



Overcoming Hospitality Hangups

by Leslie Bennett

In an informal poll of women's ministry leaders:

- 26% said they didn't have enough time to clean and prepare to practice hospitality.
- 16% responded that comparison with other women is a hindrance.
- 12% simply felt inadequate.
- Others mentioned not having enough money or a large enough space to host others.

Do you hear the word hospitality and immediately tune out? Perhaps you believe it requires a special kind of woman—and you don't fit that mold. The true heart of hospitality is not about you: *your* gifting, *your* personality, *your* home, or *your* ability to whip up memorable meals. **It's about the gospel.** You get to welcome others because Christ has welcomed you.

To help you overcome common hospitality hangups, we've gathered tips from friends in the [Revive Our Hearts Ministry Leader Facebook group](#) to equip you to extend hospitality in the unique ways that only you can!

HANGUP #1: NOT ENOUGH TIME TO CLEAN AND PREPARE

- How clean does your home need to be? Not as clean as you might think! For everyday hospitality to happen, we need to lower the standard of perfection. Light a clean-scented candle and dim the lighting to conceal the stray dust bunnies. Cue the soft music. Keep cleaning wipes handy to make a quick swipe on bathroom surfaces. One woman quipped, "Only the first person who arrives at your home sees how not-so-perfectly-clean it is. The remainder of the guests will assume that it just got messy!"
- People feel more relaxed in a home that isn't picture-perfect. One woman likes to say, "My dirt is clean dirt since I cleaned a couple of days ago!" Families will appreciate that they don't have to be too worried that their child may mess up something.
- Make it a habit at the end of each day to spend 10 minutes tidying up your main living areas so friends and neighbors know they can drop by on short notice (and you won't fret).

- Minimize cleanup by using colorful, seasonal-inspired paper plates and napkins. After your guests leave and it's time to clean up, don't think you must decline if someone offers to stay afterward to help. It's okay to accept help. Your guests will appreciate the chance to pitch in.
- Try your hand at batch cooking. Crockpot recipes, one-dish casseroles, or soups can be easily doubled and frozen. Complete the meal with a bagged salad and frozen rolls. To keep sweet treats on hand, scoop cookie dough into balls. Freeze them on a cookie sheet then transfer to a zip bag until ready to use.
- Sometimes we never get around to doing the things we want to do. So rather than waiting for the perfect time, go ahead and schedule a date on your calendar.

HANGUP #2: LACK OF MONEY AND SPACE

- Invite someone to meet for a "dutch treat" lunch after church. That's a quirky way of saying each person pays his or her own way.
- Ask a friend or co-worker to bring a bag lunch and meet up at a local park.
- Plan a playdate with another mother at a playground and provide snacks for the kids.
- If you are a baker, hospitality may look like baking bread or cookies and delivering them with a note or Scripture verse.
- Giving hugs, providing a listening ear, inviting a new person to join your group, welcoming women who feel left out, or praying with someone who's lonely or hurting costs nothing but each is a meaningful way to extend the heart of hospitality.

HANGUP #3: FEELINGS OF COMPARISON OR INADEQUACY

- Stock your pantry with muffin or cookie mixes, chips and salsa, popcorn, hot teas, coffee, lemonade mix, or sparkling water. You'll have a beverage and a sweet or savory snack to serve in thirty minutes or less.
- Food doesn't have to be fancy to be enjoyable and nutritious. Serve foods that are easy to prepare like cheese boards, fruit, taco bar, baked potato bar, or a sandwich station.
- If you aren't naturally outgoing and talkative, invite an extroverted friend whenever you open your home. She can help carry the conversation and make people feel comfortable.
- Does your home have an outdoor space? Try inviting someone over for coffee and conversation on the porch.
- If you're concerned about carrying the conversation among people who don't know each other well, create conversation cards. Allow guests to take turns drawing a card and answering a question about themselves. A Google search will help you develop questions that are right for the occasion.

BONUS: EASY RECIPES TO TRY

Creamy Crockpot White Chicken Chili

Serves 6

8+ ounces of diced chicken
4 cans of great northern or navy beans, drained
4 cups chicken broth
2 cups of water
1 - 4 ounce can diced green chiles
1 medium yellow onion, chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced
2 tsp. cumin
1 tsp. coriander
1.5 tsp. oregano
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper

Place all ingredients in the crockpot. Cook 4–5 hours on low. Serve with crushed tortilla chips, sour cream, and shredded cheddar cheese on top. You can also add sliced avocado or sliced jalapeños.

Strombolis

Serves 6 (This recipe can easily be doubled.)

1 lb. ground beef
1 T. finely chopped onion
½ cup tomato sauce
½ cup ketchup
2 T. parmesan cheese
½ tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. fennel seed
⅛ tsp. oregano
Garlic spread
6 kaiser rolls
6 slices mozzarella cheese

Brown beef and onion, stirring frequently to break up meat. Add next six ingredients; cook for 20 minutes. Split rolls. Spread 1 teaspoon of garlic spread on the top half of each roll. Divide meat mixture evenly on the bottom half of each roll and top with 1 slice of mozzarella cheese. Close sandwiches with bun top. Wrap individually in foil and place on a baking pan. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Heat sandwiches for 15 minutes or until cheese melts.

Garlic Spread: Blend in a small bowl 2 T. softened butter, ¼ tsp. garlic powder, and ½ tsp paprika.

Cream Cheese Wonton Cups

1 lb. ground sausage
8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1 can Rotel
1 package wonton wrappers

Cook the sausage, stirring to crumble. Drain the grease. Mix in cream cheese and Rotel. Spray a muffin tin with cooking spray. Place a wonton wrapper into each cup in the muffin tin and press down to form a cup. Fill wonton wrappers with sausage mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 12–14 minutes.

Million Dollar Dip

8 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
1½ cups mayonnaise
½ cup real bacon bits, divided (Optional: warm 6 slices of pre-cooked bacon and crumble)
½ cup slivered almonds (Optional: toast in a saucepan over medium-low heat until lightly golden, approximately 5–7 minutes; allow to cool)
4 green onions, sliced thin and divided
¼ tsp. garlic powder
⅛ tsp. cayenne pepper

Combine cheddar cheese and mayonnaise in a mixing bowl until smooth. Fold in bacon and green onions (reserve some of each for the topping), almonds, garlic, and cayenne. Cover and chill for a minimum of 1 hour in the refrigerator. Top with remaining onions and bacon. Serve with butter crackers or bagel chips.



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