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5-29-11

Are we Given
to
Hospitality?





Reflections

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 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. (Romans 12:10-13 NKJ)

We live at a time when personal relationships seem to be in short supply. Kids and young adults spend much of their day plugged in, online, or developing callouses on their thumbs as they text instead of talk. Walk through the mall and observe how many are talking or texting on their cell phones or listening to music. Folks walk past each other without so much as a nod of recognition and if one says hello a questioning look follows as if to express wonder at what you meant by such a greeting. In the churches today many come and go without a greeting or any type of conversation and judgments are made about such churches as being cold, impersonal, and unwelcoming. It has become such a norm that even the daily newspaper comics make light of the isolationism that is so much a part of today's society.

As the Apostle Paul tells the Church at Rome, we are to be in those special relationships as Christians that uplift and edify fellow believers and that cause God to receive praise and glory when they are observed by others. Jesus explains how we are to live out these special Christian relationships when He says.. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16 NKJ)* One of the key features of Christian fellowships is to be the expression of love for one another. Again we listen to Jesus. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.³⁵ "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 13:34-35 NKJ) Love leads to honoring others above ourselves, rejoicing in hope, being patient in tribulation, being one who prays, caring for the saints and being given to hospitality. In a typical fellowship today, we often find factions and clichés that tend to separate from others and, as a result of their narrow focus, miss out on opportunities to live out the Scriptural call to be loving, kind and hospitable. May it never be said of us, that we are a cliquish group of

Christians. May our testimony reflect lives that honor each other, treat strangers with respect and a welcoming spirit, and stay true to the calling we have as the Lord's disciples.

Another "typical" characteristic of many fellowships is that they don't listen. They don't listen to the stories of other's lives so that they can minister to them. They are too busy telling their own story in order to impress the stranger among them to hear of his or her needs. It is reminiscent of the passage in Hebrews that admonishes those who belong to Christ... *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. (Hebrews 13:2 NKJ)* The word translated 'entertain' in this context actually means to "receive a stranger as a guest." Kind of scary in this day and age? Yes it does seem to be kind of unsettling at times, yet when the stranger comes to our fellowship we are to receive them as a guest. The Lord will give discernment as to what the stranger's needs may be and how we might serve them.

Paul's admonition to the Romans, however, was primarily directed to those in the Body of Christ and how they should treat and serve each other. He tells them, and us, that we all have differing functions and gifts and yet, when operating together in an environment of love, they are complementary to one another and the body is made healthy. When our gifts and ministries are directed to edifying the fellowship of believers around us and not to bring notoriety to ourselves, Jesus is the One who receives the glory.

People look forward to times when the fellowship assembles to worship God, be encouraged, and equipped for the days to follow, and especially when these activities are done in an environment of love for each other. A stranger entering such a church will recognize that it is indeed a place where the Lord is King and where he or she might just find rest and support for their life's needs. When they enter and are greeted by a servant of Jesus who communicates a genuine interest in ministering to them, it may be the very day that they come to know our Lord. How glorious would it be to hear such a one declare that: "I came with a burden and found love, and caring people who introduced me to the Lord Jesus and I gave my life to Him that very day?" Are we then a fellowship that is given to hospitality? By God's grace, let's make it our defining characteristic. Our fellowship has a growing reputation for being welcoming, let's keep up the good work! **Pastor Doug**