

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

PRACTICE HOSPITALITY

Romans 12:13 “. . . Practice hospitality. . .”

According to some, hospitality has become a lost art. Perhaps, to be sure you understand this word a definition is in order. Hospitality is the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers. With many in today's culture focused upon convenience and consumption, sacrificial service, and care for those in the community, especially strangers is becoming less valued.

There is a rich history of hospitality. This is especially true among Christians. Early Christians considered it simply a normal part of life to open their homes and hearts to total strangers. Think of Martha and Mary opening their home to Jesus and His Disciples. The writer to the Hebrews, chapter 13:2, exhorts, “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” [Think of Abraham and the strangers that came to his tent – Genesis 18]

Peter encourages you to show hospitality and to do so without grumbling. (1 Peter 4:9) In the next verse he continues, “. . .use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace.” (1 Peter 4:10) Yes, your hospitality flows out of the grace you have received from God as John writes, “we love because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

Six different English words are used by various translations for the word “practice.” (ESV) They include show, extend, given, always be eager to practice, pursue, be hospitable. The majority of English translations use the word “pursue.” This is faithful to the original Greek word which can be translated “to run after, to chase after, to pursue.” Expanding on these three phrases, the Greek word emphasizes an urgency or great importance in showing hospitality: “to follow with haste, with intensity of effort, to catch up with for a friendly purpose.”

When St. Paul writes, “practice” or “pursue” hospitality he does so with yet again the general theme of “love in action.” Jesus says, “let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Practicing, showing, pursuing hospitality is one way for you to do this.

Prayer: Lord, grant me a heart of hospitality with which I reach out to fellow believers and strangers in love to receive and entertain them in Your name. Amen.

Lord, whose love through humble service Bore the weight of human need,
Who upon the cross, forsake, Offered merc's perfect deed,
We, Your servants, bring the worship Not of voice alone, but heart,
Consecrating to Your purpose Ev'ry gift that You impart.

Still Your children wander homeless; Still the hungry cry for bread;
Still the captives long for freedom; Still in grief we mourn our dead.
As, O Lord, Your deep compassion Healed the sick and freed the soul,
Use the love Your Spirit kindles Still to save and make us whole.

As we worship, grant us vision, Till Your love's revealing light
In its height and depth and greatness, Dawns upon our quickened sight,
Making known the needs and burdens Your compassion bids us bear,
Stirring us to tireless striving, Your abundant life to share.

Called by worship to Your service Forth in Your dear name we go,
To the child, the youth, the aged, Love in living deeds to show;
Hope and health, good-will and comfort, Counsel, aid, and peace we give,
That Your servants, Lord in freedom May Your mercy know and live.
(LSB 848)