

bless this meal

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

By Ken Camp



"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help?"
(1 John 3:17, NRSV).

Growing up as a native Texan, I thought I understood Southern hospitality. Then I traveled to the Global South, where Latin American and African brothers and sisters in Christ taught me what it really means.

South of the Red River, hospitality involves enjoying abundance together. South of the Rio Grande, it involves sharing with others whatever resources are available — however meager they may be in our eyes.

In East Texas, hospitality means none of the invited guests — nor the host and hostess — will leave the table hungry. In East Africa, it means everybody is invited to the table, and hungry hosts allow guests to fill their plates first.

Just as the good manners that characterize Southern hospitality include more than saying "yes, sir," "no, ma'am," "please," and "thank you," love involves more than flowery phrases and kind gestures to friends and family. Love requires sacrificial giving and helping others — particularly those who are most vulnerable and have the greatest need.

John the Elder understood that truth better than most. In 1 John 3:16-18, he makes it clear: We understand love by looking at what Jesus did for us.

He loved us so much, he gave his life. So, if we say we are Christ's followers and God's love is in us, we cannot hold back. If we see others in need, we cannot withhold what God has entrusted to us. We hold whatever we have in an open hand; we don't grip it in a clenched fist. Love demands giving.

Elsewhere in this chapter, John tells us our love for others shows we have passed from death to life. Tangible expressions of love—most clearly evident in our response to those who cannot repay our kindness — demonstrate whether we genuinely have entered into life in Christ.

We can make a difference. The Texas Baptist Hunger Offering supports ministries that feed people in crisis and funds development programs that help families and individuals rise from poverty.

Give to the Texas Baptist Hunger Offering. Respond to our neighbors in need throughout Texas and around the world. Hospitality requires it. Love demands it.

Ken Camp is managing editor of the Baptist Standard and a member of South Garland Baptist Church.

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