

# Hospitality / God's Hospitality

**Carol:** Hello! This is Carol, and of course with me is Tammy!

**Tammy:** Hello

**Carol:** It's good to have you with us here on Women of Hope. Thank you so much for inviting us to be with you! We're looking forward to having a cup of tea together...

**Tammy:** ...or coffee - what would you like? Carol's brought some coconut cookies that she made, on a lovely pink plate - she's such a good hostess. Isn't it nice to be invited to share meal or a cup of tea or coffee with someone?

**Carol:** Do *you* like being invited to a party or celebration, or to spend a few days at a friend's house? I do, It makes me feel special.

**Tammy:** Absolutely! So today we'll be talking about hospitality - how to be a good host, and a good guest. Oh, these cookies are so good, Carol!

**Carol:** Hospitality means to provide shelter or food, especially to a traveler. In ancient times, travelers would hope to find a guest house, or hotel, at the end of the day, or some kind family who would take them in for the night. It was considered a duty to look after strangers in need.

**Tammy:** Most cultures have some traditions of offering hospitality for strangers. Is that true where you live? Things have changed for travelers, haven't they? Today, in most places, there is some sort of hotel. So when we talk about hospitality now, we usually mean inviting people to our *homes* to stay for a night or longer, or to share food.

**Carol:** Let's talk about having guests to stay overnight. I love having people stay at our home. But some families don't feel comfortable having guests in their house..

**Tammy:** It can be hard sometimes. Some guests will stay for a long time and disrupt the family they're staying with.

**Carol:** Well, I once read that a guest is just like a fish. After three days it doesn't smell good anymore!

**Tammy:** So it's important for the hosts and the guests to talk about how long the visit will last. If you're a guest, don't stay too long, unless the hosts say they're willing to have you for as long as you need.

**Carol:** A good host wants the guest to feel comfortable and welcome in their home. The question is: how do we host someone in such a way that both the guest and the host feel good about the visit? We'll talk about that today, on Women of Hope!

**Tammy:** When I have someone in my home, my first concern is: will *they* be comfortable in my home? Will they like my food?

**Carol:** Of course: hospitality means to welcome someone...to offer them shelter and food, for *their* sake, not ours. It's lovely to provide tasty food, beautiful flowers, a comfortable bed, or fun for the guests, if you can. But hospitality means more than that. It means sharing *ourselves, our time* and what we have with anyone who comes as a guest into our home. We give hospitality for the sake of our guests, not to impress them or to get an invitation in return.

Yes... you can share your life with your guests even if the food is simple and your home is very basic. What matters to them is to know they're welcome in your home, and to feel 'at home'. Show that you care about them, and love having them with you.

**Tammy:** Each family has its own way of showing that they care. You might be happy to invite your guest to help themselves to food or drink whenever they like. If so, tell them they can do that.

**Carol:** That's good. Because your guests will know what they can do, and that will help them to feel comfortable. Tell your guests to ask you, for anything they need. Be sure to ask them if there is any special food they need. Then do your best to provide that food.

**Tammy:** We were talking about showing love. I like to place a sweet and a welcome card on their bed. What would you do to show special care? Maybe put out house slippers? Give them the comfortable chair?

**Carol:** I always put some flowers in a vase, and clean towels on the bed, so the guest doesn't have to ask for them. I like to ask what they want to do while they're staying. Maybe they want to go sightseeing or visit a friend nearby. Maybe they just need a rest. In other words, I talk to my guests and we plan the days they'll be with us.

**Tammy:** That's great, then everybody knows what to expect each day. My mother always told me, 'When you have guests, make sure there is a clean place to go to the toilet and wash. And make sure it smells nice.' If possible, supply things like toothpaste, shampoo, soap and toilet paper and don't forget to tell your guests that they are welcome to use them.

**Carol:** Another little thing - provide a table or something for your guests to put their luggage on, so they won't need to bend down to reach for their belongings. Oh! And don't forget some hangers for special clothes!

**Tammy:** How about leaving some water in the room? A small bottle of drinking water is a great thing to offer the guests, right?

**Carol:** Good idea! And leave a cup so that the guest doesn't need to get up during the night if they get thirsty. Oh and speaking of night – we always try to leave a small light on in case they do have to

get around at night. That way they can see where they are going.

**Tammy:** Well, your house may be very simple, but it needs to be clean. That shows you care! Now we need to talk about how we should behave if we are a *guest*.

**Carol:** Tammy, a guest should be pleasant and honest, don't you agree?

**Tammy:** Yes; if you're a guest, be *nice*. Be a friend to the family, remember their names and take an interest in them. Try not to make your host feel stressed. I mean, if the food isn't quite what you like, or if the shower doesn't work properly, or if you're not able to do everything you want, have a nice attitude about it. Show that you appreciate all their hard work. In my country, it's polite to send a letter or card to thank your host, or to give them a small gift. In some places the guest might take the host family to a restaurant for a nice meal. What would you do?

**Carol:** Hospitality is mainly a *relationship* between the guest and the host. There will probably be differences in the way we do things, so we need to talk about them openly, but in a nice way, not demanding what we want. We can learn a lot from each other's cultures and ideas when we share a house for a few days!

**Carol:** The guests should say how they feel about things, but be as nice as possible. They should try to fit in with the customs of the family they're visiting. Then the visit should be pleasant for everyone.

**Tammy:** You know, hospitality is more than providing food and a bed. Guests can get that in a hotel, but in a *home* you should give warmth and friendship. We might give a hug. What would be right in your culture? I'm sure you would spend time talking together about things that interest you both. And you will be making good memories...the most special thing about this time together!

**Carol:** Here on Women of Hope we've been talking about having guests to stay for a time in your home. But often we invite guests for a meal, a celebration, or just a simple drink and a snack. How would you make your guests feel just as welcome?

**Tammy:** Invite them warmly and personally. And when your guests arrive, greet them, make sure they're comfortable, and offer them a drink. And, if they've travelled a long way, they may need to know where the toilet/bathroom is.

**Carol:** You can offer food that's really special, if you can afford it – but be careful you are not just showing off! Especially if it is something more than your guests could usually afford?

**Tammy:** Ask yourself - will this make them feel special...or uncomfortable because they couldn't do the same for you? Always try to make your guest feel happy and at ease. Of course, if you're having a celebration meal to honor someone, you would try to provide some special food if you can.

**Carol:** When my children were small I used to take them to visit my friend Lee. It was so easy because Lee moved her precious things out of their reach, and put out some things they could play

with safety. And she would have food that was easy for them to eat without making a mess. That made my visits so relaxed and comfortable.

**Tammy:** So...think about *who* will be coming, and what *their* special needs will be. Think about how to include the shy ones in the conversation, and those who might feel less important.

**Carol:** If you really *want* to make all your guests comfortable, I think you'll know what to do. Do your best, and *enjoy* the time together.

**Tammy:** Here on Women of Hope we've been talking about how to be hospitable. Have you ever thought that God is hospitable?

**Carol:** That's an interesting thought! Yes, I suppose we could say he is the host for all of us.

**Tammy:** Can I read you part of a Psalm...a poem, from the Bible? (Ps 104:10-23) It was written about 2500 years ago, and the whole poem is about the greatness of God the creator. Listen for all the creatures that enjoy God's hospitality.

**Tammy:** God makes springs pour water into the valleys; it flows between the mountains.

They give water to all the beasts of the field;

The wild donkeys quench their thirst.

The birds of the air nest by the waters;

They sing among the branches...

God makes grass grow for the cattle,

And plants for people to cultivate

Bringing food from the earth;

Wine to make a man happy,

Oil to make his face shine'

And bread to sustain his life...

The stork has her home in the pine trees.

The high mountains belong to the goats,

The rocky crags are a safe place for the rock badgers.

The moon marks off the seasons and the sun knows when to go down.

God brings darkness...and all the beasts of the forest prowl.

The lions roar for their prey

and look for their food from God.

The sun rises...

Then the man goes out to his work...until evening.

How many are your works, O Lord!

In wisdom you made them all;

the earth is full of your creatures.

**Carol:** Did you like that poem? God created a perfect world where the whole environment works together perfectly, so there is a place for every creature, including humans. And God continues to provide everything we need. So... if God is such a good host, I guess his followers should be welcoming and caring too.

**Tammy:** I agree. In the Bible, God gave his good laws for his people, and rules about how the community should look after those in need. For example, farmers were to leave grain in the fields and olives and grapes on the branches, for poor people to gather (Deut 24:19-22). The law said that God's people should welcome foreigners and strangers, because they were once foreigners in a strange country, where God had helped them. (Exodus 23: 9). They were to take good care of helpless people. People like widows and orphans were vulnerable to neglect or abuse then - and often are today. I think God specially cares for widows and orphans!

**Carol:** Often we leave out the people who are different to us, because we just feel more comfortable with people who are more like us. Do you ever invite to your home someone who is an outsider or stranger in your community? Maybe they are from another country or tribe, or they dress differently, or they don't fit in easily. Perhaps they couldn't invite you back.

We talked about this not long ago on Women of Hope. Remember how Jesus spoke to his host at a dinner party? He said, 'When you give a feast, invite the poor, the people who are crippled, lame, and blind, and you will be... blessed! Although they can not pay you back, you'll be repaid at the time when the righteous are raised to life again.'

**Tammy:** So, Jesus is saying that God sees and rewards us when we include those who would usually be left out?

**Carol:** Yes, I think so. Hospitality is part of following our hospitable God.

We've been talking about how God is so hospitable to us, and he wants us to be hospitable to others, especially those who need extra care. Sometimes you might think that you don't have much to share and can't put on a wonderful meal. You might not have a spare bed to share. I'd like to tell you a story from God's word, the Bible. It's about Jesus Christ, God's son, God in human form, who came and lived among us long ago.

**Carol:** Jesus and his friends didn't have a settled home. They travelled about, teaching about God's love and how we should live. Sometimes people gave them a bed in their houses. They may have even slept outside sometimes. So they were not used to a fine and comfortable life.

As they were travelling, they came to a village called Bethany. They had some friends there, two sisters named Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus. Martha invited Jesus to stay with them. Martha wanted to provide a special meal and every comfort for Jesus, so she was busy organizing everything. She was thinking about the preparations she wanted to make, the special food she wanted to serve . . . . But Mary was sitting close to Jesus' feet, listening to what he had to say. Martha came to Jesus and interrupted him: 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!'

Jesus looked at his friend Martha. 'Martha, Martha,' he answered. 'You're worried and upset about many things, aren't you? But only one thing is really needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'

And that's all that we read about that meal.

**Tammy:** What do you think about that story? I think I might have wanted Mary to help. Do you think Martha was right to be cross with her sister?.. well, maybe, if she was trying to *impress* Jesus. But Jesus didn't need a fancy meal, he was used to simple food, whatever people offered him. What did he really value?...

Yes, he wanted their time, their attention, their friendship. He wanted to have time together, talking about God. I'm sure he appreciated that Martha wanted to cook a nice meal for him; she wasn't wrong to show her love in that way. But what was even better? To spend time with him, getting to know each other better.

I think there's a message about hospitality in this story. The purpose of hospitality is to listen, to value your guest and show that you're interested in them.

**Carol:** I'm sure if Jesus came to my house, I would love to spend time with him. I wouldn't spend all the time in the kitchen! So maybe I need to make sure my meals are simple and I spend time with my guests. And I need to make sure I spend time with Jesus, praying to him and listening to his words from the Bible.

**Tammy:** We talked about God as our host, who made a beautiful world for us to live in. But you know, he has an even better home for us, if we belong to him. The Bible talks about God making a new heaven and a new earth, where we can be with God *for ever*. It says that there are no tears there, no evil, no darkness. It's a place of love and joy and beauty, and we will never be separated from our loving heavenly Father. And God wants to invite you into his home and his family, for ever. How do you say yes to this invitation? You pray and tell God that you're sorry for not putting him first in your life. You thank him for sending his son Jesus to take the consequences of all you've done wrong. You ask Jesus to be your Lord and your Saviour from now on, and to help you to follow him with all your heart.

**Carol:** That sounds simple, but it will change your life in so many ways. If you don't have this friendship with God, why don't you think about it? Think about saying yes to God's invitation to join his family. Maybe you don't really understand all this. Do you know anyone who follows Jesus, who you could ask? Is there a church you could visit? Would you like to write to us? We'll do all we can to answer your questions.

**Tammy:** You can write to us in care of this station or at Women of Hope.... The address: TWRWomenofHope.org. We do hope you will be with us again. Practice Hospitality! And have a great week filled with God's blessings.