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### THE BLESSING OF CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY

By Bruce C. Meadows  
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Have you ever entertained an angel in your home? If not, maybe it is because you have neglected to be hospitable to someone.

A Christian minister befriended an old gentleman. He visited him when he was sick, comforted him when he was distressed, and occasionally invited him to his home for Sunday dinner. He did all this out of a heart of Christian love, not thinking of a reward. When the old gentleman died he willed to the pastor's church a large sum of money to be used in the building program. When this happened the pastor was reminded of Paul's admonition, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Of course, Paul was referring to Abraham's entertaining three men by inviting them into his shepherd tent and spreading before them a hearty meal. These men were angels of blessing which told aged Abraham and Sarah they would have a son.

Though hospitality may be a lost art in civilized America, a modern Bedouin sheik would receive travelers arriving at his camp in about the same manner as did Abraham. Perhaps because we in parts of the Western world have lost the art, we also lose the blessing.

Most ancient nations regarded hospitality as one of the chief virtues. In Egypt its practice was thought to favor the soul in the after life. By kindness to strangers the Greeks secured the approval of Zeus Xenios, their protector. For the Romans, hospitality was a sacred obligation.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome that one way to serve the Lord was to be "given to hospitality." Serving the Lord in this way has many rewards. "I was converted to the Lord Jesus Christ because of the hospitality of a Christian family," declares a young man, now a Bible school student.

In his last year of high school the worldly youth was attracted to a Christian young lady. He asked her to go with him to the senior prom. Of course she refused. Instead she invited him to visit her home the evening of the prom. "The testimony of her Christian family made me compare my life with theirs," he recalls. He desired to have the exuberant peace and joy which they manifested in their home.

The family welcomed him to go with them to a camp for a week. He accepted the invitation, not realizing what would happen. The first night there the family had devotions. While they sat around the kitchen table, each one of them prayed. He relates the incident. "The one before me prayed. Did they expect me to pray? I tried. But I had never prayed before and didn't know how or for what to pray. What I prayed I don't remember. But I do know my first prayer meeting with that Christian family flooded my sinful, stubborn hearts with conviction. That night I did not rest. This was due partly to one of the young men with whom I was sharing a tent having

put a broom under my straw mattress. I did not discover this trick until the next day. Because of this my body did not rest. But conviction of sin in my heart was the 'broom' which would not let my soul rest. I was saved the following evening. Christ gave me that peace that passeth understanding."

A family shared their home, their transportation, their time, their prayer, and their camp. A soul was saved. What greater reward could they ask for?

The Bible has many narratives of the blessings which came to households because they showed kindness to men of God. We are told that Elisha passed through Shunem one day (II Kings 4). A certain woman insisted he eat with her and her husband. This he did. The fellowship must have been a mutual boon. "And so it was, that as oft as he (Elisha) passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread." The welcome mat was always at the door for Elisha.

The Shunammite woman wanted to do more for the prophet. "And she said unto her husband. Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber ... and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." Does this story give you an idea for your extra room? Why not have a prophet's chamber?

But the story of the Shunammite woman is not completed. For this kindness the Lord blessed the heretofore barren family with a baby boy. One day the child took sick and died. He was brought to the man of God in prophet's chamber. In this same room Elisha raised the boy from the dead. What a recompense for any bother or inconvenience this servant of the Lord may have been to them!

Many pastors have a problem finding someone to entertain special speakers, musical groups, or missionaries who come to minister in the church. Would this situation be different if Jesus were the visiting speaker? Does not every housewife envy Mary and Martha the privilege they had of having Jesus in their home? If he were to come, probably all the families in the church would flock immediately to the pastor and implore him to let them take Jesus to their home.

Jesus is searching for families to entertain him. To his disciples going out to minister, he declared, "He that receiveth you receiveth me ... He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward ... And whosoever shall give to drink ... a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." When you entertain his disciples, you entertain him and receive a prophet's reward.

Who knows? You may entertain an angel unawares. (Continued on Page 4)