

Hospitality

(from notes from seminar by Harold Carnes)

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I. Introduction

A. Visit another congregation recently

1. While this group of saints were sound in doctrine, they were not particularly friendly people
2. We could not find bible classrooms, and no one offered to help us to find them
3. It was not until after services that a few members (two of the elders) spoke with us
4. While we would not say they were unfriendly, they made an impression that I should think that they would not like to have made

B. Looking to ourselves – What do visitors look for when they come through the doors

1. Believers and non-believers tend to look for the same things:
 - a. Love (Gal 6:1, etc)
 - (1) Do we Love the Lord, or give lip service
 - (2) Do we Love each other
 - b. Community (Acts 2:44-46)
 - (1) How involved in each other's lives are we
 - (2) Is the assembly the only place we see one another?
 - c. Teaching (2 Tim 2:2)
 - (1) Doctrinally sound
 - (2) Desire to learn and to teach
 - d. Sacrifice (Rom 12:1)
 - (1) This goes to show how much we love, community
 - e. Evangelism (Eph 4:13)
 - (1) Are we about the Lord's work (all of the work of the church)

C. Question: How will our visitors today remember us?

1. We want them to remember us as sound in doctrine
2. Will they also find us to be a warm family?

D. Purpose of this lesson:

1. The need to make ourselves into a community is often not addressed in the church
 - a. It is clearly demonstrated in scripture

Acts 2:44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,

Ac 4:32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

- (1) Community – something a group of people have in common

2. We often resist teaching this because:

- a. It has been mis-taught as a work of the church, with fellowship halls, etc
3. We need to see that our responsibility to Christ, the church and to strangers includes establishment of community and in performing hospitality as individual members thereof

II. COMMUNITY is revealed in the hospitality of the Saint

A. Command

Heb 13:1 Let brotherly love continue. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.

1. With the commending of brotherly love prior to it, it seems this message is meant to apply to saints who are strangers

- a. We can put this to the work of benevolence to then
- b. This statement is identical to the one Peter makes:

1Pe 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." 9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

c. Also, it parallels Paul in romans 13

Rom 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love,..... 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

d. So this can be seen to pertain to Saints primarily

2. The qualifications of elders repeat this requirement in both I Tim 3 and Titus 1

a. An elder must be hospitable, just like apt to teach, etc.

B. Understanding why we need to be hospitable

1. In our language, hospitable means to have an open door for those who have need

a. Hospital: a place where injured are cared for

b. Hospice: a place of rest for travelers or needy

2. In Greek, Hospitality is *Philo-Xenos*

a. Love for strangers/foreigners

3. Jesus made it clear this is a matter for which we are judged

Mt 25:35 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

a. It is popular myth in Europe middle ages of the person who came to the king for aid, only to be turned away, and latter revealed they were there for judgment

4. We have a culture that is moving away from Hospitality

a. In America, particularly in the American West, we tend to be proud of "rugged individualism" and self-dependence, and isolate ourselves from others

b. We tend to have more personally relevant ways to spend our time

c. Coincidentally, the church struggles to grow in the west more than other places

C. The Example of Abraham

1. Hebrews 13 references Abraham's encounter with angels

Ge 18:2 So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, 3 and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. 4 "Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5 "And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." They said, "Do as you have said."

a. His nephew Lot also "entertained" these same Angels

Ge 19:1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. 2 And he said, "Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square."

2. What did these men do, in being examples of entertaining strangers?

a. They ran to greet their visitors

b. They begged them to stay

c. They offered them the comfort of their home (wash their feet, stay the night)

d. They provided sustenance to them

3. Let's pretend for a moment that this is the pattern the Hebrew writer was commanding;

a. Do we rush to greet our visitors

(1) Or do we only greet those we know, remain seated at services

b. Do we beg them to stay

(1) Or do we wish them a nice trip

c. Do we offer them the comfort of our home

(1) Or do we recommend a good restaurant

D. The practical points of being hospitable

1. We all want to convert; we all recommend our congregation

- a. The impression of being wanted is big
- b. Many people will make the decision whether or not to return to church long before a lesson is preached
- 2. Weak or unbelieving people need to see we worship in both Spirit and Truth

III. Practical Points we need to apply

A. We need to make more effort to entertain strangers

- 1. We need to be watchful when someone new comes in
 - a. Consider Paul's admonition about how we behave when we come together

1 Cor 11:33 Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat (the Lord's Supper), wait for one another.

- 2. We need to be ready to have open homes to one another
 - a. The early church grew based on this point

Acts 2:44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

- b. We need to bring one another into our homes more often
 - (1) Not as a work of the church, because that would defeat the point
 - (2) Because I need to develop the sense of community

B. We need to be good recipients of hospitality

- 1. Luke 14:16-24
- 2. Many cannot host in their homes for various reasons
 - a. ALL can receive the hospitality of others
 - b. Consider the great hurt the master felt when none came to his feast
 - (1) Consider the hurt we have when

III. Conclusion: We need to work on our sense of community

A. Understanding hospitality underlies community

- 1. The church of the first century was strong in the development of community
- 2. Acts 2:44, 4:32

B. Committing to growing our hospitality

- 1. *To run, beg, offer and provide*
- 2. To the visitor, but even more to the member (Galatians 6:10)
 - a. Committing to receiving hospitality
 - b. Luke 14:16-24