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Hospitality Is War



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Guest Contributor

God has a habit of waging war with strange weapons. He fought Egypt with frogs, gnats, and boils. He defeated the Midianite army with Gideon's clay pots and torches. Strangest of all, he defeated sin and death using a tree. So, it should be no surprise to us that Jesus calls us to take up forks and spoons to fight back Satan and his legions.

Brothers and sisters, hospitality is war.

The word *hospitality* seems harmless enough. Maybe it conjures images of Ina Garten serenely chopping herbs plucked from her lush palisade and soft-lit montages of company having lighthearted conversation while enjoying tomato crostini. Maybe you just picture an old fashioned potluck. Either way, does hospitality really have eternal value? Can sharing the table with others really advance the kingdom of Christ?

Gathering at the King's Table

It is the prerogative of conquering kings to invite guests to their table. In kindness, David invited Mephibosheth, grandson of King Saul, to join his royal banquet ([2 Samuel 9:10](#)). In the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar extended hospitality to Daniel and his friends after his conquest of Judea ([Daniel 1:5](#)). An invitation to the king's table is an extension of sovereign grace and mercy.

As Christians, hospitality also flows from our King. Jesus started his ministry in Mark's Gospel going about "proclaiming. . . 'the kingdom of God is at hand'" ([Mark 1:14-15](#)). In the very next chapter, Jesus gives a foretaste of his triumphant victory, sharing the table with the most unlikely of guests. The scribes marvel at his dinner company: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ([Mark 2:16](#)).

Our King has invited us to dine at his table as royal sons and daughters. Consider this reality: "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" ([Psalm 23:5](#)). Nothing snubs an enemy and declares, "We are untouchable!" like sitting down to dinner in the middle of a war.

It's no accident that we accept the hospitality of our Savior every time we approach the Communion Table. Jesus has invited us to share in his eternal victory through his death and resurrection at a table. It signals to the powers of darkness that our victory is certain; their defeat is imminent.

Gathering Together at One Table

In the Old Testament, Jews and Gentiles were reminded of a glaring separation every time they sat down for dinner. Jews did not eat what Gentiles ate, did not sit at Gentile dinner tables, and weren't even supposed to enter Gentile homes ([Acts 10:28](#)). This rift separated all of mankind into two irreconcilable categories, and the whole world was reminded of it at 5:30pm every evening.

However, as the apostles spread the message of Jesus's death and resurrection far and wide, the unthinkable became reality. Jesus brought an end to the food fight. The King invited both Jews and Gentiles to his table.

It began with a series of troubling dreams where the Lord commanded Peter to eat Gentile food. Peter was puzzled by the Lord's chiding: "What God has made clean, do not call common" ([Acts 10:15](#)). However, when he entered a Gentile home for the first time and watched as a Roman centurion named Cornelius and his whole household became believers, Peter realized that the blood of Jesus washes all men clean.

When Jesus wanted to show Peter the full implications of the "good news of peace through Jesus Christ" ([Acts 10:36](#)), he brought Peter to a dinner table. In the home of Cornelius, Peter learned that one Lord, one faith, and one baptism meant that men who formerly hated one another could now peacefully share a dinner table.

Never before had a Galilean fisherman been a houseguest of a Roman centurion. The dividing wall of hostility had been torn down in Christ ([Ephesians 2:14-16](#)). Peter and Cornelius celebrated their King's victory before the whole world by sharing the hospitality that was theirs through the same gospel ([Acts 10:48](#)).

Hospitality Is Worth the Fight

It has been Christ's plan since the beginning of the church to advance his kingdom through dinner tables. The first believers in Acts are found "day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, [receiving] their food with glad and generous hearts" ([Acts 2:46](#)). For millennia, the dinner table was a visible reminder of the division between men. It is at the dinner table that the peace of Christ must now visibly reign.

So, how are you celebrating the victory of our crucified and risen King day by day? Are your meals bizarre to the world? Are you sitting down to eat with people you should never get along with? Are you dining with people from other races, nations, and social classes — eating food you would never have tried if not for the unity of Christ's body? How does your mealtime shine forth the peace that Christ has brought to a hostile world?

Showing hospitality is a fight. Satan will convince you, six ways to Sunday, that you don't have time to share your table with others. Whether scheduling issues, sports practices, fatigue, or money constraints — there will always be a reason not to invite others over for dinner.

But hospitality is worth the fight. When you survey your kitchen at the night's close, and it is filled with dirty silverware, piles of plates, and a sink overflowing with greasy pans and pots, may you realize these are the well-used weapons of our war against the darkness. Make your ladles, casserole dishes, and cookie sheets become your trusty side arms in our fight to expand his kingdom.