

Women & More

Take Hospitality on the Road

May 8, 2014

The Apostle Paul in Colossians 1:6 “...*All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth.*” ***Since the day we heard it*** ...the fact that it was heard means that it was proclaimed—preached or taught. And the proclaiming of the gospel in churches and on radio, television and the internet will reach many. But many more will not darken the doors of the church or tune in—why should they? The director of a Christian school in Latvia recently shared in a 2010 Sunday night service that when she and her husband did not know God, **they did not miss him!** Until they became desperate and needy for help with their daughter—with a need they could not meet themselves—they had no reason to seek out God: They were doing just fine without him.

The gospel must go out into the highways and by-ways and be sprinkled like salt, and shined like a beacon, so that when people have needs, they will realize that we have the answer: Jesus Christ. And as ‘proclaimers’ we must carefully live what it is we proclaim, so that we will be asked “where we get our hope,” and “how we can be calm in the midst of chaos,” and “why it is that we can have love and joy, peace and patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control?” Colossians 4:5-6 “*Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity; Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*”

♥She was missing several teeth in strategic places and was disheveled, but she spoke to me as if I were her friend and pulled out a picture of her toddler granddaughter. Sitting up for her picture in a pastel plaid dress, the little girl had a banded topknot in her hair and a beautiful, and I mean beautiful, smile on her round face. We were in line at *Braums*, and it was Friday, April 30, 2010. I was on my way to Cal’s lot to help him shag a truck and some special “wheels” to Adair and stopped in for bread and a chocolate shake. The woman explained that this was her only grandchild and that she hoped it would be her last, because babies were so very expensive and they simply could afford “no more”.

The slender, equally disheveled young man at her side agreed and proudly told me that the little girl was his daughter—*angels unaware?* That’s what they were to me! I cannot know that for sure on this side of heaven, but Scripture says in Hebrews 13:2 “*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*” Do we think that our God might just send an angel or two disguised as disheveled and toothless to see how we might treat them—to see how hospitable we might be? It sounds just like Him to me!

It was a privilege and a joy to visit with them, and to be invited into this mother and son's personal joy of a baby girl and their plight of poverty. This is what it is to take hospitality on the road! And what was the question in this scenario? Would there be a witness to God's graciousness, to his listening ear and his caring heart? Someone has summed up this lesson for me in an internet presentation titled: *Twinkies and Root Beer*. "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. People come into our lives for a reason, a season, or a lifetime." (The whole story is on a separate sheet.)

♥It was Friday, May 7, 2010, and our neighborhood garage sale was underway. In early afternoon, a lady who turned out to be a physical therapist, came in to the garage looking and visiting amicably and then all of a sudden began sharing a situation in her extended family which was wearing her out and causing great grief. She asked if I knew what she could do about the situation. After learning that she was a believer, I got to pray with her and ask God to help her with the answers she needed from Him—to give her wisdom and to help her endure. This is a God-thing! And he does it all the time in the lives of his children—He points us out to those who need to know something about Him, and then he blesses us for being a blessing to others—hospitality on the road of life.

Examples of hospitality reaping *BLESSING* in *SCRIPTURE*:

- Genesis 18:1-8 **Abraham**, regarding the three men he saw standing near the LORD: ...let a little water be brought and wash your feet...rest...let me get you something to eat.
BLESSING from God: Abraham and Sarah were promised and given a son: Isaac.
- Joshua 2:1-7 **Rahab** for the spies from Shittim who came to her house: ...took the two men in and hid them and then misdirected the pursuing King's men.
BLESSING from God: Rahab and her family were spared death, and she became part of the lineage of Christ.
- 1 Kings 17:8-16 God sent **Elijah** to Zarepath—there He commanded a widow to: ...supply Elijah with food. She provided food to Elijah first—all she had—then for her and her son.
BLESSING from God: The flour and the oil did not run out.

- 2 Kings 4:8-10 The **woman of Shunem** for Elisha: ...urged Elisha to stay for a meal and prepared a small room on her roof for him to stay in whenever he passed through—with a bed, table, chairs and a lamp.
BLESSING from God: The Shunammite's son was restored to life.
- Luke 14:32 **Jesus** had joined two disciples: ...walking on the road to Emmaus—unbeknown to them—and talking about all that had happened in Jerusalem since Jesus' arrest.
BLESSING from God: Jesus got to open these disciples' minds to God's Word, and the disciples' had the Scriptures opened to them "*They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'*"
- Luke 19:1-10 Jesus to **Zacchaeus** encouraging him to practice hospitality: "*Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.*"
BLESSING from God: "*Today, salvation has come to this house.*"
- Acts 28:7 **Publius** (chief official of the island of Malta) for Paul and his companions: ...welcomed them to his estate...entertained them hospitably for three days...furnished them with supplies as they left.
BLESSING from God: Paul healed Publius' father of fever and dysentery, and Publius—no evidence he was a believer—was commended in Scripture by Paul.
- Romans 16:23 Paul said of **Gaius**: "*...Gaius' hospitality I and the whole church have enjoyed.*"
BLESSING from God: Gaius was loved by the whole church and commended by the Apostle Paul.

We are called to hospitality—to open our homes, our cupboards, and our guestrooms, yes, but to give ourselves away generously and joyfully—giving time and passion—out there on the highways and byways of life. We cannot say it is not our gift, we're all encouraged and challenged to show hospitality—to be welcoming, inviting and pleasantly passing time with someone. The mission field—we are there! Someone has said: We make a living by what we earn, but we make a life by what we give. Someone else said: "Not what we give, but what we share, for the gift without the giver is bare. Who gives herself with her alms feed these: Herself, her hungering neighbor and *Me.*"

God places a lot of importance on hospitality, especially as it relates to sharing what he has proclaimed to us, with others: Psalm 68:11 "*The Lord announced the word, and great was the company of those who proclaimed it.*"

We must be part of the company of those who proclaim it—the word the Lord has announced to us. But we also must be living out what we proclaim. Charles Spurgeon “Some men profess a great deal, but we must not believe any one unless we see that **his deeds answer to what he says.**”

Paul in Romans 12:13 “*Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*” 1 Peter 4:9 says, “*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*” Then Paul lists hospitality as one of the qualifications for being an elder or pastor in 1 Timothy and Titus. And hospitality is listed as a spiritual gift: Though every believer is called to be hospitable, some are endowed with the spiritual gift of hospitality.

● **The purpose** of hospitality is:

- 1) to encourage others
- 2) to bring them to Jesus Christ
- 3) to help them grow up in the Lord
- 4) to get to know them, and to fellowship with them.

● **The picture** of hospitality is that it: Seeks to **serve**; puts **people before things**; represents an **open heart**—stemming from a **servant’s heart**—**seeks no reward**; is **on God’s schedule**; is **modeled in God’s Word**, **builds bridges** and is **transparent**. All of this means that hospitality is **NOT**:

- seeking to impress;
- putting things before people;
- seeking a compliment;
- stemming from a proud heart;
- on our schedule;
- modeled in magazines;
- building gaps, or
- covering up.

● **The practice** of hospitality means **to focus our thoughts and attention on others**—to make them feel comfortable. The daily practice of hospitality will bring humility, happiness and holiness to our souls! And it must be propelled by our love for God and for those He loves. It must be motivated by agape’. And then we must realize that our time here on earth is short and that every influence we have is not only for the here and now, but more importantly for eternity. We are influencing for kingdom—heavenly—results. Have we heard people quip: “Don’t be so heavenly minded that you’re no earthly good”? Sounds cute; sounds reasonable, but we won’t find it in God’s Word. Scripture says we are to “fix our eyes on Jesus” and that “we are seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”, and more. And Scripture is the absolute authority on truth!

Scripture says ‘yes’ to being heavenly minded!

Colossians 3:1-2 “*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”*

● **The plan** to make hospitality a ministry to be enjoyed and not an event to be endured will need to do the following:

1. Change our focus to others—focus on the other person
2. Lower our expectations of other people
3. Be flexible with others—do nothing to impress
4. Keep a sense of humor about ‘self’
5. Create a warm and caring atmosphere

● **Prepare to be hospitable; then proceed**.... When we go to the hospital ER, they assess our need, then work to meet our need. We can always see someone who needs someone to listen with peace and patience, and who will give them a hospitable greeting. Matthew 10:12 “*As you enter the home, give it your greeting.*”

In the *Parable of the Sower* in Luke 8:5-15, a farmer went out to sow his seed. And some seed fell on the path and was trampled. Verse 6 says that some fell on rock, and it withered with no moisture. Other seed in verse 7 fell among thorns which choked out the new plants from the seed. But then in verse 8 still other seed fell on good soil. And it came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown—salvation! The other half of verse 8—“*When he said this, he (Jesus) called out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’*” And the meaning is explained by Jesus in Luke 8:11 “*The seed is the word of God.*” And verse 12 describes ones on the path who hear and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Woe!

We have no idea what the outcome of our hospitality, proclamation and influence will be, but God does! Lifetime missionary to China, Hudson Taylor, says that we are “opening the way to people’s hearts”. John 4:35 “*Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.*”

1. Jesus wants us to be free from preoccupations to harvest.
2. Jesus wants us to see: lift up eyes; look at the fields—sense urgency!
3. Jesus wants us to be harvesters, because the harvest won’t wait. Verse 36 says, “*Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.*”

We have the command from our Lord Jesus Christ to take hospitality on the road of life; eternity will be affected by our obedience to that command!