

## LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

August 15, 2021

You've likely talked with your child about the Greatest Commandment, Jesus' familiar imperative to "Love your neighbor as yourself." But did you know that when Jesus spoke those words, he was actually paraphrasing Leviticus 19? Again and again throughout the Bible God calls us to love the stranger. And in Matthew 25:31-36, Jesus goes even further explaining that when we care for the stranger, it is as though we are caring for God himself. That is a humbling prospect. So, how do we as parents help our children develop the skill of hospitality? And what does it mean to welcome the stranger and love your neighbor in a global world?



### Showing Hospitality

Hospitality is a gift and a calling from God. And it doesn't just benefit the people we extend hospitality to; it benefits us too. A recent study called "[Spiritual Households](#)" from the research group, Barna, suggests that families who regularly host non-family guests are more likely to have deeper conversations, including faith formative conversations. They are also more likely to forge deep, meaningful relationships with people both inside and outside of their homes.

These are the kind of relationships God is calling us to and you can model both extending and receiving hospitality for your children. It's as simple as accepting a playdate invitation, inviting new neighbors for dinner, or having an extended family member or exchange student stay with you. Your child's circle of influence and understanding will grow as they hear and learn from the stories of guests, and their heart for hospitality will blossom.

### Think Locally and Globally

Teach your child about the bigness and diversity of God's world. You don't have to travel internationally to learn about the world's regions, cultures, people, and practices. In fact, God's diversity is all around us and 'strangers' can live just up the street. Here are a few simple ideas to help your family develop love and empathy for your local and global neighbors.

- Learn about a local region or culture that is different than yours by taking a day trip, car ride, or camping excursions.
- Seek out local festivals that offer international foods and cultural activities. They are a great way to enjoy the diversity of God's world and meet neighbors from other countries and cultural backgrounds.
- Find local missions where you and your family can serve strangers in need.
- Pray with your children for people all over the world. By the dinner table, keep a map or globe, and choose a country to learn about and pray for each week.
- Explore websites, TV shows, or streaming programs that offer global travel and cultural programming for kids so that they can see and learn how diverse God's planet is.

Hebrews 13:2 says we are to practice hospitality and points out that some strangers indeed have been angels! Hospitality is not just a command we must fulfill, it is a blessing we are privileged to participate in. Next time your family reaches out to a neighbor or stranger in your midst, remember Jesus' own words "truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

Want to dig deeper? Check out Family Fire's article "[Can I Offer Hospitality?](#)"

---

*written by Ron Vandenburg*

<https://kidscorner.net/parent-blog/love-your-neighbor>  
*Printed on January 30, 2023*

