

# Stewardship Forum

## An evangelical alliance Partnership for Change

### Stewardship Tools for Individuals : Lifestyle Issues

**Title: Ungrudging Hospitality - our privilege and duty**

**Author: Mary Archer**

In **1 Peter 4.7** the Apostle Peter believes that the end of all things is near, and he exhorts those who read his letter to keep sane and sober for their prayers. Above all they need to hold unflinching their love for one another... and to practise hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. He continues: "As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." The possible end of all things calls not for isolation from the world, but renewed prayer, love and hospitality.

The word hospitality in Greek is *xenophilia*. We are familiar with *xenophobia*, the fear of strangers. Here the thought is the love of strangers. The early church would have not survived without hospitality. Travelling apostles had to find a place to stay. Inns were expensive, often flea-ridden and notoriously immoral. Peter stayed with Simon, a tanner (**Acts 10.6**); Paul and his company lodged with Mnason, an elderly disciple of Cyprus (**Acts 21.16**). There is much encouragement given to hospitality in the Bible, for instance in **Romans 12.13** ("practice hospitality"); a bishop or overseer should be hospitable (**1 Timothy 3.2**); "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (**Hebrews 13.2**)

Some have this quality more than others, but all of us play our part. One of our church members is Mary, an elderly widow. She said she was tired of making a cup of tea just for herself! She opened her home to overseas students for fellowship, Bible study and some refreshment. As many as twenty people meet in her house every Monday night and other church members strengthened Mary's hand. She said she has been blessed on her own soul by what she sought to do. She gets telephone calls and letters from all over the world! We have always kept 'open house', which is fine as long as you also keep some privacy for your family. Ex-prisoners, alcoholics, home and overseas students, student's wives at Spurgeon's College, young people either for a meeting after church or to share a meal with us.

Some young people have never seen the inside of a Christian home: the literature lying around, the Bible text calendar on the wall, the love, faith, prayers and joy persuaded some of them to commit their lives to Christ. One of our home-grown students heard the call of God to serve Him overseas and she did so in Senegal, Africa.

Clearly, the Lord Jesus was dependent on others for shelter and a meal. Martha and Mary at Bethany, and Simon the leper spring immediately to mind. We read in Acts 16 that in Philippi the first convert was Lydia, a seller of purple. She first opened her heart to the Lord and then her home to the missionaries: "Come to my house and stay" she said to Paul and his friends. "And she prevailed upon us" writes Luke who was one of them. In one of his parables Jesus speaks of the reward for those he calls his "sheep": "I was a stranger and you took me in." As

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part of our stewardship of the Lord's resources entrusted to us, let us practise hospitality ungrudgingly, as expression of our faith and love.

**About the author** – Mary Archer is a wife and mother who has actively ministered along her husband Revd Bob Archer to Baptist congregations God called them to and to the students of Spurgeon's College in London. Mary and Bob are now retired and live in Kent.