

The Hospitality Commands. By Alexander Strauch. Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1993. 64 pp. Paper, \$5.95.

Alexander Strauch has written the definitive book on biblical hospitality. In a mere 53 pages (Study Guide and Notes, pp. 54-64), he nails down the often-neglected topic of hospitality. Strauch begins by describing hospitality as “A Missing Crown Jewel” (pp. 5-8). He rightly suggests that believers have missed out on many benefits that come from being hospitable. In Ch. 2, Strauch insists that the primary reason Christians don’t intentionally practice hospitality is due to a failure to properly understand Christian brotherhood (pp. 9-19). As we recognize the importance of brotherly love (John 13:34b-35; Rom 12:10; 1 Cor 13:1-3; 1 Thess 4:9-10; 1 Pet 1:22; 4:8; 1 John 3:14, 16b; 4:21), Strauch believes we will seek to become more hospitable. His words are both convincing and convicting: “Hospitality fleshes out love in a uniquely personal and sacrificial way. Through the ministry of hospitality, we share our most prized possessions. We share our family, home, finances, food, privacy, and time...Through the ministry of hospitality, we provide friendship, acceptance, fellowship, refreshment, comfort and love in one of the richest and deepest ways possible for humans to understand. Unless we open the doors of our homes to one another, the reality of the local church as a close-knit family of loving brothers and sisters is only a theory” (p. 17).

In Ch. 3, Strauch uses four lines of evidence to argue that hospitality is “A Launching Pad for the Gospel” (pp. 20-31). (1) Hospitality was the practice of the early church and served as an effective means of evangelism (Acts 5:42; 10:24; 20:20; 28:23). (2) Jesus accepted hospitable invitations from others and used these opportunities to talk about spiritual things (Mark 2:16; Luke 15:1-2; 19:1-10). (3) The home served as a refuge for itinerant evangelists and teachers (Matt 10:9-11; Luke 10:7-16). The following examples of Christian hospitality are provided: Simon the Tanner, Lydia, Philemon, and two different men named Gaius (see Rom 16:23; 3 John 5-8). (4) There are great rewards for generous hospitality (3 John 7-10). Of particular interest to this reviewer were the personal, educational, and eternal rewards that it affords children who are in the home (p. 30).

The best section of this book is Ch. 4: “New Testament Commands to Practice Hospitality” (pp. 32-48). The six key NT passages that pertain to hospitality are considered (Rom 12:13a; 1 Pet 4:9; Heb 13:2a; 3 John 8; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:10c). In keeping with his others works (e.g., *Biblical Eldership*, *The New Testament Deacon*, and *Men and Women*), Strauch does a masterful job handling the biblical text. His conclusions are summed up in fourteen helpful principles at the conclusion of the chapter (pp. 47-48). The single most important principle is Number 3: “God requires every Christian to pursue hospitality. Hospitality is His command, not an option” (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:1-2).

This exceptional book concludes with a chapter providing sixteen helpful hints on how to practice hospitality (pp. 49-53). Of special note is Number 14: “Ask your church leaders to teach on hospitality. (When have you heard a message on hospitality?) To be effective at hospitality, we all need to teach or hear the doctrine of Christian hospitality and love regularly. We easily forget, so we need to be persistently and consistently exhorted” (p. 53).

Strauch’s work is thoroughly biblical and terribly convicting. Every pastor, elder, and Christian leader, should read and heed *The Hospitality Commands*. Due to its size, this book is a great tool to use in staff and/or elder meetings. If the contents of this book are implemented, the state of the American church will be revolutionized one home at a time.