality looks like, because that's the place where we as Village Bible Church can live out these essential elements. Let's do these things because God has called us to them.

Hospitality involves attitude

Being hospitable involves more than just our actions; it also involves our attitudes. I've got to be honest. I have a hard time believing that when Jesus was hanging on the cross, that He was gritting His teeth and thinking, "These people rejected Me. I just have to get through this somehow." What does Hebrews 12:2 tell us? "*For the joy set before him he endured the cross.*"

In 1 Peter 4:9 he tells us, "*Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*" There are a lot of things we can do in life through gritted teeth. There are a lot of times when we need to stand up and make it happen. We like to make it clear that we don't want to do it, but we're going to because somebody told us we have to. But that's not the spirit of hospitality God has called us to. He has called us to be hospitable toward one another with a spirit of grace, not guilt. It's not something we just check off a list. It's part of who we are. He's rewired us and made us new. It's remembering that God's mercies to us are new every morning. When we approach our day from that standpoint, it changes how we go about showing hospitality to those in need along the way.

The reality is sometimes some of us need to check our attitudes at the door. Some of us need to check our attitudes at our bedside, because it's our habit to wake up on the wrong side of the bed. God has called us to something different. He's called us to be a joyful people who extend His love and joy to others. We need to outdo one another in showing others God's grace.

As we're wrapping up this series, I love that we're looking at this principle of hospitality. I believe in some ways it ties together and puts a bow on all the other essential elements. When we look at God's Word, He calls us to this from the beginning to the end. As we value these things in our heart, we can live them out in our lives.

We saw the early church being hospitable, sharing meals together and being in each other's homes, often spending time in deep prayer together as God's people. We see how biblical hospitality involves having a spirit of generosity, as we talked about earlier. It drives and deepens the fellowship we have with one another, because of what Christ finished for us on the cross. We also see opportunities for evangelism, as we extend hospitality to the outsider as well as the insider. We are able to share the hope we have in the gospel with people who are lost, who still need to know the good news of Jesus Christ. So as we do hospitality, we live out the essential elements of the church. We do all this together.

So what do we do, as a point of application? The best way to live this out is to follow the model, where day by day we attend church together and break bread in each other's homes. I'm going to ask you the same question I asked at the beginning. When was the last time you invited somebody over for dinner? No strings attached. No church program or function. No agenda. Just, "Why don't you come over for dinner? We'd love to have you." Then talk together. Hang out. See what's going on in life.

Let's do that as God's people. Day by day. Make it a habit that we're in each other's homes, enjoying life together. I get it that we've got busy schedules, but if this is essential, if this is what God has called us to, then we should carve out time to do it. We should make it important. This may mean saying no to other things. If this is what God has designed us to do, then let's do it. Let's take these steps. If this means joining a small group for the first time, taking a leap of faith, do it. Give it a one-month trial. I trust you'll be blessed by it.

We also need to think corporately. Think about this time as we gather on Sunday mornings. Remember last week when we talked about fellowship and Pastor Tim challenged us to not just think about what we get out of church, but how we can be a blessing to other people and serve them. If this is the time of gathering together as a family for Village Bible Church, what are our attitudes and our interactions with one another communicating to other people who may be visiting and wondering what our church is all about. How are we being hospitable to those in our midst who might be checking us out? Who might be looking for the Lord?

We want to be intentional about these things. As we gather, we are responsible—you individually are responsible—for the hospitality of our church. We are called, as God's people, to be hospitable, not just the people who are serving in official roles and positions.

You know the old saying that some people make you feel like you're at home while other people make you wish you were home? Let's not be those people. Let's be those, as a church, who make others feel welcome, who make them feel at home. Biblical hospitality is treating the outsider like an insider. It's loving your neighbor as yourself, with an extended hand and a smile on your face.

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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