

Opening Words

Surprises await us as we open our homes for ministry. Hebrews 13:2 tells us, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.” Listen closely as I share today how men are to take the lead in being hospitable.

06 Living Above Reproach – Using Our Homes for Ministry

Today we continue learning what it means for men to live above reproach at home, for men to be men of character. As you know, we have taken the passages in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 as our guideline. Paul told Timothy and Titus that when they appointed leaders, they should look for men with these qualities in their lives. These were not qualities reserved for pastors or leaders only. They were qualities that every man should exhibit. It was from a pool of such men that leaders were to be chosen for the church.

You also know that I have shared that the 20 qualities in these passages is too many to remember at one time. That can be overwhelming! But what we have done is to organize these 20 areas into three major arenas in which life is lived – at home, in public with people, and in private when no one is watching. What kind of men are we in these three arenas? I hope you also remember that we have a study manual on each of these qualities that will help to guide you in discovering what each of these words means and how to apply it in life and that you will order a copy today.

After our introduction to the concept of living above reproach, we entered Arena #1 – our home life. We have looked at a man’s relationship with his wife and how a man leads his household, or his family. Let me ask you some penetrating questions about this before we move to our next area.

1. Do I understand what it means to be a good manager in my home? Do I have a good biblical grasp of this?
2. Do I have spiritual goals or desires for my wife and children?
3. Is my home a place where spiritual ministry takes place?
4. Am I disciplining my children properly and with love so that they love and respect me?
5. Does my wife love and respect me, and is she responsive to my spiritual goals and leadership?

These are questions to pray through, and when we fall short in any of them, we must take encouragement from the Lord, find grace, and apply that grace to our lives. Today, we are going to look at the third area of being above reproach at home. Men must be hospitable.

That could seem strange to some. Isn’t that a woman’s work, some might ask? No, this is a family’s work and the father must lead in hospitality and show graciousness and kindness to guests in the home.

We always did this with our family. It seems we always had people living with us or we always had a Bible study or an event in our home. We loved it, and we wanted our children to love it also. I

must tell you this “hospitality story”. It’s just too good to pass up. One Thanksgiving, our family was having international students over for our thanksgiving meal. We were training our children to say, “hello” in foreign languages. This was a good exercise for our children, and we thought it would make our guests feel comfortable and welcome. Well, we did that and had a great time and our children didn’t forget it because a month later, we were on a trip from our home in Virginia to see my mother who lived in Arkansas at the time. To get there, we had to spend the night in Tennessee, and when we got up I took two of my three children to a restaurant for breakfast. My daughter was about four or five and she was sitting next to me on a barstool at the counter. The waitress came up to us and in the thickest southern accent, she started talking to us and asked us what we wanted for breakfast. Well, after she took our order and went to place it with the cook, my daughter looked up at me and said, “Daddy, how do you say hello in Tennessee?” I thought I would die when I heard that, it was so funny and so cute. Of course, I had to explain to her that you just say, “Hello” and I went on to explain about different accents in different parts of the country and that people were not speaking a foreign language in Tennessee. But the lesson was learned about hospitality and making people feel welcome.

Making people feel welcome. That’s the goal of hospitality. It’s not just having them into your home. It’s making them feel welcome and at ease in your presence. The reason for this is that it opens the door to friendship which in turn opens the door to ministry.

I had another situation when my children were young. I was at a community college and seeking to minister to international students. While I was talking with an administrator, a student from Sierra Leone overheard that I was wanting to befriend international students and he immediately started talking with me. His name was Abu Bakar Dizo Kamara. I immediately took him home and when he sat on the couch my two young sons, then about six and three walked in to meet him and they melted his heart because he had two sons back home who were the same age. This led to a friendship that lasted several years and where we could share the Gospel with him on many occasions.

So, you want to be a man of character? Learn how to make people feel comfortable in your presence. Make your home a place where ministry occurs. When we read the Gospels, we find that many of Christ’s miracles and much of his teaching took place in homes. Ministry is not reserved for the church building. That is Satan’s lie. Satan would love to confine the work of God to a building where people attend for a couple of hours a week. God wants ministry to be everywhere, in all places, at any time, including our homes. Men, ask God to make your home a place of ministry.

Paul tells us in Romans 12:13 to practice hospitality. Practice it. If you are not good at it, start, and practice, and get better. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:9, “Be hospitable to one another without complaint.” There will be times when showing hospitality to others costs us money and uses up our time and energy. Don’t complain about it. Now, there is a time when the visit must end and when people must leave. Sometimes it is hard to know when that time is and sometimes people don’t have a clue when they are to leave, and it may cost us an extra hour of sleep at night or it may cause us to dig deep into our budget for the month. Don’t complain. Trust God and be gracious and wise as you ask God to use your home for ministry.

Surprises await us as we open our homes for ministry. Hebrews 13:2 tells us, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.” I think the writer probably had some Old Testament stories in mind. The one that comes to my mind is when three mysterious figures came to Abraham one afternoon. He was sitting at the doorway of his tent because of the heat and Abraham served them. His wife, Sarah, prepared a meal for them and after the three ate, they revealed their purposes to Abraham. Two were angels! One was the Lord himself who revealed to Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son, Isaac. What a momentous time this was! Imagine serving dinner to two angels and to the creator of the heavens and earth! We would want to be very hospitable!

In 2 Kings 4:8-11 we find this story.

⁸ Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman, and she persuaded him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat food. ⁹ She said to her husband, “Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually. ¹⁰ Please, let us make a little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; and it shall be, when he comes to us, *that* he can turn in there.” ¹¹ One day he came there and turned in to the upper chamber and rested.

So, the Shunamite woman and her husband opened their home to a prophet, and as a reward, this woman who was barren was given a blessing by the prophet – she and her husband would conceive and have a son. And, you probably know the story, for when the child was born and grew up, he was killed in an accident, but because of the relationship between Elisha and the woman, Elisha went to this home where he was shown hospitality, and raised her son from the dead! All because she opened her doors to refresh this man!

But, even though blessing comes to us when we open our doors to others, we must see hospitality as a way to serve others. I think of the great story in Luke 14 where Jesus was invited to a meal in the home of a Pharisee, and Jesus said, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. ¹³ But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

I don't think Jesus was saying we couldn't have a meal with our friends or family members. He did it himself later when he had the Passover meal with his disciples. But he was addressing the problem in their day of excluding others because they had problems or were of a lower class and Jesus said those are the ones you should go after. Those are the ones you should open your home to and you should minister to them.

Yes, hospitality is an important quality for every man to develop for the sake of the Gospel. This will mark you out as a man above reproach.

Let me close this today by asking these penetrating questions:

1. Have I devoted my home and possessions to God for His plans?
2. Do I cheerfully share food, clothing, and spiritual refreshment with others?
3. Do I sense and adapt to the needs of those I serve?
4. Is our home suitable for those we are serving and does it contribute to spiritual growth? Are there any objectionable items in our home that would hinder ministry?

Well, there you have it, the first three of the 20 qualities and three that deal with the home life; hospitality, managing our household well, and being a one-woman man. Let's pray about this:

"Father, we really need your grace. We open our hearts to you and ask you to help us be men who are above reproach at home. Help us to be men who know how to be hospitable and minister in our homes, help us to manage our household well, to raise our children to know you, and to be faithful in every way to our wife and build them up in the faith. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen!"