



Hospitality in Bible Times

In the time of Jesus, hospitality was very important. People were expected to offer a special welcome to everyone, even complete strangers. This welcome was known as hospitality. Let's look at what that welcome involved.

An example of hospitality in the Hebrew scriptures

Abraham was sitting in the shade during the hottest part of the day, which was really hot where he was. He saw three strangers standing nearby. To find out what Abraham did, read Genesis 18:2-5 and complete the following sentences.

Abraham

(Verse 2) Welcomed the strangers with a

(Verse 4) Offered them water to

(Verse 4) Invited them to

(Verse 5) And have

Even though the visitors were complete strangers, Abraham was offering the kind of welcome and hospitality that was common at the time.

bow, wash their feet, sit in the shade, something to eat

An example of hospitality in the Christian scriptures

In Luke's gospel, Jesus visits the house of Simon, a Pharisee. In this story Simon does not offer a proper welcome to Jesus, which would have been considered rude. Eventually Jesus spoke to Simon about his lack of hospitality. Jesus says,

"I came into your home, and you gave me no water for my feet.... You did not welcome me with a kiss ... you have provided no olive oil for my head" (excerpts from Luke 7:44-46).

People were also expected to offer food, as in Abraham's time.

Hey, fellow disciples, use the words in the box to complete the paragraph and find out more about hospitality.



These traditions were very _____. It was considered shameful and rude not to follow them. If you had no _____ in your house you were expected to go find some, even in the middle of the _____. For Jewish families, to eat with strangers was to accept them as _____ and to give them a place within the life of the _____.

family, food, friends, important, night



Signs of Hospitality

Go on a hunt to see where hospitality happens in your congregation. Look for welcoming signs or symbols. Walk around the church building. Imagine what it is like to come here for the first time. Fill out this survey.

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- What signs of welcome do people see before they enter the building?
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- If you are in a wheelchair, how will you come into the building?
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- How does the entrance make you feel welcome?
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- If you are a new family, who or what helps you find the church school rooms?
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- Is there a place for babies or young children? Is it clean and safe?
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- On Sunday morning, who welcomes people?
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- If you come during the week, what helps you find the church office or the pastor's study?
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- Do you see anything inside or outside the church building that suggests that some people are not welcome?

Talk with your group about what would make your church building more hospitable or welcoming. Select one idea to present to the leaders of your congregation.