

“Mastering the Fine Art of Hospitality”

by Lisa Reed

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Merriam-Webster defines being hospitable as: a generous and cordial reception of guests, and promising or suggesting generous and friendly welcome.

Hospitality Away from Home:

When I reflect on the words from Leviticus 19, I am reminded of a time when I was working at Olin Health Center @ Michigan State University and I was asked to attend a week-long training on a new computer product (IDX) for the MSU Health team. The training was being held in Burlington, Vermont, and just to set the scene, I will take you back to the year 2000, when our nation was a little less guarded and we were all a little more hospitable.

For the entire week my “training team” consisted of several customers of the program and IDX employees who were attending from across the nation, to become more familiar with the product. During one table conversation I found a “Canadian” friend with a mutual interest in history and exploring historic grave sites and cemeteries.

Near the end of the week, my new friend - Joan asked if I would like to come to her home for dinner that evening and possibly explore a cemetery or two near her home (which was on the US/Canadian border in St. Armand, Quebec). Of course, I accepted since I had been staying in a hotel for a week, and I had never been to Quebec! I probably should now add that one of our other IDX teammates 25-year old (Adam from Texas) asked if he could come too, since he needed a change of scenery and hadn't been to Quebec, either.

With this being the age of no cell phones, I instructed my passenger (Adam) to read the directions we received from Joan, while I drove my MSU rental car through a county border crossing (Morse's Line), into Quebec. As Joan described, she lived in the first house on the left, just past the US/Canadian border. I should mention here, that as we crossed the border into Canada the border guards said “Welcome to Canada”.

After receiving a brief tour of Joan's home, we (Joan and I) drove to a very creepy Canadian cemetery (in the dark), and after I got over the fear of being murdered, it was quite cool. We visited two old country cemeteries and returned to Joan's home to find Adam and Joan's husband chuckling about how awkward it was for Joan's husband to arrive home and find a strange man in his living room. We had a lovely dinner with Joan and her husband (a University of Montreal professor) and we promised to stay in touch.

As Adam and I were leaving, Joan instructed us let the US border patrol know where we had been and to only answer what we were asked, as the border guards were not as friendly on the US side. Of course, I did not follow that direction well and quickly learned that the US border guards were “definitely not friendly” and that they consider describing your evening to be grounds for detaining you while they verify your story.

Adam and I arrived safely back to our hotel, where I profusely apologized for the crazy evening and I think he said “yeah, yeah”. Several years later, I ran into Adam at a conference, where he was manning an IDX booth, and he introduced me as that cool lady that

drove him to Canada for dinner, and where he briefly got detained at the border. He declared that it was an awesome experience!

I would like to say that I have kept in touch with my friend from Quebec, but I can't. But, I can say that whenever I hear someone mention Quebec or Vermont, I am reminded of my first experience with Canadian Hospitality. Which, is the same hospitality that I continue to experience when visiting our daughter in Newfoundland. As a rather funny example, when we walk the streets of St. Johns, Newfoundland, everyone says "hello" and if you venture anywhere a crosswalk or even look like you are crossing the street; all traffic stops. This form of hospitality and civility is very refreshing, and makes me yearn for more.

Hospitality at Home:

When I told Molly what I was speaking on, she said that our own family has had many examples of giving and receiving hospitality. She reminded me of just a few:

- Like, the time she invited a classmate from HS (and his family) to our Thanksgiving, because they hadn't planned on celebrating that year. We have always believed in inviting those with no place to go to our celebration, but I later explained to Molly that a 20-minute notice wasn't quite enough. Incidentally, what Pat and I later called our "Thanksgiving Disaster" must have been something else to that family, as we saw one of the young men who dined with us several months later, and he told us that our Thanksgiving was awesome!
- Molly also asked that I include her experience with how a "village of people" provided hospitality to her while at Michigan Tech. Molly became quite ill with a respiratory infection and called because she was too sick to get groceries and she had no food. So, I made two calls: one to the local grocery store in Houghton, where an employee ran my credit card for \$50, and she shopped for "college student food" and cough medication, which she then delivered to one of Molly's friends in the parking lot for pick up.
- After hanging up with the grocery store employee, I called one of the professor's wives that Molly had been babysitting for, and I explained that Molly was ill and I asked if she could possibly check on Molly for me. Not only, did she check on Molly, but she called the other mothers that had been using Molly as a babysitter and they all cooked her meals and provided wellness "check-ins" for the next week.

I could provide you many examples of hospitality and how it takes a village to raise a family, but I don't believe that this is unique to my family.

Hospitality at Church:

When I look around this place, I see many examples of what Luke tells us about hospitality:

- I see those that help to build/restore homes for Habitat for Humanity
- I see those providing and serving meals for grieving families
- I see those who provide monthly food donations and their time to the Grand Ledge Food Bank
- I see those that volunteer for Blessings in a Backpack and the Red Cross
- I see those providing a Christian education and fellowship for our youth
- I see those Walking for Hunger

- **I see those serving on boards and committees, and I see the many, who always say “yes” when asked**

In closing, I see a church family that when they give a feast, they invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. I see a church family that masters the fine art of hospitality.