

# Give and Give More: The Art of a Mutually Encouraging Stay



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# Give and Give More: The Art of a Mutually Encouraging Stay

By Cheryl Parker



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come & stay

Mission in producing this eBook: Come & Stay is committed to cultivating a deeper love and respect within the ICOC by engaging and educating the community on travel etiquette and hosting courtesies that align with the heart of Jesus.

# Contents

## Introduction: The Heart of Hospitality

### Part One—The Host

- ♥ The Host's Motivation
- ♥ The Host's Preparation
- ♥ The Host's Moment of Connection

### Part Two—The Guest

- ♥ The Guest's Purpose
- ♥ The Guest's Preparation
- ♥ The Guest's Moment of Connection

### Conclusion



## Introduction: The Heart of Hospitality

Christian hospitality is weaved throughout the Scriptures in subtle, often overlooked ways. Much of New Testament writings describe first-century believers opening their home to disciples who passed through while preaching the gospel.

A big motivation for establishing Come & Stay was to open dialogue on what's suitable and what's not in the realm of staying with those who have graciously opened their homes to others. It's a topic we don't discuss much or have biblical lessons taught about often. We assume etiquette, protocol and knowledge of the commands surrounding hospitality are understood. But are they really?

Shortly after I bought my first house in the Northern Virginia suburbs, it became known as the hospitality haven for single sisters. For many months I had back-to-back guests, weekend after weekend. My guests ranged from sisters who came into town for a blind date to those visiting their boyfriend. Others came to attend a wedding, or another to get a decent night's rest after her connecting flight through DC was delayed a day. After a short while, it dawned on me that it might be wise to have more than one set of sheets for the guest bed so I didn't have to constantly do laundry!

Some guests I spent lots of time with, while others I barely saw. Most left a gift or card behind; others, not so much. Some I've stayed in touch with and they've returned the favor. And still others I never spoke to again.

Most fellowships within our family of churches have several households with a reputation for hosting out of town guests on a regular basis. Some people are naturals at hosting and others have to really work at it.

I've likewise been hosted by families and sisters, and the experience was always powerful for the most part. I pray to God that I gave as much to them in that moment as they did to me! It's odd how those moments of me hosting don't stick out as much as my staying with others.



Maybe it's because I wasn't hosting with intention or expectation. As I recount the moments I stayed with others and became the recipient of their amazing hospitality, I am convicted by my lack of intentionality in hosting those who came into my home. At times it was like an assembly line, shuffling guests in and out. It's almost like I didn't expect to receive anything from my interaction with my guest and in return I didn't offer much but a warm bed, a clean bathroom and the spare key.

Just knowing that I did something to help sufficed for me. But is that what God intended? I know that I am good at connecting people to other people. But in what ways am I good at connecting with others myself? I acted more like Martha, caught up in the busyness of hosting—but failed to set out to connect from a heart level with those who entered my home.

I am convicted by the disciples in the first century church like Lydia and Simon, who understood that by opening their homes to Paul and Peter, they were in turn affecting the eternity of others. Do we see how encouraging our brothers and sisters through hospitality has an impact on their ability to affect others for God?

## Part One—The Host


In this part, we will look at aspects of hosting an overnight guest that you may have never considered. It's important to clean ahead of time and communicate clearly the house rules and expectations, but what about the spiritual, inner aspect of hosting? Taking a look at our motivation, preparation and the moment the guest arrives will help us represent God more fully in our hospitality efforts.



## The Host's Motivation

Asking ourselves “why” we do what we do opens up a whole world of possibilities in following through with what we hope to achieve. It may also expose things in our hearts that aren't in alignment with our actions.

When you offer to host others in your home, I encourage you to ask yourself what you would like to personally receive from this interaction. This could range from fellowship to freely sharing what the Lord has given you with others. It could be the desire to meet others and expand your spiritual network. It may be to serve others in your congregation who would benefit from this person's visit. It could be to learn more from the particular guest, to partner in some task. To possibly have a place to stay when you travel to their town. Or it may simply be because you would hope that others would treat you the same if you were in a similar situation.



**Ask yourself what  
you would like  
to receive from  
hosting a guest.**

A couple in the early church had very clear motivation in their hosting habits. In Acts 18, Aquila and Priscilla were in Corinth as immigrants, refugees from Rome. Paul went to see them and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.

I'm sure that a big part of Aquila and Priscilla's motivation in hosting Paul was what they had in common. Jewish decent. Tentmakers. Perhaps they became business partners for a while. Imagine what it must have been like to witness the ministry of Paul while he stayed there. To watch him prepare what he was going to share in the synagogue. To listen with compassion at any frustration he may have had with those who opposed him and abused him. It appeared that Aquila and Priscilla really valued their relationship with Paul.

They accompanied him on the start of his next venture to Syria and went as far as Ephesus with him. And while there they just happened to meet Apollos, another Jew who was knowledgeable of the Scriptures, but only knew the baptism of John. The Scriptures say that when they heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. Looking at these instances, I would think that Aquila and Priscilla's motivation for hosting was to advance the gospel among Jews.



Together they assisted through hospitality to ensure the good news was being spread throughout the world and that the church was being built up with leaders.

Aquila and Priscilla were certainly co-workers in God's service (1 Corinthians 3:9); however, perhaps we're more familiar with sisters Martha and Mary, who hosted the Lord Jesus himself during his ministry.

## The Host's Preparation

**P**reparing to host an overnight guest is two-pronged. There is the spiritual component where we examine our hearts. And then there's the practical actions that need to be executed. Consider the story of Martha and Mary when they hosted Jesus in their home.

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38–42).

First, let's talk about Martha. Based on her actions in Luke 10, she often gets a bad rap. I believe she and her sister Mary worked great as a team towards both the spiritual and practical elements of preparing for a houseguest. If you notice, it was actually Martha who opened their home to Jesus. She took the first action, the leap of faith to invite the Savior of the world to visit with them.

I would imagine that Martha felt a big responsibility once he accepted the offer. She had to deliver and host to the best of her ability. And to her that meant "preparing" for him and all those he would attract during his stay.

Martha identified the practical needs of the time and it overshadowed the spiritual significance of the moment. I can be guilty of this for sure. As a matter of fact, confession on my part: sometimes I use hosting others as my prompt for cleaning the house! So needless to say, the practical preparations can totally swallow the spiritual significance, illustrated by my lack of energy when the guest arrives.

Having said this, I think it's important to consider and execute on the practical matters with much heart as it can prompt us to get spiritually-minded about having a guest come in our home. And it allows us to exercise honoring others as well.

So just like your mama instructed you as a kid, be sure to clean up before the guest arrives. At least the parts of the house the guest will frequent! And figure out accessibility factors like keys, codes, parking, etc. Also be able to offer some amenities like beverages, staple foods and basic toiletries in case they forgot something.

## Practicals for Being a Good Host

Here's a checklist of items that in my experience, I have found super helpful in getting ready for guests to arrive.


- **Have a spare key made:** Coordinate the handoff with the guest ahead of time if they are arriving at a time you're not planning to be home.
- **Make the bed with clean sheets:** If the guest bed has been unoccupied for a while, freshen up its linens.
- **Test the air mattress:** If you're offering an air mattress to your visitor, make sure it's in good condition. Inflate it and sit on it to make sure there are no holes and go the extra mile to vacuum the surface so it's free of dust.
- **Be sure to have extra pillows and blankets readily available as well as a fan:** Everyone has different levels of comfortability, so being prepared ensures they have a decent night's sleep.
- **Make room in the closet:** Get it presentable and move some things out if necessary. Be sure to have some hangers available for the guest to use as well.
- **Buy (or create) a suitcase stand:** And make sure there's floor space for the guest to move around. You can create a DIY stand by clearing off a storage trunk or providing an extra folding chair ready for guest's luggage. It will help them be organized and neater.
- **Have a basket or bin of toiletries accessible:** Utilize those trial size bottles you've collected during your travels or purchase a few items from the dollar store ahead of time so they are handy. And having an extra toothbrush on-hand is always a plus.
- **Set out sufficient towels:** Consider offering a set that's a different color from what's currently hanging on your towel rack so the guest can easily identify theirs.
- **Buy or make a few staple food items:** Have some breakfast items on hand like coffee, juice, fruit, granola or yogurt. Grab-and-go snacks and bottled

waters are good if your guest is doing a lot of sightseeing activities. It's wise to get items that you like; that way they don't go to waste if your guest doesn't consume them. And it's always a special touch to offer a food option unique to your area. However, be considerate of any known allergies.

- **Share ideas of possible activities:** Think about what the guest is coming to town for and what they might be interested in doing during their visit. Be aware of happenings around town and pick up a local newspaper, magazine, maps and brochures for them ahead of time.
- **Ensure that there is adequate lighting and electrical outlets where they are staying:** Consider that the guests may like to read in bed or use their phone as an alarm clock. So having lights and outlets in reach from the bed if possible is superb.
- **Provide important phone numbers:** Put together a list of backup contacts in case something happens and they can't reach you. This can include a neighbor, family member, or a disciple that lives within a short drive—anyone whom guests might need in a pinch.
- **Provide a list of household instructions:** There are usually little tricks or oddities to everyone's house. The chicken coop, seagulls or trash collectors that might wake you up early in the morning. The complicated universal remote or security alarm that talks every time you move from one room to another. And be sure to leave the instructions for Wi-Fi access.

Preparing spiritually takes hosting to the next level. This is again where you can examine your heart before God. Do you know the purpose of the guest's visit? Finding out would not only help you work through the logistics and expectations, but would give you an opportunity to pray for them before they even arrive.

What about your household? Do you have a family? A singles' household? What are ways that everyone living in your home can be including in preparing for the guest's visit? If everyone in the household is invested in preparing, they are inclined to be more devoted to making sure the guest has a great stay. And serving through hospitality provides an opportunity for connection with those in your home.



**Serving through  
hospitality allows your  
guest to connect with  
those in your home.**

Have you been a thoughtful host? Does the guest know you have a puppy dog? Did you check to see if they have any food allergies? Being upfront about these things is thoughtful and considerate.

Depending on the circumstances, prepare to spend time with the guest. Create an opening in your schedule to connect with them, to have meaningful conversation with them beyond how to connect to the Wi-Fi and where to find the extra blankets. Depending on the reason for their visit, the guest may have more flexibility in their schedule than you. It's okay to tell them upfront when you are free to have focused time with them, even if it's for 30 minutes. It can make all the difference in your hosting experience.

Be the type of host that has a healthy mix of Martha and Mary. Because both of them were needed to make Jesus' stay what it was...an opportunity to connect and refuel for the work he faced.

Every friend was once a stranger.—Unknown

## The Host's Moment of Connection

Okay, you *Every friend was once a stranger.—Unknown* his guest that is now at your door. You've done all that is needed in preparing for their arrival. You've connected with them via Messenger or a call or email or through a coordinator. Now it's time to meet them in person.

Maybe there are feelings of anxiety because you're letting a complete stranger stay with you and your household. Perhaps there are feelings of exhaustion and you're praying for enough energy to receive them properly when they arrive. Or maybe you are super excited about meeting someone, showing off your city and building some great memories with a new friend. No matter what your feelings are, the moment has arrived to be as welcoming and loving as the Scriptures call you to be.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality (Romans 12:9–13).

The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms (1 Peter 4:7–10).

It's interesting how the word "love" is associated in the same passage with hospitality in these verses. Demonstrating hospitality gives us the opportunity to live out loving others who were strangers before.

Practically speaking, making things accessible is key in ensuring a successful stay. This includes yourself. Make yourself accessible. This doesn't mean you have to always be there physically for the guest. But they should know how to reach you or someone close if needed.

If you're not able to show them around, connect them with other disciples in town who can show them a good time. Make sure your guest has the necessary information to best reach them.

Be willing to lose some sleep to have a mutually encouraging exchange with your guest. This is especially true when hosting someone from a different country. I recall the sister who hosted me in Croatia several years back when I went on

an encouragement mission trip to Europe. It was so amazing to fellowship and get a snapshot of her life in real time. To share about the things we had in common, in faith, regardless of our cultural or geographic differences, was incredible. For her, this opportunity to have disciples invest time and money to travel to her country to encourage the church there was rare.

We talked so long into the night that the next day I fell asleep in the airport, missed the boarding of my plane and almost missed my flight. Thanks be to God for waking me up at just the right time! I

couldn't avoid the immediate emotional stress of being separated in this foreign land from my friends who had already boarded. Or the embarrassment of having to walk to the back of the plane, passing all the passengers who were frustrated by having to wait on me. All of this added to my experience of traveling to a new country. And I wouldn't have traded it for anything. The special connection I made with my host that night was priceless.



**Hospitality gives  
us the opportunity  
to live out  
loving others.**

## Part Two —The Guest

Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward (Matthew 10:40–42).

In this part, we will look at aspects of being an overnight guest that you may have not considered. You may know how important it is to clearly communicate your needs to the host, as well as to offer a gift to them in appreciation, but what about the spiritual, inner aspect of staying with someone gracious enough to open their home? Taking a look at your purpose, preparation and the moment you arrive will help in representing God more fully in accepting ones offer to help you.



## The Guest's Purpose

Having intention about why you are traveling is not hard. I mean, who travels without knowing what they are traveling for? Even if it's a loosely planned get-off-the-grid type of trip, you typically have some idea of what it will look like (perhaps you have visions of lounging on the beach, head covered with the book you're intending to finish).

One of the most intentional and amazingly beautiful trips that required overnight accommodations in the Bible happened in Genesis 24. Abraham was old, on his death bed. He called in the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of all he possessed. Abraham gave him parting instructions: "to go back to my own relatives and find a wife for my son Isaac."

The servant prepared for the journey, not really knowing what to expect, but having high hopes of being able to honor the request of his master. Upon his arrival, he prayed a specific prayer for how God would reveal "the one" for Isaac.

Rebekah appeared as he finished his prayer and everything went according to his very specific request. "Then he asked, 'Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?'" (Genesis 24:23).

Wow, that's a bold move. Talk about inviting yourself over, making yourself at home! And it wasn't just the servant; the "us" included ten camels and a boatload of goods!

Rebekah's response to his request was immediate. She didn't stall in obliging his request.

Now I'm not sure if Rebekah knew in her spirit that this servant was connected to her through family or not. Possibly the exchange of a gold nose ring and gold bracelets gave her a clue. Or perhaps their conversation at the well sparked a kindred spirit among them. But according to the Scriptures, it wasn't fully revealed to her until after she opened her family's home to this guy and his ten camels. And once it was clear, Rebekah hit the hills running with excitement.

I love the continuity in this family, because no sooner had Rebekah reported her meeting this servant of Abraham's, then her brother Laban ran from the house to greet him: "'Come, you who are blessed by the Lord,' he said. 'Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels'" (v. 31).

Before the servant took part in the meal Rebekah's family had so graciously provided, he had to share the purpose for his trip. He was very intentional. Very purposeful. And he took the time to repeat to them for the second time everything that led up to him being there with them. Why? I believe it was to encourage them and build their faith. To reassure them that he was there on his master's behalf, and that they were a part of God's plan in action. What they had been promised was coming to pass through Rebekah.

What he came for could have been seen as a threat and faced with some resistance (because after all, he was proposing to take one of their family members away). But it was not received like this at all. Not only did he offer costly gifts to Rebekah's brother and mother, but he was the bridge for their family line to increase to thousands upon thousands; and for her offspring to possess the cities of their enemies (v. 60).

The servant and his crew spent the night there before beginning their journey back to Canaan the next morning. What an amazing visit.



**Hospitality gives  
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loving others.**

What gifts can you bring to your host? And I mean beyond the typical gift card, local trinket or meal out. Think about the gift of yourself. Your testimony. Your faith. How have you set out to walk in the way your Master would have you go, not always knowing if things would turn out as hoped? Abraham's servant was never identified by name, which I think is interesting. Perhaps it's because he was simply just being a messenger and vessel through which God was speaking to Rebekah's household. His name didn't matter. Only what God sent him to accomplish.

## The Guest's Preparation

**P**repare for your trip practically as well as spiritually. You may already pray through the practical elements of your trip: to have a good or productive time, for safety during your travels, for protection over those you are leaving behind.

But how much do you pray for the spiritual elements of your trip? Do you think about what you can offer your host, beyond a gift in appreciation for your stay? One of my constant prayers is for God to reveal to me how I should give to my




host. This has translated into late night talks with sisters about dreams and fears. It has led me to painting walls and scraping floors for a host family moving into their first home. I've helped connect a young military couple who hosted me with disciples in their next town of deployment.

When we allow the Spirit to work, God reveals what he wants us to do. And it can be exciting! However, if we are distracted with the logistics of our trip, we can miss out on truly being used by him as a guest.

Jesus had some unique instructions to his disciples about travel preparation:

“Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

“Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts— no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave” (Matthew 10:5–11).



**God wants to  
use you to bring  
healing to those  
you stay with.**

Jesus was essentially preparing the disciples to be guests. To be guests in the homes of the lost sheep of Israel. First he gave them the authority to perform miracles and heal these lost sheep. He told them what to pack and what not to pack. And he guided them on where to stay. The households where the disciples stayed were recipients of the miracle work and the good news through Jesus' teachings. Do we hear how God wants us to bring healing to those we are staying with? The way we discover this is to consciously receive and respond to God's Spirit.

As a guest, we might feel like we're coming into a place where we have nothing to give. Perhaps we've been emptied out and need to be filled up. Health issues or a legal battle may be the purpose for our travels. In these cases, we may feel like we're being a burden to someone and we don't want to ask for help. This may require us to prepare ourselves to receive. Who out there has a hard time receiving? Or trying to do things alone?

For me personally, when I don't receive what is being offered, it's typically because I'm not humble to the fact that I need others. Let's continue in Matthew 10 to discover how this can be harmful.

*“As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet” (Matthew 10:12–14).*

In this scenario, it was the potential hosts who missed out on having peace rest on their home because they didn't welcome the traveling disciples. I challenge you as a guest to look through the same lens when you find it hard to receive what the host is offering. When we don't receive humbly, it could very well be a matter of missing out on the peace of God being offered through a generous brother or sister.

## Practicals for Being a Considerate Guest

The following practicals are suggestions for how to be a considerate guest. Remember every situation will be unique. This list is meant to generate thoughts on how to show respect and gratitude to the host.

- **Be upfront about how long you need to stay:** Be sure to solidify your travel dates in advance with your hosts. Clearly communicate and don't come in expecting that your host will automatically accommodate you if you want to stretch out your visit. Be prepared to make alternate plans if you have to extend your visit for unforeseen issues like weather delays.
- **Assume your host doesn't like surprises:** Show up at the agreed day and time and give adequate notice if plans are altered outside of your control. And never show up with a puppy, child, significant other or even a mutual friend unless you've cleared it with your host beforehand.
- **Choose a thoughtful gift:** Proper guest etiquette requires a gift. It's the least you can do for someone who has opened their home free of charge. If you're able to figure out your host's interests ahead of time, that's even better. Gift ideas include a tasty treat from your hometown, taking the host out for a meal to their favorite restaurant or a gift card for community goods, especially if you're staying with a family or single's household.
- **Ask about house rules:** Shortly after you arrive, inquire about how things are done in the house to avoid any misunderstandings. This will automatically communicate to the host your desire to respect them and their home while visiting. Questions might range from what quiet hours are to things to keep in mind with any children or pets. Also be observant to other rules that might

not be directly communicated right away, like whether you should take your shoes off or the host's recycling practices.

- **Be mindful and appropriate:** We all have different levels of comfort, and oftentimes things are laid bare when you're staying with someone. Be mindful of modesty when moving through common areas, especially if you're staying with a family. Don't have your volume on ultra high for a video you're watching on your phone or engage in a lively exchange on your speakerphone.
- **Be of service:** Offer to assist the cook; set the table and clean the dishes; be the one to drive if you have access to a car; entertain the kids while Mom or Dad takes a power nap; fix something minor around the house you notice could use some TLC if you have the skills; or take the dog for a walk. Your host will appreciate the gesture even if they decline your offer. And always take the initiative to clear your dishes when you're finished; buy a few groceries items for the house if you're able to stop by the store; and fill up the tank when you return the car you borrowed for the day.
- **Make independent entertainment plans:** Your host might be open to seeing that theatre production or art museum for the third time, but they are not necessarily on vacation and probably have other things to take care of during the day. If you are there for more than a weekend getaway, consider connecting with other locals in the city. Or be adventurous (yet wise) and do some exploring on your own. Communicate your plans to your hosts and give them an idea of when you think you'll be back.
- **BYOS (Bring Your Own Stuff):** Although most seasoned hosts have extra toiletries on hand, do your best to be prepared with your own items. If you realize you've forgotten to pack something essential and you're in a pinch, inquire if the host has it or if they can direct you the nearest store. Also, don't be the one to polish off the milk in the fridge or the cookies on the counter unless the host offers and insists.
- **Leave it better than you found it:** Leave a good impression and make sure the place is as clean as possible before you go. Your host shouldn't have to do anything extra outside of their typical cleaning tasks. Before you leave, double-check the spaces you occupied for your belongings, especially phone chargers and clothes hanging in the closet. Ask the host if they want you to strip the linens off the bed before just doing it. Do a quick wipe of the counters and floors in the bathroom for hair and residue. Make sure all the dishes you used are washed or loaded. And, of course, return items you used to their proper place.


- **Express gratitude:** You can't thank your host too many times, so it's okay to be excessive here. Leaving a handwritten note expressing your appreciation in detail should be a standard practice. And if your situation allows, offer the keys (figuratively speaking) to your own places should the host plan a future visit to your hometown.

## The Guest's Moment of Connection

**Y**ou are now entering the home of someone who has graciously offered you a bed, a couch or an air mattress. They didn't have to do it, but decided to honor and obey the teachings of Christ to open themselves to a stranger.

You're excited or possibly anxious about your trip. You don't know what to expect and your initial interaction with the host may seem awkward. Take off the shoes or keep them on? Jump right into engaging with the host or allow them to take the lead in the discussion?

The majority of guests are staying but for a short time. They have a home somewhere else and will be returning there soon. But as for Jesus, he did not have a home. He was a constant guest in others' homes. He was always fully present to what was before him. Engaging with the people. Offering a word to inspire and convict.



**Offer words of encouragement or a helping hand to those you stay with.**

Offering an inspiring word or a helping hand to your host who may be overwhelmed should be a learned action. Sharing what you are learning in your quiet time, offering to pray together or playing with their children are ways you can show up to be present with the household that is hosting you.

Taking responsibility for your being there is equally as important. Cleaning up after yourself, putting things where they belong and being considerate of the host and their house rules are all ways to express appreciation and respect. Communicating your plan is also essential to respect, as the host is entrusting you with access and even at times the keys to their home. This does not mean you must "report" everything like a child to a parent. Simply be respectful in your communication and openness about your reason for the trip.

Your host would more than likely wish to be included in your overall experience. Are you there for a date? Encourage your host and share about it. Is your purpose for coming to take care of something hard in your family? Open yourself up to being encouraged by what your host may have to share. There may be a shared experience that would only be revealed in this moment of exchange. We are called to mutually encourage one another in the Lord and to refresh the hearts of saints.

## Conclusion

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).

In my years as a disciple of Christ in our precious fellowship of churches, I have had the amazing opportunity to receive the gift of being hosted by dozens of sisters and brothers. Likewise I have experienced the joy of welcoming even more into my home as guests. Being a guest and being a host has truly enriched my faith and placed me on paths I never imagined.

Our love for one another, demonstrated through hospitality, has the power to transform our lives and the lives of those around us in ways unimaginable. We are called to do everything for the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31) and this command is the same regardless of our role as a host or a guest. You may be on this journey, literally as a traveler or figuratively speaking as a servant host. If you're not in the habit of viewing hospitality through the lens of the Bible, I invite you to become more intentional in defining motivation and purpose behind your thoughts and actions. And to diligently prepare as though you were about to meet Jesus himself. When we consider these things, we pave the way for miracles to occur in our moments of connection and beyond.