

## The Best-kept Secret for Stewardship?

by Dr. Ed Kruse

“I dream of a church where everyone’s needs are felt and met, and every Sunday is a family reunion.”<sup>1</sup> Some think hospitality in a theater or church is smiling as a greeter hands out programs. Many claim their church is “a friendly church,” though they talk to their friends, not to the guests. Who welcomes strangers? Does it matter? Our hope is that you and your church will answer those questions.

Hospitality is the stewardship centerpiece for [www.HealthierChurch.org](http://www.HealthierChurch.org), a coaching service for churches to become “Unstoppable.”<sup>2</sup> Hospitality is caring for and welcoming every stranger, giving her or him warmth from the cold, comforting the needy, and providing much-needed food for the hungry. Hospitality is intimately connected to our relationship to God and His love for us and others. Hospitality is a spiritual gift. Hospitality fulfills the God-given need of the giver to give.<sup>3</sup> Hospitality builds up the body of Christ and glorifies God. It is living into God’s love on the ground.

I am moved by the hospitality of Jesus. Even when Jesus suffered the most, He reached out to one of the criminals on the cross, and gave him a home in heaven, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” Then, as He was dying, He arranged a home for his mother, “Woman, behold your son,” and then He reached out and asked the disciple John, “Behold Your mother,”<sup>4</sup> the ultimate hospitality called stewardship.

On the one hand, the lack of hospitality can shut the church doors. The lack of hospitality is one of the worst stewardship behaviors a church could have. If your church is a friendly church, you don’t need to be defensive and talk about it in apathy, uncaring, insincerity, glad-handing, and shallow formality. Failure to notice an opportunity for hospitality is loveless.”<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, do you notice people on the fringes of a room and go over to visit with them? Do you notice when someone hasn’t spoken in a group and ask them what they’re thinking? Simply put, do you notice the needs of others? Do you notice when someone is lost by seeing it in their eyes? Do you notice when someone is alone, and you help them belong? If so, **you may have the Spirit-led spiritual gift of hospitality.**

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<sup>1</sup> Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, MN, and Robert Schuller, former pastor of Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California

<sup>2</sup> “Unstoppable” is the operative word all congregations are to embody, as Christ loved, and we, through the Holy Spirit, help churches become more God-centered than “organized religion.” The church is the body of Christ. Spiritual gifts are the heart of our stewardship as part of God’s church.

<sup>3</sup> This was the way we were created, in the image of God, with the need of the giver to give.

<sup>4</sup> John 19:25-27 is amazing to me that Jesus gave hospitality to others while He most painfully dying.

<sup>5</sup> Ed Kruse, [Unwrap Your Gifts and Use Them](#), p. 46

HealthierChurch.org<sup>6</sup> regards hospitality as connected to the heart of stewardship. Hospitality is the centerpiece for “Churches and Communities Together.”<sup>7</sup> Hospitality is the first indication of caring-stewardship and in Christ Jesus and hospitality is the hallmark of any congregation, and that makes it an unstoppable church.

Unstoppable churches have two main characteristics: 1) mission interpretation, and 2) hospitality. These stewardship behaviors are integrated into all ministries of the congregation for all interaction. Hospitality is spiritual gift that is given by the Holy Spirit to give our lives to others and to Christ Jesus,<sup>8</sup> not just a “Welcome” sign or a Hospitality Committee, though the possibilities of exercising hospitality are life-changing possibilities.

Jesus told the organizers of a wedding banquet, “Drop what you’re doing and go out to the street and “compel them to come in,”<sup>9</sup> no excuses. The verb “compel,” is insistent. A youth worker wrote a catchy refrain to the wedding banquet parable, “*I cannot come to the banquet, don’t trouble me now, I have married a wife, I have bought me a cow. I have fields and commitments that cost a pretty sum, I pray, have me excused, I cannot come.*”<sup>10</sup> 😊

A professor connects hospitality with stewardship, “Whatever it takes for us to meet the other person’s need Our hospitality and stewardship are verified so totally that the people who receive our hospitality ask us if we can teach them hospitality in their lives! This is a good devotion to start a church council.<sup>11</sup> Here are some “genuine hospitality questions.” Share these hospitality questions in the love of Jesus:

1. How well do we notice hospitality in what God is doing through the church?
2. How might we behave hospitably in church meetings?
3. How do we reflect hospitality when we reframe conflict in church?
4. How does our church hospitality motivate others to be hospitable?
5. How well do we connect hospitality with each other, growing in giving?
6. How does our hospitality stimulate others to participate in God’s mission to reconcile the world to Himself, and to others?

Is hospitality the best-kept secret for churches? You decide. This is not taking a class in a school. You already have the capacity because the Holy Spirit is already in your heart through baptism. Share hospitality stories with others in your home, your church, and your community. We can all grow in spiritual maturity, God-given witnessing, church and

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<sup>6</sup> HealthierChurch.org is a non-profit coaching service for churches in the United States and Canada, regardless of size or tribe. We notice churches that under-function, are stuck or stagnant, and want to become Unstoppable.

<sup>7</sup> One of the 12 Genuine Questions that characterize an Unstoppable Church.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Peter 4:9-10, Roman 12:9-13, Matthew chapter 25

<sup>9</sup> Luke 14:23

<sup>10</sup> Richard Koenicke, who also wrote the faith-song, “Christ Is Changing Everything.”

<sup>11</sup> Patrick Keifert, A seminary professor wrote [Welcoming the Stranger](#). It is excellent for council devotions.

community-belonging, giving and growing – this is hospitality-stewardship of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, it does matter who welcomes the stranger. Hospitality matters.