

**A Letter to Fathers, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 03070617**  
**Galatians 2:15-21 and Luke 7:36-50**  
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How would you like to be invited to someone's home for, let's say an evening of cards? Or, maybe to watch the Superbowl on TV? You have been looking forward to this opportunity for a long time. You arrive, and your host, after welcoming you, says, "You sure are dressed sloppy. Your shirt doesn't match your slacks." You probably wouldn't feel very good.

You would fumble around for a good retort like, "I wore my shirt in honor of the Atlanta Falcons." But down underneath, you would wonder why you came. No matter how lavish the snacks, or magnificent the decor, you would not feel very good about your host.

Simon the Pharisee was not a good host. He may have had a magnificent home and threw a lavish dinner, but he failed to be the "host with the most" on four counts: he did not provide his guests with water to wash their feet which was a customary welcoming procedure in the Middle East; he did not welcome his guests with an embrace; he did not anoint the heads of his guests with oil; but, worse than that, he was critical of his guests. He criticized the woman from the streets and he criticized Jesus for allowing her to touch him. Simon and the other pharisees taught that good Jews did not associate with women from the streets, tax collectors, or homeless people.

We do not know what made this woman a sinner. Many preachers have traditionally thought of her as a prostitute, that it could have been Mary Magdalene who is mentioned a few verses later, but we really do not know who she was. *We don't know*, but evidently the *whole town* knew. She had a reputation. She was the kind of woman everyone talked about. Simon the Pharisee, the host, criticized Jesus for allowing this woman to touch him.

The religious leaders like Simon the Pharisee did not think much of this woman, but Jesus did. He used her as an example of love. He said God forgave her because of the love she demonstrated.

Imagine what this woman must have felt like when she heard those words of Jesus, "Your sins are forgiven." For most of her adult years, she had been shunned. When others saw her coming, they would cross the street to get away from her. She went to Simon's home to see Jesus, feeling worthless, but she left the home feeling exhilarated. Jesus forgave her, and accepted her demonstrations of love and care.

Do you see what happens when we to forgive others? Do you see the power we have to help others feel good about themselves? Like Simon, we can offer hospitality or judgment. Which will we use? It is important to be a good host.

How many of us men or fathers are good hosts? We have a lot of power, you know. How do we use that power in our homes? I do not mean asking our wives to cook dinner for the boss. How do we use our power to make others feel good-- to feel welcome in our homes? How do we host our children? Do we make time for them? Lot's of time for them? Is it fun for them to bring their friends to our homes?

I confess that too often, I would offer judgment to my daughters, rather than hospitality. After I judged, I did not feel good about it. Do we men, fathers, provide judgment or hospitality?

I have a letter to fathers.

Dear fathers:

Congratulations for being a father. Of course, it doesn't take much effort on your part to bring

a new life into the world, so congratulations more for sticking around and being a responsible father who provides love and support.

Do you know how much power you have, within your household, to be a force for good: to help others see the love of God? Do you offer hospitality to all who enter, most of all to the little ones who live there?

But, dear fathers, your power goes far beyond that. You can be a force for good in this world by showing your children what it means to work in partnership as you honor their mother with joint decision-making and joint responsibility-sharing. Do you lead your children by example, rather than by command? Do you show them how important church is by *taking* your family to church?

On Sunday morning, whom do you honor? Do you honor the sports team, or a weekend getaway home, or God? Do you let your children know that it is more important to be in Sunday school than on the soccer field?

If you expect respect from your children, it is important that you show respect to them , but it is also important to show respect to the one who is greater than all of us, our creator.

Do you let them know that it is as important to be at church on time as it is to be at school on time?

And, in your parenting, do you let your children know how important it is to be a good host: to offer hospitality to others, others who are different than you? Do you make others feel good about themselves by offering forgiveness?

Dear fathers, you have in your hands a precious treasure. Treat the members of your household in the same way your heavenly father treats you: with a vast unconditional love which is patient and kind, not irritable or resentful-- a love which bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

With sincerity,

Dan