

# HOSPITALITY MINISTRY

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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*Equipping You to Serve*

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**CHURCHLEADERS**  
P R E S S

*Colorado Springs*

# HOSPITALITY MINISTRY

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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*Equipping You to Serve*

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***Written by***  
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***General Editor***  
Mark A. Taylor

**CHURCHLEADERS**  
P R E S S

*Colorado Springs*

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## DEDICATION

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To my mom, who is my biggest prayer warrior and hero. Your cooking, hosting, and hospitality I witnessed growing up were a constant source of inspiration. Not only did you constantly host family for Thanksgiving and other events, but I remember you having our church staff over to the house for cookouts and swimming. That example was not lost on me. Thank you for setting the bar.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I'd like to thank Mark A. Taylor, Mary Ann Sibley, Paul Crosby, and Rebecca Carlisle for their constant support, encouragement, and their work on this project. I couldn't have done it without you. Thanks for using your gifts for the Kingdom.

## INTRODUCTION

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### to the *Outreach Ministry Guides* Series

*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 4:10).

This handbook is part of a series designed to equip and empower church volunteers for effective ministry. If you're reading this, chances are you're a church volunteer. Thanks for your willingness to serve!

Several things make this handbook unique:

- The content is specific and practical for your given area of ministry.
- The information is compiled by experienced ministry practitioners—folks who've worked, served, and helped to train others in this particular area.
- It's written with you—a ministry volunteer—in mind.

Within these pages, you'll find three sections. The first gives a brief overview of fundamental principles to provide you with a solid foundation for the ministry area in which you're serving.

Section 2 unpacks various roles and responsibilities. Understanding your role and the roles of your fellow teammates helps the ministry team serve together well.

Finally, Section 3 provides a multitude of practical ministry tools. These ideas and tips will help you demonstrate Jesus' love to the people you serve at your church.

## INTRODUCTION

Whether you're a first-time volunteer or a seasoned veteran, my prayer is that the information and practical tools in this handbook will encourage and assist you. May God bless and guide you in your ministry!

— **Matt Lockhart**, Project Manager

## INTRODUCTION

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### **to the *Hospitality Ministry Volunteer Handbook***

Every good host knows hospitality doesn't happen by accident. The meal won't magically appear. The rooms don't clean themselves. You need a plan and a list of tasks, and hopefully you can share the jobs among several different workers. You need a schedule so everything's ready on time. You know "welcome" means more when it doesn't stop with the mat at the front door.

What's true for hospitable homemakers—and well-run hotels and restaurants—is even more important for local congregations. The hospitality ministry at your church can change the lives of your visitors for eternity. This practical handbook explains why, and then shows you how to plan experiences that show first-time guests what Christian love looks like.

If you're leading a hospitality ministry, discover help here for every aspect of the task, from the parking lot through the end of your worship services. If you're a worker responsible for just one of the many necessary hospitality duties, you'll find yourself in these pages too. Not only will you benefit from a detailed job description of your role, you'll be challenged by examples that describe how your particular responsibility can make a difference.

The last section includes pages and pages of practical tips and ideas. Every hospitality worker is sure to find something new here to make their work more effective.

As you consider the author's advice, you'll catch his enthusiasm for the ministry you've chosen. "The end game is lives transformed by the gospel as they begin a relationship with Christ," he says here.

## INTRODUCTION

“The journey of one’s spiritual growth may start when that person walks through the doors of our church for the first time.”

You have the chance to start many on that most-important journey. This book will help you do so with grace and with excellence.

— **Mark A. Taylor**, General Editor

## SECTION 1

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### HOSPITALITY MATTERS!

*I*t's been said that people will do almost any *what* if they know the *why*. This first section of the book is to explain the why. In these pages you'll see why what you do matters.

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## CHAPTER 1

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# THE MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY

*Y*ou are a vital piece of the puzzle of a thriving church. That's why you have this book.

Consider the invitation to read this book as a coach asking you to get off of the sideline and into the game. The church needs you, and this book will explain just how vital you are to the mission of God and the mission of your local church.

Someone could tell you to stand at a door and greet people when they walk in, but hospitality—true biblical hospitality—is much richer and deeper and more meaningful than standing at a door passing out a bulletin.

It's important to start with the end in mind. Why do we want people to feel comfortable and welcome at our church? A number of reasons deal with biblical themes: loving your neighbor, displaying kindness, gentleness, and compassion. We'll certainly look at these. But first let's consider, what is the end goal?

*“When your guests return for a second look, you’ve won 80 percent of the battle of gaining new regular attenders and have drastically increased the chances that they will begin a journey with Christ.” — Nelson Searcey*

The end game is lives transformed by the gospel as they begin a relationship with Christ and grow in faith year after year.

The journey of one's spiritual growth may start when that person walks through the doors of our church for the first time. You have been given the awesome responsibility to see they're so welcomed and so loved that they will return for a second visit, and a third visit, and eventually assimilated into the body and grow in their faith.

*Welcome.* That's a word we all long to hear. To know we're welcome, loved, and accepted is a deep desire. Our opportunity as workers in our church's hospitality ministry is to help meet that longing for the many who enter our church doors.

*“Hospitality means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.... It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines.”*

— **Henri Nouwen**

The book *Secrets of a Secret Shopper* describes the challenge that has motivated this handbook.

*Imagine you're hosting a small group in your home. Imagine you're hosting a birthday party. Imagine you're having friends over for dinner. Can you picture one of these scenarios?*

*When you have company over, what do you do? You clean house! You prepare. You want to welcome your company with open arms and make sure they feel right at home. This is what this book is about.*

*Every week thousands of guests visit our local churches. We need to clean house, prepare, and be ready to host them.*

## THE MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY

*All of us need to have the mindset and expectation that company is coming. How we prepare for and welcome “company” or guests to our churches says a lot about how seriously we take the Great Commission.<sup>1</sup>*

You know God dearly loves you. Through the hospitality ministry of your church, you have the chance to share that love with others.

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1 Atkinson, Greg. *Secrets of a Secret Shopper*, pg. 22. Rainer Publishing (December 21, 2016)

## CHAPTER 2

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# THE HISTORY OF HOSPITALITY

What is hospitality? One definition is, “the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way.” One website describes hospitality this way: “Away from home surrounded by strangers and yet you feel welcome.” It goes on to explain that *hospitality* comes from the Latin word *hospes*, meaning both visitor and stranger, and the idea has roots in ancient history.<sup>2</sup>

The word *hospital* has this same Latin word at its root. The word *patient* comes from *patior*, which is to suffer. Hence, a hospital can be interpreted etymologically as a place where strangers who suffer come to be cared for.

The word *hospice* originated in medieval times, a derivative of this same Latin word. Travel-weary crusaders on their way to the Holy Land found places of refuge in monasteries. Eventually these places of rest came to be called hospices.

Today the “hospitality industry” builds hotels for travelers who need a bed and a meal. But hotels didn’t come along in Europe until the eighteenth century. Before that, travelers often relied on the kindness of strangers, and later primitive inns and taverns, for a place to rest.

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2 <https://hospitalityinsights.ehl.edu/the-origins-of-the-hospitality-industry-and-what-lies-ahead>

*“We don’t know where our first impressions come from or precisely what they mean, so we don’t always appreciate their fragility.” — Malcolm Gladwell*

But hospitality has an even deeper rich and ancient history. Hospitality is firmly rooted in the Bible and the way of Christ.

In the New Testament, the Greek word translated “hospitality” literally means “love of strangers.” Hospitality is a biblical mandate, and we see it both commanded and commended throughout Scripture.

Starting in the Old Testament, we are told to welcome the stranger. Some translations say to welcome the newcomer.

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:33-34).

Genesis records the story of Abraham showing hospitality to three strangers (Genesis 18:1-15). The book of Hebrews reminds us, “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it” (13:2). And, in fact, this is exactly what Abraham did!

Jesus himself depended on the hospitality of others. “Foxes have dens and birds have nests,” he said. “But the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20).

When Jesus was asked what is the greatest of all the commandments, he summed it up by telling us to love God and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40).

He shows what he means by that in the most amazing story of the Good Samaritan. It’s striking to note that loving our neighbor means loving those not like us and has “nothing to do with geography, citizenship, or race. Wherever and whenever people

need us, there we can be neighbors and, like Christ, show mercy. This is the essence of hospitality.”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus’ sobering words should haunt us all: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, *I was a stranger and you invited me in*, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matthew 25:34-36, italics added).

Hospitality is also a specific hallmark for church leaders. In 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7-8, Paul lays out important guidelines and criteria for church leadership. He tells the leaders of the church they must be known for being hospitable.

### **A Biblical Mandate**

While hospitality may sometimes be perceived as a unique gifting for some people, Scripture is clear that loving strangers is a biblical mandate to anyone who follows Jesus. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God specifically commands his people to practice hospitality.

When we welcome the least of these and treat them as valued guests, we welcome Christ himself. And like so much of 1 John shows us, when we love others, we show our love for God.

With the command to practice the loving of strangers so prevalent throughout Scripture, it seems that showing hospitality is one of the primary attributes of individuals—and whole congregations—who follow Jesus. In fact, Jesus says that loving others is the primary way to demonstrate that we’re his disciples (John 13:35).

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served,  
but to serve others (Mark 10:45). — Jesus*

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3 <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-hospitality.html>

Perhaps one of the most grace-filled examples of hospitality in the Old Testament is the system that God sets up allowing all people, both rich and poor, to approach the tabernacle and offer sacrifices to him for their forgiveness. Via this system, travelers could come to the temple to offer sacrifices and worship God. No one's economic status excluded them.

In the same way, because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins, we are able and welcome to come to him. Everyone—including those who don't yet know God—should be able and welcome to come to his Church, which Paul calls "God's household" (1 Timothy 3:15).

When we welcome strangers into our church and show love to them, we emulate his love and compassion—the same hospitality he showed us as he welcomed us, not as "foreigners and strangers," but as "members of his household" (Ephesians 2:19-20). A church that welcomes strangers and practices true hospitality is a community where God dwells.

Are you a part of a church that loves strangers? Would your surrounding community say you are a church of love and compassion where anyone would feel welcome?

Do the hearts and attitudes—not just actions—of your people reflect a true desire to bring others into God's household? Do you see how your congregation's hospitality can lead strangers to feel the love of God and experience transformation that will affect their eternity?

A few verses from Ephesians are especially challenging: "As you read over what I have written to you, you'll be able to see for yourselves into the mystery of Christ. None of our ancestors understood this. Only in our time has it been made clear by God's Spirit through his holy apostles and prophets of this new order. The mystery is that people who have never heard of God and those who have heard of him all their lives (what I've been calling

outsiders and insiders) stand on the same ground before God. They get the same offer, same help, same promises in Christ Jesus. The Message is accessible and welcoming to everyone, across the board” (Ephesians 3:4-6 MSG).

“Perhaps because it’s so rare in our times, welcome beautifully expresses God’s vision for human relationships. In a culture that emphasizes fast meals, online friendships, and casual hook-ups, *hospitality is a truly countercultural experience.*

Showering tangible love on those we know—and on those we don’t—allows people to experience the love of Jesus in ways they don’t see coming.

*Hospitality is good faith in action.”<sup>4</sup>*

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4 <https://annvoskamp.com/2016/03/1-remarkably-simple-way-to-live-good-faith-when-society-thinks-people-of-faith-are-irrelevant-extreme>

## CHAPTER 3

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# YOUR MISSION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRST IMPRESSIONS

### **Mission and Calling**

The apostle Paul compares the church to a human body (1 Corinthians 12:27), and he says the work of the pastor is to equip those various parts of the body “for works of service” (Ephesians 4:11-12). Those works can include the many different roles in your hospitality ministry: parking team, greeters, ushers, welcome center hosts, section hosts, and more. Obviously, no pastor can fill all those roles. But you can help make your church body healthy and effective as you claim a ministry that best fits the gifts God has given you.

*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 4:10).*

Moses had to learn to delegate (Exodus 18:13-26) and thus extend his ability to serve. Likewise, even Jesus multiplied himself through his apostles (Mark 3:13-15). He chose, taught, and empowered them to do his work on earth.

You’ve been chosen too. You’ve been given this handbook because you can play a crucial role in your congregation’s mission of becoming a safe and welcoming place for all who enter in.

## First Impressions

“My pleasure.” Those are the two famous words heard from every Chick-fil-A employee across the US when you say, “Thank you.”

The phrase is important because it communicates a desire to serve another person. The phrase is remembered because it is the same at every location across America. The phrase is impactful, because it is a breath of fresh air in today’s hurried world and stands in stark contrast to the response and attitudes you may experience from many who are hired to serve you.

Chick-fil-A’s goal is to treat every guest “with honor, dignity, and respect.” The company is committed, through key actions they call Second-Mile Service, to create remarkable experiences for guests.<sup>5</sup> Have you thought about creating remarkable experiences for guests at your church?

Disney has long been the benchmark for customer service and hospitality. Disneyland is known around the world as the “happiest place on earth,” largely because guests know they will be treated as VIPs with over-the-top customer service. This was envisioned, modeled, and encouraged by Walt Disney himself—decades later, it remains the gold standard of how to treat others well.

The following quote is widely attributed to Walt Disney: “Whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it, they will want to come back and see you do it again, and they will want to bring others and show them how well you do what you do.”

Imagine your hospitality ministry serving people so well they want to come back to your church. In fact, they want to bring others and show them how well you honor and treat your guests. What a wonderful goal for volunteers in this ministry.

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5 *It’s My Pleasure* (book by Dee Ann Turner) – pg. 117, 118. Elevate; Gld edition (November 3, 2015)