

Hospitality: What's that?

BY JO

The hardest thing about being a student is being homeless. Now don't get me wrong, I haven't been living in a cardboard box for the last 3 years, but living at college means that I don't have a home of my own. And that means that I can't offer hospitality to people, which I find very hard at times.

But what is hospitality? Paul commands the Romans to "Practice hospitality" as an expression of brotherly love (Romans 12:13). Peter says,

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:8-10)

Hospitality is an expression of love; it is serving others.

Why does Peter think that people

might grumble about hospitality? I think sometimes it's because we don't want to serve each other, we think it's too hard. But mostly I think it's because he knows that people get hospitality wrong, they think it's about making everything perfect and putting their normal activities on hold when people come over. Hospitality is not 'entertaining'. It's not about the perfectly cooked meal, the beautifully cleaned house, the need to have it all together and appear unflustered and relaxed. Hospitality is using our homes, the gifts we have been given, for the good of our brothers and

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sisters. I think it's a way of sharing our lives with people.

People like me for example. I have been greatly blessed over the last few years by the families that have opened their homes and their lives to me.

They've fed me, given me a place to

stay, let me play with their kids and be part of their family. They've loved me and given me a sense of home and belonging that I otherwise wouldn't have had. Sometimes we've had a lovely home-cooked dinner.

Sometimes it's been a sandwich lunch after church on a Sunday. Sometimes I've arrived after they've had a terrible day and it's been me who's ended up actually doing the cooking. In all of these cases they showed me great hospitality. I thank God for them.

And of course there are the people who open their homes for our Bible study groups every week. Their welcome and willingness to serve us in this way helps to make our Bible studies into places where we can relax and study God's word together.

Hospitality doesn't always need to be a long-term thing. I know of people who try to invite newcomers over for dinner to welcome them to the community and so they can get to know a few people from church. Or there was the night when a couple from church, who had accidentally locked themselves out of their flat, stayed at my place for the night.

I'm not the only one in the church who doesn't have a (real) home. There are many of us who are a long way

from our families. There are many of us who appreciate a chance to spend time in a real home. Many students who come to Australia from overseas don't visit a family home in the entire time they're here. Is that the case in our church? And, of course, there are also people who do have a real home who would still appreciate hospitality, spending time with people in a relaxed environment.

How can we love one another and truly share our lives as a community of people who follow Jesus? One way is by showing hospitality to one another.

