

The Unexpected Rewards of Hospitality

Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue.

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

Writing to Christian Hebrews, the author recognized their love for one another and encouraged them to continue in such. Brotherly love, *philadelphia*, is edifying and essential in the Church. But our attention cannot be within always and unto the family of God only. We are to practice both *philadelphia* and *philonexia*.

In loving the brotherhood (*philadelphia*), don't forget to be hospitable to the stranger (*philonexia*). The Bible makes mention of travelers stopping by and being given some water, bread, a meal, and even lodging. Jesus told the story of a man who had unexpected company drop in, and he went to the neighbor in the night asking for some bread to share. Hospitality is about being courteous and respectful also to visitors. Hospitality is not necessarily convenient and is sometimes costly. Of course, not being hospitable can be costly, too.

The Hebrew Christians could easily relate to this verse: *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares*. They knew the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Gen. 18; of Lot, Gen. 19; of Gideon, Judges 6; and of the parents of Samson, Judges 13. Each of these showed hospitality to strangers who turned out to be messengers of God, angels.

I do not think this verse encouraged them/us to be hospitable, expecting an angelic visit. *Some have entertained angels unawares*, but not all. The point is that in hospitality (guest-host relationships), not only is the guest blessed by the host, but often, the guest blesses the host. There is mutual sharing in true hospitality. The host wanting to care for their guests will prepare and plan accordingly. Knowing that the guests have traveled a distance, they will likely be hungry. Therefore, food and drinks are given, at the very least, a snack. Consideration is given to their room. Clean sheets, sufficient pillows and coverings, towels, washcloths, lamps lit, a fresh scent, a basket of fruit, maybe even some books to peruse and relaxing music playing softly, etc., all convey of the hosts' care for company. One of the keys of generous hospitality is to give the guest more than they ever expected. The amenities provided are from the heart of the host and are not given expecting the guest to do anything or be anything more than appreciative. The host is there to give.

There are unexpected rewards of hospitality. The guest being gracious and grateful for the kindnesses being shown to him, wants to be a blessing to the host. Because he feels welcomed, he relaxes and relates. His stories bring life and laughter to the home. My wife and I have been refreshed, encouraged, and strengthen so many times by the guests we have had in our home. They nourished us with new perspectives on life and ministry. We have been challenged and enriched by them. When our sons were young, their world was enlarged and enhanced by the godly influences of men and families that came our way.

It is a reality. Earthly hospitality can become so heavenly. So many times, the blesser becomes the blest.

-RWT