

## Following Christ and Our Comfort Zone – Part 2 - Relationships and Hospitality

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to continue the thoughts I began last Lord's Day concerning the relationship of our "comfort zones" to our ability to follow Christ.
  - A. Comfort zone – "a place, situation, or level where someone feels confident and comfortable...the level at which one functions with ease and familiarity" ([www.Merriam-Webster.com](http://www.Merriam-Webster.com))
  - B. And, as we have seen, this "zone" may be acceptable to a point, but can also become a hindrance to our service to God!
  - C. So, again, I think it is important that we look at this subject.
2. What I want us to focus on today is how comfort zones must be addressed to have the kind of *relationships among Christians* and the show of *hospitality* that God demands of His people.
  - A. **Relationship** is defined as "the way in which two or more people, groups,...etc., talk to, behave toward, and deal with each other" ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com))
  - B. **Hospitality** means "to be given to generous and cordial reception of guests," visitors, and strangers ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)).
    - i. This definition almost sounds passive, as if one waits until approached to act.
    - ii. Biblically, however, **hospitality** is *active*, where one **seeks out** opportunities to be generous and friendly toward guests, visitors, and strangers.
  - C. Why we need to address these specific subjects is because:
    - i. God wants His people to have strong relationships and puts much emphasis on being hospitable toward one another as well.
    - ii. Our comfort zones tend to really affect us in these areas for various reasons.
3. So, today let's consider some attitudes and actions needed to improve relationships between us and improve our showing of hospitality.

### BODY:

#### **I. Our relationships in Christ must reflect God's relationship:**

- A. God's comforting of us means we must comfort one another (2 Cor. 1:3-4 – "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction **so that we will be able to comfort** those who are in any affliction **with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**").
- B. **God's acceptance of us** means we must accept one another (Rom. 15:1-3, 6-7 – "Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. <sup>3</sup> For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me...<sup>6</sup> so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, **accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us** to the glory of God.").
  1. We must bear with weaker brethren, **accepting** them for their good as Christ did for us.
    - a. Relationships with others cannot be about us, who we like, who we are comfortable with.
    - b. We must act for the good of others, which means choosing, as did Jesus, to open our lives to those outside our "circle," to people we are not so comfortable with.
  2. We do this so we can give unified praise and glory to God, as did Christ.
  3. If the holy and perfect God will do this at such great cost in Jesus, we have to put forth a lot more effort to accept and reach out to one another.
- C. **God forgiveness** must cause us to be kind and forgiving of one another (Eph. 4:31-32 – "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.").
  1. As mentioned in the last lesson, being in Christ requires more than putting evil away.

2. For, just as God has gone to unimaginable lengths to assure a relationship with us through Jesus, we must be willing to be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving to establish and nurture relationships with one another.
3. This involves doing so toward those that we may clash with in our personalities, etc., or even wronged us in the past.
4. We need to seek better relationships with them, find a reason to love them, and interact with them.

D. **God's welcoming of us into His family** must lead us to welcome one another into our lives.

1. We are Gentiles that have benefitted greatly from God's willingness to bring us into fellowship with Him and His people (Eph. 2:12-13, 17-19 – "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ... <sup>17</sup> And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; <sup>18</sup> for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household").
2. The effort we make to reach out to one another, to open our lives to one another, is going to be judged by the standard of God's work in Christ to reach out and bring us into His family.
3. That is something we really have to think about, especially concerning those we feel are "far" away from us for whatever reasons, people here we do not really associate with.

E. **God's love** must lead us to love one another.

1. God's choice to love us requires that we **choose** to love one another (1 John 4:9-11 – "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.").
2. God's choice was to love those living in opposition, rebellion, to Him, not just those he got along with, had much in common with (Rom. 5:8 – "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.").
3. Godly love is a choice exemplified in Christ that must...
  - a. Cause us to choose to love others as He has loved us (John 13:34-35 – "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, **even as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.").
  - b. Cause us to choose to have a sacrificial love toward our brethren (1 John 3:16 – "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.").
  - c. Cause us to step out of our comfort zone and open our lives to those that are different from us, those we do not seem to have much in common with besides Jesus.
4. What God has done and does for us is to be the motivation for how we approach our relationships with and service of one another.

## II. Reflecting God through hospitality

A. Hospitality is one of the best ways to show God's love to one another (Rom. 12:9-13 – "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; <sup>11</sup> not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; <sup>12</sup> rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, <sup>13</sup> contributing to the needs of the saints, **practicing hospitality**.").

1. Hospitality is included here in a list of **significant things**—hating evil, doing good, being devoted to brotherly love, giving preference to one another, being devoted to prayer, diligently serving the Lord, etc.

2. It does not seem to fit, except that God says it does!
  3. Just as we are not to wait for others to act for us to hate evil, do good, etc., we are to be proactive, to take the initiative in practicing hospitality, even for those who have not shown it to you, those you may not have much of a relationship with.
- B. Willing hospitality is part of our stewardship in the grace of God (1 Pet. 4:8-10 – “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Be hospitable to one another without complaint. <sup>10</sup> As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”).
1. Showing God’s grace in our lives involves using our gifts to serve one another, which includes *showing hospitality*.
  2. Note that hospitality is to be done *without complaining*.
    - a. I believe the Spirit says this because hospitality takes work, is often inconvenient, invades our privacy, and draws us out of ourselves and our comfortable world!
    - b. So, there is determination and effort involved in being hospitable as God commands.
- C. Some questions for your consideration:
1. Will you determine to actively seek better relationships with those here that are not in your circle?
    - a. This means taking the initiative to talk to and entertain your brethren.
    - b. This means choosing to be *uncomfortable* for a while that you might show love and *comfort* your brethren as God has shown to you his love and comforted you.
  2. Will you determine to open your life and home to others? (Hebrews 13:1-2 – “Let love of the brethren continue. <sup>2</sup> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.”).
    - a. A good way to ascertain the size of your comfort zone is to ask yourself how often you have opened your home to others, to your brethren, in the last month, year, etc.?
    - b. I am not talking about those within your circle. That is much easier. I am talking about those that require effort, those that you do not know, those that are different from you.
    - c. Note that it says to be hospitable to strangers.
      - i. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century there were not hotels, etc., and brethren travelling through, strangers if you will, had to depend on their brethren for hospitality.
      - ii. Also, in most congregations you have brethren that are basically strangers to you.
      - iii. If we cannot address the need for hospitality toward our brethren, how will we ever show hospitality to strangers?
  3. Will you commit to accepting the hospitality offered by your brethren?
    - a. I know the inconvenience and discomfort this may present.
    - b. I know everyone is tired, busy, has their own responsibilities, has their own friends.
      - i. We **must get beyond ourselves**, our comfort zones, and realize that we are hindering others from fulfilling their Christian duty if we are not willing to accept hospitality.
      - ii. It is just as much our responsibility to accept hospitality as it is to be hospitable!

CONCLUSION:

1. Surely, we can all agree that it is vital to our service to candidly examine our comfort zones, especially when it involves relationships and opening our lives to one another in hospitality.
2. Will you step up the challenge and determine to allow God’s love and commitment to you lead you to much greater love and commitment to your brethren?
3. Will you come to Christ in F-R-C-Bp?