

Reflections

Grilled Cheese, Weed Salad and Leftover Stew

Have you ever noticed how often Paul thanks those who gave him fellowship and support during his travels and ministry? For example, he thanked Gaius “whose hospitality and the whole church here enjoy” (Romans 16:23 NIV). and Publius “who welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days” (Acts 28:7 NIV).

Paul then challenges us to pass that hospitality forward. “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (Romans 12:12-13 NIV). My family has been blessed by people who practiced hospitality. In fact, hospitality led to my dad being baptized 35 years after my mother joined the church.

One of the finest Sabbath dinners I ever had was a grilled cheese sandwich and tomato soup. Early in our ministry a young couple in our new church invited my family—which included our three small children—home for



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*“Be joyful in hope,
patient in affliction,
faithful in prayer.
Share with the
Lord’s people
who are in need.
Practice hospitality”
(Romans 12:12-13 NIV).*



Sabbath dinner. When we arrived at their home, cheese sandwiches were in the frying pan and tomato soup was warming in a pot.

They made no excuses for not having a fancy entrée, array of vegetables, and choice of dessert. They were simply showing hospitality and love by inviting the pastor's family for a meal. And what wonderful fellowship we enjoyed.

I had other simple meals in members' homes. One elderly widow explained that the salad she was serving came from pokeweeds in her yard. She said that if you let them grow too long, they would become poisonous. I remember looking at the salad on my plate and trying to determine whether the weeds looked young or old. Sensing my nervousness, she assured me that they were young and safe to eat. Another hostess told us that she had thrown all her leftovers in a pot, and we were going to have leftover stew. My wife and I felt blessed to be invited into their home and into their hearts no matter what was served.

Another outstanding example of hospitality and love occurred when a retired couple in our church invited our young children to their home for Sabbath dinner so my wife and I could have a quiet Sabbath afternoon to share together.

Now, the story about my dad. His last job before retiring as a process engineer was at Gulfstream, a manufacturer of premier private jet planes. On their first Sabbath in Savannah, my mother asked Dad if he would drive her to church and pick her up afterward because she feared getting lost. When Dad noticed how far it was, he said he might as well stay and go to church and then bring her home.

After church, a couple invited them home for lunch. Mom looked at Dad and he agreed. My dad often said that he could eat any of the fake meats provided there was enough ketchup.

The next Sabbath, Mom asked to be chauffeured again, and Dad again decided to stay for church. A different couple approached them and invited them home for lunch. Two Sabbaths in

a row they were invited home by strangers. What are the odds of that happening in your church? During lunch the couple mentioned their friends were getting together to play games that night and invited them to come. Soon all my dad's friends were Savannah church members. When the church had an evangelistic series, Dad went because his friends were there.

One day my mom called and said, "Dad wants to ask you a question." His question was, "Ed, would you come down to Savannah next Sabbath to baptize me?" When I stood in the baptistry with my dad, I thanked the church members for their hospitality, for welcoming him into the *fellowship* of the church months before inviting him into the *membership* of the church. Their hospitality and friendship opened my dad up to hearing the good news of God's love and grace.

I thanked the church members for their hospitality, for welcoming my father into the fellowship of the church months before inviting him into the membership of the church.

Three of my favorite Bible heroes are Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. You may not have any idea who they are, but Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16, "such men deserve recognition." Why? "because they have supplied what was lacking from you. For they refreshed my spirit and yours." Amid a seemingly not caring church, three men offered Paul the fellowship and support he needed.

Will you join my wife and me in offering love, support, fellowship, and hospitality, even if it's only an invitation to our homes and lives for grilled cheese, pokeweed salad and leftover stew? Who knows, we might even be entertaining angels unaware. "Some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it (Hebrews 13:2 NIV). ■

Spicy Avocado and Mango Salad with Black Beans

Serves 2

- 1 lime, zest and juice
- 1 small mango, peeled and chopped (see tip below)
- 1 small avocado, chopped
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 red chili, seeded and chopped
- ½ red onion, chopped
- ½ small bunch cilantro, chopped
- 1 (14 oz.) can black beans, drained and rinsed

Put lime zest and juice, mango, avocado, tomatoes, chili, and onion in a bowl, stir in cilantro and beans. Enjoy!



CHEF'S TIP

Slice mango lengthwise close to the seed, then chop the slices.

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