

## **Pursuing Hospitality**

Hospitality could easily become a casualty of these difficult economic times if we are not consciously making it an integral part of our Christian walk, as commanded by Scripture. Romans 12:13 presents it quite succinctly:

**“Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality”.**

The first part of the command specifically addresses God’s people, the Body of Christ. Whatever we may have, be it small or great, we are commanded to share it. The word “hospitality” in the second part of the command is translated from the Greek word “philoxenia” which literally means “love of strangers”. The word “practice” in the Greek is “diokontes”, which means “pursuing”. Not only are we to share with God’s people who are in need, but we are to pursue showing hospitality to others who may not be within the circle of our comfort zone.

We often focus only on this and other New Testament commands relating to hospitality, but the importance of the concept can be seen throughout the Old Testament as well. The story of the prophet Elijah and the widow in I Kings 17 is a great example. Elijah had been sent by the Lord to a place called the Kerith Ravine during a time of terrible drought and famine in the land. For quite some time, Elijah lived there, drinking water from a brook and being fed by ravens sent from God. The Scripture says that the ravens brought him bread and meat every morning and evening. When the brook dried up, God directed him to go to the town of Zarephath where, God said “I have commanded a widow...to supply you with food”. Apparently the widow was not yet aware of that command! She protested to Elijah that she had only enough flour and oil to make one last meal for her and her son. Elijah asked her nevertheless to share that last meal with him, and to trust God’s promise that He would replenish her supply. She did as she was asked, and experienced the miracle of seeing, in the days that followed, that her flour was never used up and her oil never ran dry.

Why did God choose this solution to Elijah’s need? He could have directed him to another brook; or He certainly could have re-filled the Kerith Ravine. The ravens could have kept coming. Perhaps for these reasons: Elijah had been alone and in hiding for a long time. God knew that Elijah needed fellowship, to share a meal and conversation with another human being. That is a basic need common to all humanity. God also used this opportunity to intervene in the life of a young woman who, having already lost her husband, had also lost all hope. It must have been very difficult for her to share the last of her supply with this stranger, knowing that by doing so she would be depriving her son of that extra portion by which she hoped to prolong his life. But by faith she obeyed; and in offering hospitality to Elijah and sharing with him out of her great need, her experience of God was taken to a whole new level. Her obedience in this act of sharing opened up the storehouses of Jehovah Jireh, her Provider.

Few of us are in straits as dire as that of the young widow, but we may still feel that the tight budget we’re on doesn’t allow for sharing many meals. Or our excuse may be that the demands of a job, or caring for a family, don’t leave us anything “left over” to share with anyone else...just like the widow’s initial response.

Be intentional about making a different choice. Trust God to be the Provider of all that you need, and in so doing, become His hands that reach out to meet the needs of others.