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Blog

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Hospitality

Aude McKee
Knoxville, Tennessee

Suppose you were asked to name three or four things that are a great deal less prevalent today than a quarter of a century ago, what would you list? I suspect that hospitality would be named by most people. The oft used phrase, "What ever happened to . . . ?" could well be applied to hospitality and probably listed among the "lost arts." When I was a boy you could hear, "Come and go home with us" all around as you left the building, and people meant it.

As you think about it, the whole thing becomes sort of confusing. Why has it happened? Why are people less hospitable now? We have more in about every way to do with than people did years ago. More money, more time and labor saving devices, more foods that are prepared commercially and only need a few minutes in the microwave or need no preparation at all. But maybe this is our problem. When housewives had to have preparations made ahead of time, perhaps it was easier.

There have been other changes in society that have affected hospitality. During the depression years, people who were "down and out" knocking on your door was a common occurrence. I can't recall my mother ever turning anyone away. And I can't recall her ever saying, "I'll have to call someone from your home town to determine if you are worthy." We didn't have the bums and frauds like we have now. Those people weren't

asking for a handout so they could drive their Hudson or Packard to the next city.

Let's look at hospitality from the Bible viewpoint. The word is from a Greek word that means "love of strangers." Elders, if qualified, are "given to hospitality" (1 Tim. 3:2), but it is also a responsibility of all Christians. In Romans 12, we learn 'that a part of presenting our bodies a living sacrifice and being transformed by the renewing of our minds, is "distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (v. 13). To the Hebrew brethren, the writer said, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (13:2), and Peter pointed out that we should "use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Pet. 4:9). From these passages we learn some vital truths.. Hospitality must be vital to the ongoing of the local church - men are not qualified to be elders unless they are hospitable, being hospitable is a part of being a faithful Christian. Great opportunities and blessings are missed when we fail to practice hospitality, and hospitality must be extended with the same attitude of heart that motivates us to lay by in store on the 1st day of the week (2 Cor. 9:7).

There are abundant examples of hospitality to help us understand what sort of activity is involved. Abraham enter-

tained angels unaware of who they were in Genesis 18:1-8. In 1 Kings 17, a widow and her son took Elijah into their home and shared the little they had with him in his need. Elisha was the recipient of the hospitality of a Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:8-11. She and her husband prepared a place in their house with a stool, a table, a candlestick and a bed so he could stop and refresh himself. In Acts 2:44-45 and 4:34-35, the Judean Christians shared what they had with their brethren. Lydia, immediately after her conversion, "constrained" four gospel preachers to live in her house (Acts 16:14-15) - she literally begged them to make her house their headquarters. Onesiphorus had a "grip" on true hospitality. He helped Paul often, he was not ashamed of him even though he was a prisoner, and Paul didn't have to look for Onesiphorus - he looked for Paul so he might minister to his needs (2 Tim. 1:16-18).

Hospitality is something extended when it is needed. Every example given suggests this fact. It is also seen in the qualifications given for a widow to be enrolled in 1 Timothy 5:10. She (according to this word used but once in the New Testament) had to be a person who "lodged strangers" (KJV) or "showed hospitality to strangers" (NASV). We are not suggesting that Christians are to be together and enjoy each other's company (as well as food), only when a need exists. The "breaking bread from house to

Practical Chapters in the Bible

Romans 12:9-11

Points to Consider

1. Our Attitude and Actions Concerning Good and Evil
2. Our Attitude and Actions Concerning People

The Text:

Rom 12:9-21 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Our Attitude

Our attitude concerning good and evil

We are to _____ what is evil. This word carries with it the idea of totally detesting something. We should hate the evil as much as we hate the hell to which it leads!

John 2:13-17 *Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. 15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."*

Jesus _____ the sin being committed by the Jews. Notice that His actions showed the zeal he had for His father's house.

We are to cling to what is good. We are to be cemented to good things.

In verse 21 we find out that we are not to be _____ by evil. We are to overcome evil with _____.

How do we overcome evil with good?

You must _____ those who persecute you.

Matt 5:43-48 *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*

Jesus says that we are to _____ good to those that hate us. We are to _____ for those who spitefully use us and persecute us.

Rom 12:17-18 *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men... 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

You overcome evil with good by _____ your enemy when he is hungry. If your enemy is thirsty you are to _____ him a drink.

1 Sam 24:9-11 *And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'? 10 Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.' 11 Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you.*

David did not repay Saul's evil with evil. He _____ the king's life.

Our Attitude and Actions Concerning People

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor _____ preference to one another.

1 Sam 18:1-4 *Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2 Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. 3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.*

Jonathan gave _____ to David.

Phil 2:3-4 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

When we esteem others _____ than ourselves, we are giving preference to one another.

... distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

Acts 6:1-4 *Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*

Distributing to the needs of the Saints has been a trademark of _____ from the very beginning.

We are to be _____ to hospitality. The word "given" is the same word used when Paul says "I press towards the goal."

Acts 26:15 *So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'*

We are to be given to hospitality with the same _____ Paul was persecuting Jesus.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

As Christians we need to feel the emotions of others.

Luke 15:8-10 *Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' 10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

When a woman found a lost coin she called her friends together to _____ with her. Paul comes back to the idea of humility that he touched on in verse 3. Paul says that we should not set our mind on high things, but we should associate with the _____.

Matt 9:10-11 *10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"*

Jesus associated with people the Pharisees would have considered lowly.

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house" (Acts 2:46) probably relates to the sort of thing we enjoy so much, but we doubt this really pinpoints the real meaning of hospitality. Let me give some examples without calling names. A family in the Northeast lived close to the building. Several other families had to drive many miles for the Lord's Day assembly. The family near the building opened up their home so the other families would not have to make two long drives or else miss the evening worship. That is hospitality. During a meeting in another "mission area," a day service was planned. Usually at such gatherings, everyone in attendance would go to a restaurant at noon, but the preacher and his wife knew that one family attending would lack the financial resources to "eat out" and so they fed the entire group to keep from embarrassing the one family. That is hospitality. In a congregation in Florida, the meal list was posted for the visiting preacher. A widow and her grandson, who had both just recently obeyed the gospel, were among the first to put their names on the list. Then they began to face up to their problems. They only had two chairs and two plates, etc. So they had to go to a second-hand store and buy the things they needed to feed

the preacher. That's hospitality - not because the preacher needed that particular meal, but they needed to do their part! True hospitality grows out of love and concern. In another meeting, many years ago before the barrier between the races were broken down, an old black sister - the only one among the whites, as I recall - took the preacher aside and asked him if he would mind eating in her home. That is hospitality.

We usually don't need encouragement to visit with and eat with those who are near and dear, but what about those in the local congregation who are usually overlooked? Jesus taught along this line in Luke 14:12-14. We need to extend our hospitality to those in need. Occasionally there will be someone in physical need, but more often, in our experience, it is someone who is in need of spiritual assistance. There is hardly a congregation in the land but what has some neglected people in it. Stop and think of the ones in your local congregation who would benefit from your hospitality. Be sure they are included in the near future.

However, the hospitality Christians extend is not limited to those who are

members of the body of Christ. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men. . ." is the command of Galatians 6:10. The injunction of Hebrews 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers. . ." would certainly cause those not Christians to be the recipients of our hospitality, like a number of other responsibilities, is limited. First, we could not extend hospitality to false teachers. 2 John 9-11 makes it clear that to do so would make us a "partaker of his evil deeds." Also, we could not extend hospitality to a person too lazy to work. This prohibition is also a command in 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

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