

LESSON 6:

BE HOSPITABLE TO ONE ANOTHER

As love is a defining characteristic of God's family (John 13:34-35; 1 John 2:7-11), so is showing hospitality. In fact, the word "hospitality" in Greek comes from two words that mean "love" and "stranger." So, it involves love/care/generosity shown to strangers and guests. Hospitality is a critical component of how God wants members of His family to interact.

1 PETER 4:9

This command is positioned between two related commands (constant love and service, vv. 8, 10). It is not optional nor a suggestion for God's people. God wants all His people looking for ways to show love, care, and generosity toward strangers and guests who are Christians! In Bible times, travelers were often at the mercy of hospitality being shown (Luke 10:4-8). Sadly, hospitality can be lost in modern times of hotels and restaurants. Still, God's people must watch for opportunities to be hospitable and not allow these conveniences to become excuses. Then, although showing hospitality can be costly, time-consuming, require effort, etc., God's command requires hospitality to be shown without complaining (i.e. secret displeasure)!

GENESIS 18:1-8

Here is an ancient example of hospitality being shown by Abraham and Sarah. Although the visitors turned out to be Jehovah (v. 1; perhaps Jesus) and two angels (19:1), Abraham does not appear to have known this when he began serving them. Notice that Abraham interrupted his rest during the heat of the day to show this generosity toward the travelers. He attended to their needs personally (rather than having one of his servants do such). He provided water for their feet, food, drink, and a place to rest, despite the time, energy,

and cost involved. Furthermore, he quickly provided such things for them (alongside his wife Sarah).

HEBREWS 13:1-3

The Hebrew writer makes an obvious reference to the example of Abraham and Sarah's hospitality to encourage Christian hospitality today. God views the hospitality they showed as something that must not be neglected by any of His people! By being so committed to hospitality, Abraham and Sarah unknowingly showed hospitality to God and angels. Although we may never physically show hospitality to God and angels in the way they did, this passage challenges us to recognize that you never know the good you may accomplish for the Lord or any of His servants (messengers) when you are committed to hospitality. In fact, Jesus teaches that doing good for other people is doing good for Him (Matthew 25:31-46)! Therefore, Christians must never neglect the opportunity to show hospitality, as it is an opportunity to show hospitality to Christ Jesus Himself and will matter on Judgment Day!

2 KINGS 4:8-11

The prophet Elisha would often pass through Shunem. This drew the attention of a prominent woman there to the point that she would invite the man of God to eat. As she noticed the frequency of Elisha's travel through that town and recognized him as a holy man of God, she and her husband even added on to their house so he would have a place to stay. They provided him with all that would be necessary – a bed, a table, a chair, a lamp, and some food! Although not being motivated by what they could receive, their association with Elisha resulted in some great blessings (vv. 12-17, 18-37). So it often goes whenever hospitality is selflessly shown to others: Those who show hospitality are often blessed through the hospitality as much or more than the others (e.g. encouragement, lasting example and influence on the family).

ROMANS 12:13

Christians must look after one another's needs. The characteristic of selflessness is critical for God's people so they develop the ability and concern to see what others need and actively look for ways to be generous and caring toward them (Galatians 6:10). Furthermore, God's expectation for His people to show hospitality is not just waiting for an opportunity to fall into their laps. Rather, He wants His people to pursue it (seek to show it). This requires keeping your eyes open for opportunities. This may be Christians who are passing through your town or Christians who live around you – and not just to those who are hospitable to you (Luke 14:12-14). Also, note this is required of those who will serve as elders (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).

ACTS 2:44-47

The early Christians took care of one another and spent time with one another. Think about the needs of many of these new Christians pictured in this text (perhaps due to their prolonged stay in Jerusalem). Notice that early Christians spent time with one another daily and tended to one another's needs. Although circumstances are different today, Christians must still be committed to the same. Showing hospitality/generosity (even to those who may not be strangers) provides great opportunities for many other things to happen within God's family beyond just meeting a physical need (e.g. developing closer relationships, learning one another's struggles/pains, recognizing opportunities to encourage and teach, etc.). God's family is not expected to assemble on Sundays as strangers who happen to worship together; but as people whose lives are deeply intertwined throughout the week!

CONCLUSION

Those who are part of God's family must be hospitable to one another. Each one should actively be looking for opportunities to show care and generosity toward other Christians, including Christians who are strangers. Although this requires sacrifices of time, money, energy, etc., it is a true blessing to both others and yourself when hospitality is shown without complaint!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What does the command of hospitality require of God's people?

What are some things hospitality will cost you?

What do you learn from the hospitality shown by Abraham and Sarah?

How does God apply the example of Abraham and Sarah to the hospitality He expects from Christians today?

How does showing hospitality to others impact Jesus?

What can be learned from the hospitality shown to Elisha?

What does it mean for Christians to pursue hospitality?

How does showing hospitality provide even greater opportunities beyond meeting physical needs?

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