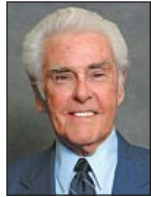


Hospitality: How ordinary people can live on mission

In biblical times, hospitality meant to entertain or receive a stranger into one's home as an honored guest and to provide the guest with food,



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shelter and protection. Such care for travelers was essential since there were few inns available, therefore even the stranger had to depend on the kindness of others and by culture had a right to expect it.

“When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:13-14). Peter taught that Christians were to “offer hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:19). Being able to express this kind of caring love was “a necessary tool for evangelism” (Holman Bible Dictionary, p. 670).

Even though some of the ancient texts encourage the kind of hospitality that is different from what we expect today, a contemporary definition of “hospitable” means “giving or disposed to give welcome and entertainment to strangers or guests” (Oxford English Reference Dictionary, p. 684).

Food as an element of hospitality. Many biblical references identify serving food as one accompaniment of hospitality. In a lecture trip that took me and my family to England, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Vienna, the Czech Republic, Portugal and France, we found that international Baptists love a good meal! Every place we met included a sumptuous meal for guests. In such a situation, it becomes virtually impossible to fulfill Jesus' instruction in Luke 14:12-14.

Generally families are encouraged to have meals together as a means for

family bonding. This does not exclude inviting persons to family meals that are not part of the family but following Jesus' instructions on a regular basis in our contemporary culture would diminish family or friendship experiences.

The central teaching of Jesus is that Christians are to be unselfish in their ministry to the excluded of society by sharing hospitable times with them. In his commentary on Luke, W.F. Adeney rightly comments that it “is impossible to believe that Jesus desired to destroy family affection.... But it was his custom to give strong utterance to important truths in order to be the more impressive, trusting to the common sense of his hearers as well as to their knowledge of his general position” (The Century Bible, Saint Luke, p. 295).

The parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:15-24). A guest eating at the same table with Jesus declared that those who follow Jesus' instructions would “eat bread at the feast in the kingdom of God” (14:15). This means to be “among those who participate in the joys of the messianic kingdom” (Malcolm Tolbert, The Baptist Bible Commentary, Luke, p. 120). Jesus then challenged his hearer's self-assurance that he would be at that great banquet by telling a parable about that feast.

The plan for the great banquet involved inviting the prospective guests, getting their acceptance, letting them know that they would be advised when the banquet would be ready and that they were expected to come.

The drastic result of the messenger's invitation was that all of the invited ones had excuses concerning why they could not attend. When the host learned of their refusals, he sent his servant into the village to bring in the socially excluded of society to be his guests. Since there was still room for more, he sent the servant out into the countryside to secure more. What did Jesus' actions teach his listeners?

Bible Studies for Life

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Scripture: Luke 14:12-24

Interpreting scripture must focus on the original message of a text and then make applications that are relevant to the original.

“Concentration on the original message is the only way toward valid application. Before one can determine the meaning of a text for today, one must know that the writer intended to convey to his original hearers/readers” (Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, p. 160).

In his parable, Jesus is following up on his initial discussion of the seating arrangements for a formal banquet and his insistence that the host shall include the types of persons who cannot repay his generosity (Luke 14:12-14). The great banquet invitations and the refusal by the invited guests becomes an introduction to God's invitation to the Jewish religious leaders and the consequences of their refusal to come to the Lord.

Scholars interpret the bringing in of the people on the streets to illustrate God's care for the types of people who were unacceptable to synagogue worship. When more attendees were needed, the servant goes beyond Israel to the “Gentiles in God's divine purpose” (Tolbert, p. 120).

In verse 24, Jesus identifies the ultimate messianic banquet as his own when he says, “not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.” The application possible is the rejection of the Jews as God's chosen ones and the anticipation of the Gentiles being acceptable to God regardless of what the Jewish leadership had taught. They can be invited to the Kingdom banquet.

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