

Lifeword.org

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2).

The Hospitality of a Home

Lesson Subject: A Christian family should be eager to help others.

L50. Date: August 1982. **Text:** II Kings 4:8-17. **Topic:** Home.

A testimony: "As a minister of the gospel, I have been blessed with the gracious hospitality of so many of God's people. I have experienced the truth of the promise of Jesus, *'Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life'* (Matthew 19:29). As I have gone from my home to serve God, many homes have opened to me.

"As a Christian, I have had opportunity to extend hospitality in the name of Jesus Christ to others who could profit by it. I have experienced the truth of the words of Jesus, *'It is more blessed to give than to receive'* (Acts 20,35)."

That testimony underscores the theme of this week's study. It is built around the blessed potential of "Hospitality of a Home." This lesson aims to stir up in you the spirit of loving concern which would extend your hospitality to those who could profit from it. Please read the following comments with the central truth in mind: "A Christian family should be eager to help others."

I. HOSPITALITY EXTENDED (II Kings 4:8, 9)

God has always approved it when His people reached out in a ministry of love to others. He gave a beautiful example of the nature and blessings of

hospitality in II Kings 4:8-37.

Elisha was a man of God, a prophet of the Most High. He traveled here and there over Palestine, speaking to the nation of Israel the things of God. One day his ministry brought him to the town of Shunem, in the area afterward called Galilee. A woman of considerable means lived there with her husband. The prophet was a stranger in the area with no place to lodge. The lady perceived that he was "an holy man of God" (verse 9), and invited him into her home for a meal.

The blessing of having a man of God in the home was so great that it became the custom that Elisha always ate with that family when he was at Shunem. The blessing was twofold: The prophet was supplied with the physical need for food, and the family was supplied with the blessings of God for kindness to one of His prophets.

Why would a family invite a stranger into their home? The family in Shunem invited Elisha out of respect for his service for God whom they trusted and served. Could there be any greater motive for hospitality than that?

II. HOSPITALITY EXPANDED (II Kings 4:10, 11)

It was necessary for Elisha to pass through Shunem regularly in his ministry. The gracious family there built another room on their house in order to have a place for Elisha to sleep. So they provided him "room and board." (There are homes today where the family has provided a "prophet's room" for visiting preachers, praise the Lord!) The family was out considerable expense in the building of an extra room and the food the prophet ate. But Christian hospitality rejoices in the grace of God and does not count the cost.

You will find the blessing of hospitality as you practice it. You will find one act makes you interested in other opportunities. And you will find that God will provide opportunities for hospitality to the person who is willing to serve others in the name of Jesus.

III. HOSPITALITY REWARDED (II Kings 4:12-17)

Jesus said, *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be*

measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

The family at Shunem found that "God will be no man's debtor." They gave freely to the man of God, so God gave freely to them.

One day Elisha called the woman of the house and asked her what she desired of the Lord. He learned that she wanted a son, but because she was a younger woman married to a much older man, the possibility of her having a child looked hopeless. The prophet promised, *"About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son"* (verse 16). And it happened! God gave a male child to the couple because of their faithfulness to provide for a man of God.

Hebrews 6:10 promises, *"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."* The labor and money involved in hospitality is not wasted; it is invested. God will reward faithful service to people in His name.

IV. HOSPITALITY CONTINUED

Christian hospitality is a great doctrine of the New Testament revelation. There are so many references to it that it is seen as a Christian duty. Examples recorded in the Old Testament are to encourage our involvement and to explain the duty set forth in the New Testament.

There were some among the early Christians whose service for God took them from place to place. They met with Christian congregations and ministered to them in spiritual things. Believers would, in turn, provide for them (food, lodging, and travel expenses to their next place of ministry).

The Third Epistle of John was written to approve that practice. John commended the church for her *"charity"* (meaning divine love) expressed in Christian hospitality. He said of those itinerant servants of God, *"If thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth"* (III John 6-8).

John wrote a severe rebuke of Diotrophes, who did not extend Christian hospitality to God's servants and did not want any other member of the church to do so. Demetrius, on the other hand, had a good report because of his faithful service (III John 9-12). God approves of His people extending hospitality to others who need it.

Such Christian concern was expressed when the church in Antioch

provided travel expenses for Barnabas and Saul to start their missionary journey (Acts 13:3, 4), and again when they went to Jerusalem to attend a conference there (Acts 15:3). That same concern was expressed by the church in Philippi as she gave once and again to supply the needs of Paul as he served God (Philippians 4:10-18). What is God's attitude toward such giving? It is *"an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God"* (Philippians 4:18).

God is still pleased as His children minister to one another in acts of Christian hospitality and loving concern. He has commanded. *"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things"* (Galatians 6:6). That word *"communicate"* means "to share, to contribute." The text says the one taught should share his resources with the one teaching the Word. That is Christian hospitality in a practical and blessed expression. All Christians are under obligation of God to *"do good . . . be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate"* (I Timothy 6:18). That is a call to practice benevolence, to show kindness, to use their money to do good. It is an appeal for Christian hospitality to be expressed in every available way.

Here is a summary statement of the subject: *"To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased"* (Hebrews 13:16). What does that mean in terms of practical Christian service? It is a call for all Christians to be kind and liberal, sharing what they have, as an act of service to God. He is greatly pleased with such sacrifices.

The convenience of motels and cafeterias makes "old fashioned hospitality" in the home even more "old fashioned" today. However, Christians should have Christians in their homes. They should have non-Christians in their homes to share Christ with them. Others should see what a home is like when Christ reigns there.

Who among the readers of these words will follow the example of the woman of Shunem and extend hospitality in the name of God?

QUESTIONS

1. What is "Christian hospitality"?
2. How does Matthew 19:29 relate to this study?
3. Why was hospitality extended to Elisha?
4. How is Christian hospitality extended today?
5. How does Luke 6:38 encourage hospitality?
6. What does Hebrews 6:10 mean in the light of this study?
7. What message is given in III John?

8. How does Philippians 4:10-18 teach hospitality?
9. What does God command you in I Timothy 6:18?
10. How can you be more hospitable as a Christian?