



# FOUNDATIONAL TEACHINGS FOR BIBLICAL HOSPITALITY

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## FOUNDATIONAL TEACHINGS FOR BIBLICAL HOSPITALITY

Biblical stories with overt or subtle themes of hospitality abound in the Old and New Testaments. If biblical hospitality is intentionally providing a guest with generous care, a solid foundation must be at the core for stories to have greater meaning. Every picture has a backdrop, and this includes the activity of biblical hospitality. To understand the full meaning and importance of stories about hospitality, there are four key foundational elements to prioritize. First, man was created in the image of God. Second, people must love God completely. Third, people must love their neighbor. Fourth, showing hospitality is a characteristic of those who follow Jesus.

### Mankind Created in the Image of God

The first foundation to understand as a backdrop for biblical hospitality is why man and woman were created. God was busy in the first chapter of Genesis with his creation. In the final moments, God brings everything to a grand finale. In the very first chapter of Genesis, the writer states, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Of all creation, only one element is said to have been created in the image of God and that was mankind. The image of God is not selective; it does not appear in some people and disappear in others. All human beings bear the image and thus have the ability to be moved by displays of the image in another person.

What does it mean to be created in the image of God and why does it matter? How one treats a human must include the Imago Dei. Wayne Grudem writes, "The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God."<sup>1</sup> When God made man and woman in Genesis 1, he surveyed his handiwork and declared it "very good" (Gen. 1:26–31). In other words, it was better than anything else he had made: "Humanity is not only God's creation, but the pinnacle of his creative effort."<sup>2</sup> What was



the distinction? Mankind was made in some way like God. Theologian Millard Erickson defines the image of God as this:

God's creation was for definite purposes. The human was intended to know, love, and obey God, and live in harmony with other humans, as the story of Cain and Abel indicates. The human was certainly placed here on earth to exercise dominion over the rest of creation. But these relationships and this function presuppose something else. Humans are most fully human when they are active in these relationships and performing this function, fulfilling their telos, God's purpose for them...The image itself is that set of qualities that are required for these relationships and this function to take place. They are those qualities of God which, reflected in human beings, make worship, personal interaction, and work possible...This is the image in which humans were created, enabling them to have the divinely intended relationship

<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 442.

<sup>2</sup> David Horton, gen ed., *The Portable Seminary: A Master's Level Overview in One Volume* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2006), 162.

to God and to fellow humans, and to exercise dominion.<sup>3</sup>

For years in church history, there has been a great debate as to what the “us” and the “image of God” mean. For the purpose of context, it is appropriate to see the proposed views relative to who is involved in “us” mentioned in Genesis 1:26. This dissertation is not being written to choose a view; rather, this study is to emphasize that mankind is uniquely made in God’s image. Interestingly enough, and not surprising, “In theological studies, the more sparse the biblical information on a particular subject, the more theories are advanced to explain it.”<sup>4</sup> Some of those popular explanations of what “us” could mean include (1) the Trinity; (2) a plural of majesty, because the word God is itself plural; (3) a plural of deliberation, which implies God speaks to himself; and (4) God addressing angelic beings in heaven.<sup>5</sup>

There has been debate through the years about the relationship between two words in Genesis 1:26-27. God approaches this aspect of his creation unlike everything else he made.

Prior to his creation of mankind, God spoke in third person. However, his pinnacle reveals a first-person voice. There is an intimate connection and care to what he is about to create. In Genesis 1:26, we can read two words (“image” and “likeness”), but are they really that different? In Genesis 1:27, we see only one of those words (“image”) from verse 26 used. The question is, what is the relationship between “image” and “likeness,” and what is the meaning? “Image” comes from *tselem*, which the LXX normally renders *eikon* (icon). *Tselem* is found in other parts of the Old Testament that could support this idea of representation. Other theologians submit that “image” could mean representation, shadow (*tsel*) or likeness. One writer states:

He endowed them with his own image. In the ancient

world an image was believed to carry the essence of that which it represented. An idol image of deity, the same terminology used here, would be used in the worship of that deity because it contained the deity’s essence. This would not suggest that the image could do what the deity could do, nor that it looked the same as the deity. Rather, the deity’s work was thought to be accomplished through the idol. In Mesopotamia, a significance of the image can be seen in the practice of kings setting up images of themselves in places where they want to establish their authority.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, one can deduce that an image represents what the creator intends. Any reader can see confirmation of this throughout the Bible where humanity is to represent God to others. “Likeness” comes from *demut* and refers to something similar but not identical to the thing it represents.<sup>8</sup> There has historically been some debate about why “likeness” was used only in Genesis 1:26 and not in verse 27. “Image” is found in both verses. Is that important enough to change the meaning? One writer answers the question, “It is clear that v. 26 is not interested in defining what is the image of God in man. The verse simply states the fact, which is repeated in the following verse. Definitions have been suggested, but most of these definitions are based on subjective inferences rather than objective exegesis.”<sup>9</sup> Many theologians adhere to the belief that “image” and “likeness” are to be taken as synonymous words: “Lutheran theologians were correct in stating that the two words are synonymous and are merely combined to add intensity.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, to the original readers, Grudem adds, “It simply would have meant ‘to make man like us and to represent us.’”<sup>11</sup>

Why is being created in the “image of God” foundational to biblical hospitality? Biblical hospitality is about a human-to-human interaction that has to find meaning from somewhere. Why should humans care for each other? Jesus

<sup>3</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 532-33.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Gardowski, “The Imago Dei Revisited,” *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 5, accessed July 10, 2020, <https://www.galaxie.com/article/jmat11-2-01>.

<sup>5</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Genesis 1-17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 133-34.

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, 134.

<sup>7</sup> John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 29.

<sup>8</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 442.

<sup>9</sup> Hamilton, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, 137.

<sup>10</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 2001), 39.

<sup>11</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 443.



did not see people as obstacles to overcome; he saw them as broken beings to be redeemed. Jesus, by virtue of being the God-man, by being the Creator in the flesh, was able to recognize the divine within each person. The Fall in Genesis marred humanity but did not take away the image of God. Eventually, what Jesus did on the cross was the actionable step to restore what was marred by humanity. Even as a sinner and an enemy, Jesus was driven by love and chose to die for mankind.

Human beings are wired to respond to love. This image is most fully recognized in the person of Jesus Christ and in his interactions with people during his ministry. Consider how Jesus treated the marginalized, sick, and the lost, and see how he brought people to faith not by doctrinal savvy but by touch, compassion, and kindness. Jesus brought out the good in people by extending goodness to them—he resurrected the image of God by deliberately appealing to it in his work.

A great illustration of how Jesus interacted with a leper, a person society and the religious leaders avoided, can be found in Matthew 8:1-4. In this story, Jesus conveys goodness with a simple act of physical kindness. A man with leprosy approaches Jesus. Jesus reaches out his hand, touches the man, and says, "Be clean." Don't underestimate the magnitude of the gesture: Jesus touched a leprous man, which was against the Law, and then pronounced him healed. In all likelihood, it was the first physical contact the leper had received since his illness appeared, and it restored not only his skin, but also his humanity.

The woman who battled a blood issue her entire life in Mark 5:23-34 once again demonstrates how he treated someone others avoided. After the woman had forced her way through the crowd and touched Jesus without his

permission, Christ offers her compassion instead of anger. He affirms her faith in seeking his power and sends her on her way fully restored. Much like the leper, the woman was considered unclean—she was a social pariah who broke all kinds of Laws simply to get near Jesus. To actually touch the Rabbi was a potentially life-ending decision. So, when Jesus not only affirmed her for touching him, but for having the faith in him to believe he would heal her, it restored her body and her soul.

An interesting example is found in Mark 8:22-26 because Jesus doubles down to heal the man's blindness after being at the same spot in Bethsaida for many years. First, he spits on the man's eyes and places his hands on the man. When the man tells Jesus that he could see very blurry images, Jesus places his hands on the man's eyes. When he takes his hands away, the man can see flawlessly. Two passes went by for the man's sight to be restored, and it's interesting to note how Jesus went from touching the man in a general way (hands on the man) to touching him in a specific way (hands on his eyes).

The Gospels contain these stories and allude to even greater works the authors could only generalize in which Jesus healed everyone who came to him. Churches or Christian organizations that highlight how Christ met the needs of the sick and needy is common, but very rare to focus on the why. The why is important. Why did Jesus heal the sick and needy? Was it merely to meet their need? Was it merely to demonstrate his power? While those considerations are certainly viable and present, it seems Christ's willingness to heal was part of his desire to bring the image of God back to life in those who were broken. His physical work was a manifestation of his spiritual work; in restoring the body to health, in bringing back the goodness of the physical frame, Christ not only pointed to the same in the spiritual realm but

also opened the door for that spiritual transformation to occur.

When one thinks of Jesus, it is impossible to do so without considering his hospitality to humanity. Numerous stories illustrate this, but none compare to what we read in John 3:16. Obedience to his Father and love for humanity drove him to freely give up his life. You see his interest in people as he demonstrated emotion, empathy, and compassion. There would be little to believe and experience without his character, attitude, and intentional action. He believed humanity needed all he had to offer and gave it without reservation. Jesus knew on the other side of his generous care toward us that we would reap the eternal reward.

### Love God with Your Everything<sup>12</sup>

The temptation with showing biblical hospitality is to immediately start caring for others: in other words, the doing portion. There is nothing wrong with that approach. However, what if there is one essential element that can deepen and strengthen hospitality in the life of an individual as well as in a church? To be captured by the reality that God created mankind in his image is powerful, but is that all there is to showing biblical hospitality? Loving others is made better when one discovers the power of choosing to love God completely.

When the Bible repeats itself, it should cause anyone to pause and listen carefully. When a similar verse or verses are in the Old and New Testaments, any reader should wonder about the significance. The Bible repeatedly talks about how God loves humanity. What about humanity loving God? Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Similar words are found in Mark 12:30 from Jesus when he said, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."



A significant verse and command with special meaning to the Hebrew people is found in Deuteronomy 6:5. E.W. Nicholson commented on the importance of this one verse in Deuteronomy, "It is in a very real sense true to say that the entire book is a commentary on the command which stands at its beginning."<sup>13</sup> This verse was part of a section devout Jews would recite daily in the morning and evening called the *Shema*.<sup>14</sup> The indicator of this prayer and confession is known because of the word, "Hear."<sup>15</sup> Historically, "The injunction to love was based on the precedent of God's love, which had been shown to the Israelites principally in the Exodus."<sup>16</sup>

Are there similarities or differences between Deuteronomy 6:5 and Mark 12:30?<sup>17</sup> The obvious similarities include the use of words "heart," "soul," and "mind." The obvious difference is the additional word in Mark 12:30, which is "strength" or "might" in other versions. The other similarity is how Jesus uses it is slightly different than before.

According to Jesus, Mark 12:30 is a response to an inquiring scribe when he asked which of the 613 commandments rank as most important. Jewish people understand the voluminous laws that must be honored and kept, including this one (Deut. 6:5) from the Old Testament. However, Jesus takes a different and unexpected approach when he prioritizes this one as the most important. He does not directly say the other laws are unimportant, but he does say this one is

<sup>12</sup> This section title was inspired by a blog title by Jason DeRouchie on October 10, 2013 on <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/love-god-with-your-everything>.

<sup>13</sup> E. W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1967), 46.

<sup>14</sup> The *Shema* is Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; and Numbers 13:37-41.

<sup>15</sup> See vv. 4-9.

<sup>16</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 170.

<sup>17</sup> See also Matthew 22:37 and Luke 10:37 for similar texts that will not be exegeted here.

the other laws are unimportant, but he does say this one is most important: "The extent of a man's love for God was to be total. Israel was to love God with her whole being."<sup>18</sup> Jesus is bringing that same command forward and making it superior. He is putting to rest any squabbles over who should do what and why. He later says in Mark 12:31 that no other commands are greater than the ones he just said. The people in the crowd must have been dumbfounded: "That many of Jesus' hearers would recognize the truth of his reply makes it all the more difficult to dispute with him on the matter."<sup>19</sup> This man just said two commands are more important than the 613 commands most have known their whole lives. Jesus was bold. He was daring. He was revolutionary. How freeing this must have been for those listening and those who would soon be told. This most important command was directly tied to the first four commands in the ten commandments. These commands deal with the vertical relationship with God and sum up those commandments into one: "It is a great command, then, for its comprehensiveness, and it is a great command for the immense demand which it makes upon us."<sup>20</sup> The four elements Jesus spelled out in Mark 12:30 about how to love God meant something or he would not have said them.

Love is powerful. After all, Jesus uses it when he talks about how one should feel towards God and how to put that into action. The word love is used in many different ways in the Bible. Mark 12:30 uses *agape* for love. By definition, this love is a sacrificial and others-first kind of love. The life and actions of Jesus reveal the highest form of love.

What does it mean for someone to love God with all their heart? One way of answering this question is understand that if one could capture the heart, it is easier to capture the mind. This idea can be said in a different way: "The ancient Hebrews regarded the heart as the organ of the intellect."<sup>21</sup> Key verses or passages in the Old Testament

highlight the role the heart plays, which include Deuteronomy 4:39-40, Deuteronomy 6:6, Deuteronomy 8:5, Jeremiah 33:3, and Proverbs 4:23. From the depths of the heart flows passion and without a passion for faith, everything is futile because a person can end up as lukewarm.<sup>22</sup> The word for "heart" comes from *kardia*, which means the center of one's life. Therefore, everything that makes a person who they are is to love God, which includes personality, quirks, and reason to name a few. To add, "The heart, not only as the seat of affections, but as the center of our complex being – physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual."<sup>23</sup>

What does it mean for someone to love God with all their soul? One example of the weight of the word is, "Our bodies die, but our souls endure, making the resurrection possible."<sup>24</sup> "Soul" comes from the word *psuche* and is similar to *kardia* but implies something more encompassing. Interestingly enough, the English word psychology comes from this same Greek word.

What does it mean for someone to love God with all their mind? The word "mind" is not found in Deuteronomy 6:5 but was important to add for people influenced by a Greek culture that regularly used rational thinking in everyday living. This is evident in religious and academia circles. Perhaps Jesus added "mind" (*dianoia*) to his use of recitation because he wanted to emphasize how loving God with how you think and what you think allows you to "have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16).

What does it mean for someone to love God with all their strength? People can love God with their passion, the part that lives beyond the body, their rational mind, and still not fulfill this command. Why? Jesus stresses the importance of loving God with our muscle. This is the ability to show an exceedingly actionable extent of love. Love may begin inside, but love will work its way outside and show

18 J. A. Thompson, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 122.

19 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 169.

20 Charles Spurgeon, "The First and Great Command," (sermon) New Park Street Pulpit, November 8, 1857, accessed July 16, 2020, <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-first-and-great-commandment/#flipbook/>.

21 Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 239.

22 Trevor Davis, "The Call to Love," *The Dartmouth Apologia: A Journal of Christian Thought*, February 13, 2014, accessed July 27, 2020, <http://www.dartmouthapologia.org/apologia/the-call-to-love/>.

23 Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), 218-19.

24 Davis, "The Call to Love."

demonstrable proof.

Why does Mark 12:30 matter in biblical hospitality?

Why does loving God with everything allow humanity to give more and better to others? Jesus lays out in Mark 12:31 an important command about loving others, but it comes second to loving God. Why? The first command fuels the second. The first empowers and emboldens the second. When we prioritize the first command, the second command is made possible and better. The power and reason for these words are divinely given. “A wholehearted love for God necessarily finds its expression in a selfless concern for another man which decides and acts in a manner consistent with itself.”<sup>25</sup> A genuine love for God will naturally be seen in a genuine love for others.

### Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

Jesus set the stage for how to live by listing the two most important commands. So important are they that all the other laws hang on them. To love God with everything is number one. However, the second command is just as important. In fact, they are inseparable. Jesus continues in Mark 12:31a by saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” What does that mean? This one verse accurately captures the last six of the ten commandments. This command is all about horizontal relationships.

If Jesus tells everyone to love their neighbor, it is fair to wonder about who a neighbor could be. According to William Lane, he references Leviticus 19:18 and emphasizes fellow Jews, but Jesus freed the commandment from that restriction.<sup>26</sup> The parable of the good Samaritan is an excellent example of who Jesus believes is the neighbor after an inquiry from a Pharisee. At the end of the day, a neighbor is another fellow human being. Each person is to love any neighbor as themselves. What does that mean? When people love themselves, they look out for their personal interests and care for who they are as a human. One way this can be done, also seen in the ministry of Jesus, is taking an empathetic approach toward another person. Aminta Arrington



writes, “Love for the stranger is developed through empathy. Empathy is emotional identification. Hospitality fosters empathy, for it brings people together, face to face, in a time of intentional listening.”<sup>27</sup>

The consistent fabric in the New Testament is the supporting texts that mimic the same command and example Jesus talks about in Mark 12:31a. The significance of consistent examples reinforces the priority the divine places on people and how each one should be treated. Jesus himself said, “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). He has loved them with a personal, intentional, and sacrificial love. Jesus reminded the same crowd five verses later to love one another (John 15:17). Again, Jesus says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (John 13:14). Here are supporting examples of how people are to care for their neighbor.

### Romans 13:9

Love doesn't do wrong to a neighbor.

### 1 Corinthians 10:24

Do everything to the glory of God  
and that includes seeking good for one's neighbor.

### Galatians 5:14

The whole law is fulfilled when you love your neighbor as yourself.

<sup>25</sup> Frank E. Gaebelein, gen ed., *The Expositor's Biblical Commentary*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 944.

<sup>26</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 451.

<sup>27</sup> Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 209.



### Philippians 2:3

Count others more significant than yourself.

### Hebrews 13:1-2

Caring for others is imperative because you never know who you are entertaining.

Why does Mark 12:31 matter in biblical hospitality?

Loving other people allows a person to offer genuine and sustainable care for them. Why is loving another person so important to Jesus? Jesus, from the beginning of his ministry, was focused on caring for people. He had this incredible ability to honor what his Father trusted him to do and to demonstrate that to humanity in his life, death, and resurrection. Throughout his ministry, Jesus drew people to himself because he was attentive and caring. He rewrote the script so many legalistically lived and demonstrated humility by serving. When humanity looks out and cares for another person as much as oneself, people will begin to experience our full presence and what that can do for another human in need of connection. Croatian theologian, Miroslav Volf, talks about “double vision,” which is the ability to see the world from another person’s perspective<sup>28</sup> without losing one’s unique personal perspective. When this type of effort and action is taken, caring for another person becomes easier to do. Hospitality is all about intentionally caring for the needs of others and showing that through action. Said another way, “The terms relation and love express the nature and image of God. The Christian religion is based on love. Christians cannot act in the likeness of God in the absence of love.”<sup>29</sup>

### Showing Hospitality is a Characteristic of Following Jesus

The title of this section originates in Paul’s writings to the Romans. In our modern Bibles, sections of the Bible can be given a heading that are founded in scholastic efforts. As such, twelve verses have a common theme, and that is all about the marks of the true Christian. The context is important, so here is Romans 12:9-21:

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.’ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

<sup>28</sup> See Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019).

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth A. Bryson, “An Interpretation of Genesis 1:26,” *Philosophy & Theology*, 23 (January 2011): 195.

For the sake of this dissertation, focusing on verse 13 is essential, "Seek to show hospitality." Hospitality requires intention followed by effort, which is supported by what Clinton Arnold wrote, "Paul not only commands believers to exercise hospitality; he urges them to pursue it."<sup>30</sup> The audience Paul was writing to understood the importance of what he was communicating. "Hospitality" or *philoxenian* in this verse, is a combination of two words, *philos* (brotherly love) and *xenos* (stranger). The definition is loving a stranger as if you would love your own brother. Many travelers in the arid land sought lodging and food when journeying across the land since hotels and motels were obscure. Helping those who are in need is part of what followers of Jesus got to do then and now even more. This demonstration was common in those who followed Jesus, and this behavior often drew those who did not follow Jesus to Christianity. More so, this text gives the picture of pursuing (*dioko*) hospitality as their enemies pursued (*diokontas*) them.<sup>31</sup> Said another way, avoiding a sometimes easier posture of sitting back and waiting to offer help, prevents one from showing love for strangers with earnestness.

Jesus did not shy away from the sins men and women committed, but he did not see them as evil things to be destroyed (see John 8:11). Jesus persistently compared humanity to lost things that needed to be found. The sinner was not a monster that needed to be eradicated; it was a corpse that needed to be resurrected. This put him at odds with the religious leaders of his day.

The Pharisees and the experts of the Law saw the world vastly different: they feared it. To them, there was no one and nothing good except God—and even he was someone to be feared. Stray from the Law and he would rain down punishment and calamity. This fearful view of the world was why the Pharisees did not minister to the sick or the socially outcast: to do so invited God's wrath. The prevailing thought of the day was those who were sick came to be that way because of their disobedience. Somewhere, somehow the leper, or the blind man, or the lame woman, had done something (or maybe their parents had) to displease God, and he

sent their illness upon them as punishment. As a result, the Pharisees lived under the mantra "Hate the sin, hate the sinner." This also manifested itself in the Pharisees' attempts to control people through the Law.

On top of the Laws found in the Old Testament Scriptures, the Pharisees added additional laws that specified just how people were to obey God's commands. Where God said, "Don't work on the Sabbath," the Pharisees said, "Work consists of walking X number of feet, carrying X number of pounds, for X number of minutes." As Richard Foster writes, "Their righteousness consisted in control over externals, often including the manipulation of others."<sup>32</sup> Because of their view of the world, the Pharisees attempted to create good in people through rules, weighty expectations, and a heaping dose of judgment for those who failed.

Their fear—that mankind was evil and could not be trusted—led to a religious system that enslaved people to the very thing it hoped to free them from: sin. As the Apostle Paul said in Romans 7:7-8, "What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead."

Whatever you expect in life is typically what you get. The Pharisees expected sin, evil, death; as a result, everywhere they looked, that was exactly what they saw, and that was exactly what they drew out of the people who fell under their teaching. But instead of pulling people towards something greater, their mindset pushed people lower. Believing they were evil from the start, and therefore not capable of anything good, many people simply settled for a life absent of anything good. Jesus, however, flipped the paradigm. Being the Creator of all things, he knew the intent—and substance—of all things better than any legal expert ever could, and he spent his time combating the evil in the world by overcoming it with good. As a result, the broken and sinful

<sup>30</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 76.

<sup>31</sup> Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman, 1931), 405.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 9.

flocked to him, begging him for the transformation of their lives.

Jesus expected and connected with the image of God within people—and brought that image out with observable results. The power of positive thinking was not the turning point, but the alignment of the reality within humanity with the reality of the world. Jesus pointed people to the truth: they were made in the likeness of God, for relationship with God, and God's love would transform them for the better. Jesus demonstrated incredible hospitality, and people wanted more. He had the ability to care and satisfy more than just physical needs. Jesus pursued people. Jesus demonstrated the exact mark or characteristic of a true Christian when he pursued and showed hospitality. To add, Jesus was not in the business of entertaining but embraced the practice of showing hospitality: "Christian hospitality differs from social entertaining. Entertaining focuses on the host – the home must be spotless; the food must be well prepared and abundant; the host must be relaxed and good-natured. Hospitality, in contrast, focuses on the guests. Their needs – whether for a place to stay, nourishing food, a listening ear, or acceptance – are the primary concern."<sup>33</sup>

To serve and care for another person with biblical hospitality means a foundational understanding that mankind is made in the image of God, that we are made to love God with everything, love our neighbor as ourselves, and showing hospitality is a mark of a true Christian. Beginning in the Old Testament and carrying on into the New Testament, you find stories ungirded by these biblical foundations. The moments and words Jesus shared with people established that biblical hospitality is about how you see and respond to someone, how you welcome that person, and how you care for him or her while they are your guest.

<sup>33</sup> Barton, et al, *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, 625.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Jason Young is an author and speaker. He can help maximize your leadership and reclaim the art of hospitality in your organization. He has worked with leaders at Ford Motor Company, Life Church, Chick-fil-A, North Point Ministries, Bayside Church, Gorilla Glue and others.

Jason has an earned doctoral degree and has written five books. He also enjoys sharing his engaging conversations with respected leaders through the Catch Fire podcast.

Jason likes to read, collaborate on new ideas with friends, and hang out with his family.

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