Romans 12:10-13 Commentary

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Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference (to one another in honor (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: te philadelphia eis allelous philostorgoi, te time allelous proegoumenoi, (PMPMPN)

Amplified: Love one another with brotherly affection [as members of one family], giving precedence and showing honor to one another (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

NLT: Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. <u>NLT - Tyndale House</u>)

Phillips: Let us have real warm affection for one another as between brothers, and a willingness to let the other man have the credit. (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: In the sphere of brotherly love have a family affection for one another, vying with one another in showing honor (Eerdmans)

Young's Literal: in the love of brethren, to one another kindly affectioned: in the honour going before one another;

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NEED	WAY	LIFE	SCOPE	SERVICE	
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SALVATION	SALVATION	SALVATION	SALVATION	SALVATION	

God's Holiness	God's Grace	God's Power	God's Sovereignty	Gods Glory
In	In	In	In	The
Condemning	Justifying	Sanctifying	Saving	Object of
Sin	Sinners	Believers	Jew and Gentile	Service
Deadliness	Design Demonstration of Salvati		ion	
of Sin	of Grace	Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness	Righteousness	Righteousness	Righteousness	Righteousness
Needed	Credited	Demonstrated	Restored to Israel	Applied
God's	God's	God's	God's	God's
Righteousness	Righteousness	Righteousness	Righteousness	Righteousness
IN LAW	IMPUTED	OBEYED	IN ELECTION	DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine			Duty	
Life by Faith			Service by Faith	

Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work "Jensen's Survey of the NT"

BE DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER IN BROTHERLY LOVE: te philadelphia eis allelous philostorgoi...proegoumenoi (PMPMPN):

- Jn 13:34,35; 15:17; 17:21; Acts 4:32; Ga 5:6,13,22; Ep 4:1,2, 3; Col 1:4; 1Th 4:9; 2Th 1:3; He 13:1; 1Pe 1:22; 2:17; 3:8,9; 2Pe 1:7; 1Jn 2:9, 10, 11; 3:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18; 4:11,20,21; 5:1,2)
- Brotherly love Job 1:4; Ps 133:1)

NET Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another with mutual love, showing eagerness in honoring one another.

CSB Romans 12:10 Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor.

ESV Romans 12:10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

NIV Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Spurgeon in commenting on Ro 12:10-13 notes that "Paul writes at full length upon the doctrines, but he is very concise and pithy upon the precepts, for things of daily practice need to be short and easy of remembrance. Let us learn each one of these weighty sentences by heart and put them all in practice.

Be devoted - The original Greek order (te philadelphia eis allelous philostorgoi, te time allelous proegoumenoi) is different than most of our translations = "in the love of brethren (te philadelphia), to one another (eis allelous) kindly affectioned (philostorgoi): in the honour going before one another".

Wuest retains the order and conveys the sense rendering it "In the sphere of brotherly love have a family affection for one another, vying with one another in showing honor."

Paul places philadelphia first in the Greek sentence for emphasis.

Be devoted (only use in Bible)(5387) (Philostorgos from phílos = friend + storge = natural family love or tender affection; cherishing one's kindred, esp parents or children) pertains to love or affection for those closely related to one, particularly members of one's immediate family, in this case referring to God's family composed of all believers in Christ Jesus. Notice that philostorgos is an adjective not a verb and so many translations add a "be" before the adjective so that it makes sense in English.

Philia is affectionate love between friends and **storge** refers to the tender affection among family members. **Storge** speaks of instinctive affection, like that which parents and children feel toward one another (see a more detailed discussion of the antonym **astorgos** used in Ro 1:31-+). **Storge** is "an attachment sealed by nature and blood ties," and is especially represented by a mother's innate love, benevolence, and devotion toward her children. Paul is saying that the relationships among Christians should involve intimacy, understanding, and acceptance. The idea is to be devoted to other Christians with a family sort of love, not based on personal attraction or desirability (cf. 1Thessalonians 4:9+).

Vincent on philostorgos - Only here in the New Testament. From stegeo to love, which denotes peculiarly a natural affection, a sentiment innate and peculiar to men as men, as distinguished from the love of desire, called out by circumstance. Hence of the natural love of kindred, of people and king (the relation being regarded as founded in nature), of a tutelary god for a people. The word here represents Christians as bound by a family tie. It is intended to define more specifically the character of brotherly love, which follows, so that the exhortation is "love the brethren in the faith as though they were brethren in blood" (Farrar). (Romans 12 - Vincent's Word Studies)

Barclay - The word Paul uses for affectionate is **philostorgos**, and **storge** is the Greek for family love. We must love each other, because we are members of one family. We are not strangers to each other within the Christian Church; much less are we isolated units; we are brothers and sisters, because we have the one father, God. (<u>Daily Study Bible</u>)

Brotherly love (5360) (**philadelphia** from **phílos** = beloved, dear, friendly + **adelphós** = brother) means "fraternal love", brotherly love (kindness), love of the brethren. Brotherly love normally referred to the love members of a family held for each other (this was the way it was used in secular Greek) and would not normally be used to describe the love between members of different families.

In the NT **philadelphia** is used to describe the love that believers possess for one to another, for even though they were members of different natural families, they were united in Christ and were recipients of family love originating from the Father Who had bestowed His great love on His spiritual children (1John 3:1, cp note 1Peter 1:22). Philadelphia manifests itself in acts of kindness (Ga 6:10).

Philadelphia describes a love which calls for an affection for one another like that one expressed between natural family members (see Romans 12:10+ where **devoted** or "loving warmly" = philostorgos from philos = beloved, dear + storge = family love, the love of parents and children). Remember that Christianity forged a radical relationship in Christ wherein believing Greeks and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, Scythians, slaves and freemen, men and women were now all one in their Lord (cp Gal 3:28, see Col 3+, Eph 4:3ff +). Such a diverse cultural community would have continual need for emphasis on**love of the brethren**. As Christians we have become brothers and sisters in the community of faith and Paul refers to them as **brothers** (sisters is clearly implied) some nineteen times in 1 Thessalonians alone. Our love is not just a passive disposition of fondness but manifests itself in overt acts of kindness toward the brethren.

Phileo love (word study) is the love of belonging, of friendship. It is a love we have for brothers because of our likenesses. (Greek for **brothers** = adelphos = literally "from the same womb") The Greek word for friend is philos, and it is related to the word for filial love, phileo. This root is seen in such English terms as "philanthropy" (benevolence or, literally, the love of man), and "philology" (the love of words).

A **friend** is one for whom you have filial love. Early Greek literature used the word philos to describe the followers of a political leader. Later it came to mean the clients of a wealthy man, or legal assistants. When the Romans embraced the language they extended the word to include friends and relatives. It is much like the "official family" of a political person, governor, or President. In ancient usage the word "**friend**" had much deeper implications than our casual usage. Aristotle indicated that a person might be called on to sacrifice his life for that of a friend. According to that famous Greek philosopher: "To a noble man there applies the true saying that he does all things for the sake of his friends" (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, IX, p. 153). This concept of friendship lays the basis for the New Testament use of this word.

It was this affectionate relationship in the early Church among Christian converts, in spite of their diverse status and varied backgrounds, that amazed the pagans.

Brotherly kindness must be cultivated (diligently) for it entails difficult duties, such as a willingness to bear one another's burdens and to forgive shortcomings and failures.

More Than Socializing - Church can be a great place to get caught up on the latest football games, golf scores, family news, health concerns, or just to visit with friends. A cup of coffee together, a warm handshake, a friendly pat on the back are all part of the social interaction we need as human beings.

All of this is good, but New Testament fellowship goes much deeper than merely socializing when we get together at church. It takes place when we consider how we can lift up, build up, and brighten up our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Bible clearly says that we are to "serve one another" (Gal 5:13), forgive as we are forgiven (Ephesians 4:32+), and "bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2). From the first century, believers have gathered in Jesus' name to "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" and to exhort one another (He 10:24, 25+).

Christian fellowship takes place when we offer encouragement to our friends, pray for them, and confess our sins and weaknesses to one another. These are the elements that make fellowship genuine.

What about your church? Are you merely socializing? Or are you practicing true Christian fellowship? —Dave Egner <u>Our Daily</u> <u>Bread</u>)

We Christians have a kinship with All others who believe, And from that bond of faith and love A mutual strength receive. —Hess

Christian fellowship builds us up and binds us together.

Why is this exhortation so vital for believers to put into practice? Because the visual display of this quality of love in the body of Christ is the primary means by which the world recognizes us as followers of Christ (Jn 13:35 cf 1Jn 3:10-+, 1Jn 3:17-19-+). We must love each other, because we are members of one family. We are not strangers to each other within the Christian Church; much less are we isolated units; we are brothers and sisters, because we have the one father, God.

Christians are eternally members of one family, one body and truly have a "sibling relationship" with one another. Thus we are exhorted to develop the close and affectionate relationship that should exist among brothers and sisters who are blood relatives. The blood that binds us to one another as believers is even more precious than that binding secular families together.

The use of both of these words together (**philadelphia**, **philostorgoi**) does two things. First, it magnifies the importance of understanding the church as a family. In most cases the local congregation is like the immediate family, and the church universal is the extended family. Second, it intensifies the need to consciously seek to develop toward one another the tender affection and devotion appropriate among brothers and sisters. How are we doing as a church in America? The world is "dying" to see this quality of love exhibited.

Charles Colton once wrote that ...:

The firmest friendships have been formed in mutual adversity, as iron most strongly united by the fiercest flame.

In other words, "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon counted among his friends George Mueller and Hudson Taylor. On friendship Spurgeon said,

Friendship is one of the sweetest joys of life. Many might have failed beneath the bitterness of their trial had they not found a friend.

GIVE PREFERENCE TO ONE ANOTHER IN HONOR: te time allelous proegoumenoi (PMPMPN):

• Ge 13:9; Mt 20:26; Luke 14:10; Php 2:3; 1Pe 5:5)

Outdo one another in showing honor. (ESV)

Give preference (4285) (**proegeomai** from **pró** = before + **hegeomai** = lead way, think) means literally to lead the way before and so to show deference to the other person. This is the only use of this verb in Scripture.

Proegeomai is in the **middle voice** which indicates that the subject initiates the action (showing preference) and participates in results of that action. The idea is that believers are to continuously which reflect the **present tense** = this is to be our habitual practice, our lifestyle before a critically watching world, and a lifestyle **possible only** as we are filled with/controlled by the Spirit, relying not on our adequacy, but His adequacy [2Cor 3:5-6+], His enabling power [dunamis] [Eph 3:16+], just as did our Lord when He lived as a Man [cp Lk 4:14].

Christ followers are to continually, supernaturally give preference to one another, something that simply does not come naturally!

The idea of the **middle voice** is for you yourself to take the lead **(hegeomai** = to lead the way) and show genuine appreciation and admiration for fellow believers by putting them first (Php 2:3+) and to be willing and even desirous for them to receive honor. Quite a contrast with the world's way (Torrey's Topic **Selfishness**) and therefore a mindset or lifestyle that serves as "salty salt" (cp Mt 5:13+) in a world that is given over to blatant selfishness in these last days (2Ti 3:2+ - note what "heads the list" of evil attitudes and actions! It's the "big I", not surprisingly the middle letter in sln!)

If the we are walking in the truth of the first part of this verse (and walking in the Spirit) and are truly "devoted to one another in

brotherly love," it will be (supernaturally) "easy" to give preference to one another in honor. The virtue here is Christ-like humility, not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Ro 12:3+). It is doing

"nothing (try this by relying on Self, not Spirit!) from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves"..."not merely looking out "for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." It is having "this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (Php 2:3, 4+)

To honor the other person is one way of holding in check the innate human tendency to honor oneself unduly. If we are are focusing on others, it is somewhat more difficult to focus on ourselves. Our example of course is Christ (see Php 2:5, 6, 7 + Php 2:8+ Php 2:8-notes 1Pe 2:21+)(Torrey's Topic "Example of Christ")

Vincent - Proegeomai occurs only here. It means to go before as a guide. Honor is the honor due from each to all. Compare Philemon 2:3; 1Peter 2:17; 1Peter 5:5. Hence, leading the way in showing the honor that is due. Others render anticipating and excelling. (Romans 12 - Vincent's Word Studies)

One another (240) (allelon) means each other and speaks of a mutuality or sharing of sentiments between two persons or groups of persons. Allelon is a reciprocal pronoun which denotes that the encouragement and edification is to be a mutual beneficial activity. As each submits, encourages, loves, etc, the other members benefit. This is the God's description and prescription for a body of believers.

One another is a common NT phrase (especially in Paul's letters) with most uses relating to the building up of the body of Christ. As such the "one anothers" in the NT would make an excellent Sunday School study (or topical sermon series), taking time to meditate on each occurrence, asking whether it is being practiced (in the Spirit+) in your local church and seeking to excel still more (cp Php 1:9, 10, 11 notes; 1Th 3:12+, 1Th 4:1+, 1Th 4:10+). Below is a list of the NT uses of one another (be sure to check the context for the most accurate interpretation).

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Ro 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:13, 19; 15:5, 7, 14; 16:16; 1Co 6:7; 7:5; 11:33; 12:25; 16:20; 2Co 13:12; Ga 5:13, 15, 26; Ep 4:2, 25, 32; 5:19, 21; Php 2:3; Col 3:9, 13, 16; 1Th 3:12; 4:9, 18; 5:11, 13, 15; 2 Th 1:3; Heb 3:13; 10:24, 25; James 4:11; 5:9, 16; 1Pe 1:22; 4:8, 9, 10; 5:5, 14; 1Jn 1:7; 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2Jn 1:5
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See related resource - Short study of "one another" in Scripture

Honor (<u>5092</u>) (<u>time</u> from **tío** = pay honor, respect) refers to the worth, value or merit of some thing or some one.**Time** is a valuing by which the price is fixed or an estimation of the value of a thing. Finally and most importantly in the present context, **time** is our attitude towards another person which is commensurate their value (as God sees them). **We honor** that which is precious to us.

See Related Resources:

- Honor Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology
- Honor Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature

To honor someone is to show genuine appreciation and admiration for the other individual. Believers who are being transformed by the renewing of their mind should be becoming more and more sensitive to showing respect, to acknowledging the accomplishments of others, to demonstrating genuine love by not being jealous or envious. These are the marks of a sincere faith which is maturing. Such a one in fact is to take the lead in the carrying out of these actions. If we have truly presented ourselves as a living sacrifices, we should be growing in these graces (and they can only be carried out by His empowering grace).

How am I doing this week with others?

Especially with my mate?...my children? ...my employer or employee?

Paul, why did you have to start "meddling"?

ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIBLE TRUTH - by Harry A. Ironside - HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE -

"Be not ye called Rabbi" (Mt 23:8). "In honour preferring one another" (R. 12:10).

On one occasion when in London, I was walking home from a meeting; part of the way I was accompanied by the Marquis of Aberdeen (who had presided) and the Lord Bishop of Norwich (who had been one of the speakers). Being an American, and unaccustomed to titles, I felt embarrassed as to how I should address men

of their position. I expressed my perplexity, and the Marquis replied, "My dear brother, just address us as your brethren in CHRIST. We could have no higher honor than that." This was surely to enter into the spirit of what the LORD JESUS taught.

We are told to give honor to whom honor is due. On the other hand, the servant of CHRIST is to seek the honor that cometh from GOD only. The first passage delivers from rudeness and that pride which apes humility, as it refuses to recognize the gifts which CHRIST has given to His Church. The other is a rebuke to all self-seeking and fleshly ostentation on the part of those to whom the LORD has entrusted any special ministry for the edification of His Church.

Romans 12:11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

Greek: te spoude me okneroi, to pneumati zeontes, (PAPMPN) to kurio douleuontes, (PAPMPN)

Amplified: Never lag in zeal and in earnest endeavor; be aglow and burning with the Spirit, serving the Lord.

Moffatt: "Never let your zeal flag, maintain the spiritual glow, serve the Lord"

NLT: Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically.

Phillips: Let us not allow slackness to spoil our work and let us keep the fires of the spirit burning, as we do our work for God.

Wuest: with respect to zeal, not lazy; fervent in the sphere of the Spirit, serving the Lord

Young's Literal: in the diligence not slothful; in the spirit fervent; the Lord serving;

NOT LAGGING (lazy, sluggish, slothful) BEHIND (shrinking from) IN DILIGENCE: te spoude me okneroi:

Ex 5:17; Pr 6:6, 7, 8, 9; 10:26; 13:4; 18:9; 22:29; 24:30, 31, 32, 33, 34; 26:13, 14, 15, 16; Eccl 9:10; Is 56:10; Mt 25:26; Acts 20:34,35; Ep 4:28; 1Th 4:11,12; 2Th 3:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 1Ti 5:13; Hebrews 6:10,11)

Lagging (3636)(okneros from okneo = to be slow, delay, hesitate) an adjective which means shrinking from or hesitating to (timid to) engage in something worthwhile, possibly implying lack of ambition.

TDNT - Okneros describes a. those who are slow to act through hesitation, anxiety, negligence, or sloth, and b. things that awaken suspicion, dislike, or fear. In the OT it is used for the slothful (Pr 6:6, 9) who let inconveniences stop them (Pr 20:4) or never move on from the will to the deed (Pr 21:25).

Don't be slow, tardy, slothful, lazy in your diligence (interesting mix of words isn't it?)

Here are the other 2 uses of okneros

Matthew 25:26 "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed.

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no **trouble** to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

Okneros - 12 uses in the Septuagint where it is repeatedly translated "sluggard" a word which describes a habitually lazy person, one who is habitually indolent. - Pr 6:6, 9; 11:16; 18:8; Pr 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 26:13, 14, 15; Pr 31:27;

Diligence (4710) (**spoude** from **speudo** = to hasten, make haste. See also cognate verb **spoudazo**) is a noun which means to do something hurriedly, with intense effort and motivation, with haste, in a hurry. (Lk 1:39).

Denney - Spoude denotes the moral earnestness with which one should give himself to his vocation. In this Christians are not to be backward: Acts 9:38. (Romans 12 - The Expositor's Greek Testament)

Spoude speaks primarily of an attitude which is associated with or leads to an action. Do one's best, doing so with intense effort and motivation. In this sense **spoude** describes a quality of genuine commitment such as zeal, eagerness, earnestness, a striving after something. **Spoude** is eagerness to do something, with the implication of readiness to expend energy and effort.

Spoude describes an active concern for others - a devotion, care, goodwill (2Cor 7:11)

Vine - Spoude primarily "haste, zeal, diligence," hence means "earnest care, carefulness," 2Cor. 7:11-12; 8:16 (rv, "earnest care," in each place). **Merimna** conveys the thought of anxiety, **Spoude**, of watchful interest and earnestness.

BDAG

- 1) swiftness of movement or action, haste, speed. It is used with the preposition 'meta" = with meaning in haste, in a hurry
- 2) earnest commitment in discharge of an obligation or experience of a relationship, eagerness, earnestness, diligence, willingness, zeal Often. in Greco-Roman literature and ins. of extraordinary commitment to civic and religious responsibilities, which were freq. intertwined, and also of concern for personal moral excellence or optimum devotion to the interests of others

Whatever is worth doing in the Christian life is valuable enough to be done with enthusiasm and care (Jn 9:4 Gal 6:10, Hebrews 6:10; 11+; Eccl 9:10Spurgeon note; 2Th 3:13) Sloth and indifference not only prevent good, but allow evil to prosper (Pr 18:9; Ephesians 5:15; 16+).

See Torrey's Topics "Diligence", "Idleness & sloth"

Cranfield says, Paul is warning us against "that attitude which seeks to get by with as little work and inconvenience as possible, which shrinks from dust and heat and resents the necessity for any exertion as a burden and imposition"

Spoude - 12x in 12v - diligence(4), earnestness(5), effort(1), hurry(2).

Mark 6:25 Immediately she came in a **hurry** to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

Luke 1:39 Now at this time Mary arose and went in ahurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah,

Romans 12:8+ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with **diligence**; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

- 2 Corinthians 7:11 For behold what **earnestness** this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. 12 So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your **earnestness** on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.
- 2 Corinthians 8:7 But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all **earnestness** and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. 8 I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the **earnestness** of others the sincerity of your love also.
- 2 Corinthians 8:16 But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus.

Hebrews 6:11+ And we desire that each one of you show the same **diligence** so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,

2 Peter 1:5+ Now for this very reason also, applying all **diligence**, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,

Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was making every **effort** to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

Spoude - 14x in the non-apocryphal Septuagint - Ex 12:11, 33; Deut 16:3; Judg 5:22; 1 Sam 21:8; Ezra 4:23; Ps 78:33; Jer 8:15; 15:8; Lam 4:6; Ezek 7:11; Dan 2:25; 10:7; Zeph 1:18; Here are some representative OT uses of spoude...

Ex 12:11 'Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in **haste**—it is the LORD'S Passover.

Ex 12:33 And the Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in**haste**, for they said, "We shall all be dead."

FERVENT IN SPIRIT: to pneumati zeontes (PAPMPN):

Mt 24:12 Col 4:12, 13 1Pe 1:22 4:8 Rev 2:4 3:15, 16)

Jesus speaking about the last days says why this attitude is so necessary...

Matt 24:12 "because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

Epaphras is a good example of a man "fervent in spirit"

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Fervent (2204) (zeo) is a verb that literally means to be hot (boil, of liquids; or glow, of solids - Lxx uses literally in Ezek 24:5), bubble, boil. It was used to describe water boiling or of metal glowing with heat. To seethe.

In NT, **zeo** is only used figuratively meaning to be fervent, to burn with desire or exhibit passion. In a negative sense it can connote rage. To express spiritual fervor, eagerness and enthusiasm. **BDAG** says zeo is speaks figuratively "of emotions, anger, love, eagerness to do good or evil, to be stirred up emotionally, be enthusiastic/excited/on fire."

Zeo pictures a person so enthusiastic about his or her tasks that they can hardly contain their excitement. Their desire to accomplish God's work (works prepared before the foundation of the world as described in Eph 2:10+) with excellence and enthusiasm is constantly boiling inside, creating a Spirit filled (controlled and empowered) diligence regarding their divine assignment.

Liddell-Scott (summarized) - (1) to boil, seethe, of water, Homer.; the kettle boils, II. (2). metaphorically to boil or bubble up, of the sea, Herodotus.; of passion, like Lat. *fervere*, Aeschylus., Sophocles. (3). c. gen. to boil up or over with a thing, Plat.. II. Causal, to make to boil

Vincent - **Fervent**, which is formed from the participle of the Latin ferveo, to boil or ferment, is an exact translation of this word, which means to see the or bubble, and is therefore used figuratively of mental states and emotions.

Septuagint (LEH) - to boil, to seethe, to be fiery hot Ezek 24:5; to boil, to seethe (metaphorically of rage) 4Macc 18,20

Zeo - used only 2x in NT and 3x in Lxx - 4Macc 18:20 (here zeo describes "negative" fervor = "in his burning rage" tortured sons and daughters); Job 32:19; Ezek 24:5 (literal use = "bones are boiled"). Here is the other NT use...

Acts 18:25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being **fervent** in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John

Comment: Apollos was well informed about the story of Jesus, and he yearned to make Him known to his fellow Jews. Luke used zeo to describe his fervor to tell others about the great rescue mission of the Deliverer Jesus. Lord, may Apollos' tribe increase in our day of too often "business as usual" church and Christianity! Amen. You may respond - "But that's not my personality," you object. Paul isn't speaking of personality; he is speaking of spirit. The fervent life of Christ's servant is lived more like Apollos and less like Casper Milquetoast." (Woodrow Kroll).

Zeal (Webster's English definitions) - eagerness and ardent interest in pursuit of something: fervor (fervor implies a warm and steady emotion); an intense emotion compelling action; ZEAL implies energetic and unflagging pursuit of an aim or devotion to a cause preaches with the zeal of the converted>; Passionate ardor in the pursuit of any thing. Excessive zeal may rise to enthusiasm. In general, zeal is an eagerness of desire to accomplish or obtain some object, and it may be manifested either in favor of any person or thing, or in opposition to it, and in a good or bad cause.

Fervent (Webster's English definitions) - from ferveo, to be hot, to boil, to glow; Hot; boiling; as a fervent summer; fervent blood. Spenser. Wotton. 2. Hot in temper; vehement. They are fervent to dispute. Hooker. 3. Ardent; very warm; earnest; excited; animated; glowing; as fervent zeal; fervent piety. Figuratively exhibiting or marked by great intensity of feeling. FERVENT stresses sincerity and steadiness of emotional warmth or zeal (fervent good wishes).

The idea of **fervent** is with respect to the spirit, "boiling" (in a figurative sense of course). Paul is saying literally "to boil in spirit." This phrase suggests having plenty of heat to produce adequate, productive energy, but not so much heat that one goes out of control

(Acts 18:25; 1Cor 9:26; Gal 6:9).

Be "hot" for Jesus...just don't burn everyone up everyone around you. (Torrey's Topic "Zeal"). Christ is our example (Ps 69:9; Jn 2:17). The idea is that believers are to continuously (present tense = this is to be our habitual practice, our lifestyle before a critical, watching world)

Zeal should be exhibited in spirit Romans 12:11, in well-doing Gal 4:18; Titus 2:14+, in desiring the salvation of others Acts 26:29; Romans 10:1(note), in contending for the faith Jude 1:3, in missionary labors Romans 15:19(note); Romans 15:23 (note), for the glory of God Nu 25:11,13, for the welfare of saints Colossians 4:13 (note), against idolatry 2Ki 23:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 (Modified from Torrey's Topic "Zeal")

In the context of Christian service "fervent" means "to be full of energy, to be on fire with zeal and enthusiasm." It is a warning against settling into comfortable, shallow ruts in our spiritual lives. The idea is that believers are to continuously (present tense = this is to be our habitual practice, our lifestyle before a critically watching world) be "hot" for the things of the Lord.

The idea of the Greek word **zeo** is not of being overheated to the point of boiling over and out of control but, like a steam engine, of having sufficient heat to produce the energy necessary to get the work done. That principle is reflected in the life of Henry Martyn, the tireless missionary to India, whose heart's desire was to "**burn out for God**." which is exactly what he did in 6 years! Read his short albeit convicting testimony of one who was truly "fervent in spirit"...

Henry Martyn (click for longer biography) was born in 1781, studied at Cambridge, and became Senior Wrangler. (That is, he won the Cambridge University annual mathematics problem-solving competition, and was accordingly recognized as the University's best undergraduate mathematician. "Wrangling" is a British University expression for solving mathematical problems.) He had, moreover, a considerable facility in languages. Under the encouragement of Charles Simeon, he abandoned his intention of going into law and instead went to India as a chaplain in 1806. In the six remaining years of his life, he translated the New Testament into Hindi and Persian, revised an Arabic translation of the New Testament, and translated the Psalter into Persian and the Prayer Book into Hindi. In 1811 he left India for Persia, hoping to do further translations and to improve his existing ones, there and in Arabia. But travel in those days was not a healthy occupation, and he fell ill and eventually died at Tokat on October 16, 1812. (The American Calendar commemorates him on 19 October.) He was buried by the Armenian church there, with the honors ordinarily reserved for one of their own bishops. His diary has been called "one of the most precious treasures of Anglican devotion."

'Tis not for man to trifle; life is brief
And sin is here.
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have not time to sport away the hours;
All must be earnest in a world like ours.
—Horatius Bonar

SERVING THE LORD: to kurio douleuontes (PAPMPN):

Ep 6:5, 6, 7, 8 Col 3:23, 24 1Co 7:22 Titus 2:9, 10 Heb 12:28

FOCUSED FERVENCY

Eph 6:5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, **as to Christ** (THE LORD); 6:6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as **slaves of Christ** (THE LORD), doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to**the Lord**, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back**from the Lord**, whether slave or free.

Col 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men;24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

Serving (1398) (**douleuo** from **doulos** = slave or one who is in bondage or bound to another, in the state of being completely controlled by someone or something) means to be in bondage or in the position of servant and to act accordingly, dutifully obeying the master's commands.

One who lives as a **doulos** to His Lord, is a bondservant who is surrendered wholly to His Master's will and devoted to Him to the disregard of his own interest. Paul exhibited this mindset and was not his own but understood he had been bought with the price of the blood of the One Whom He loving served. He recognized that he was now the property of the Lord Jesus Christ and were to be exclusively His slave. No man can serve two masters (Mt 6:24+). We were all once slaves of **Sin** by our birth into Adam's likeness, but now we are privileged to be slaves of Christ by our new birth. As His slaves we are allow our will to be "swallowed up" in His perfect will.

We are to continuously serve our Master (**present tense** = our habitual practice, our lifestyle). Our Lord gave us His example of not coming to be served but to serve and give His life for many (Mk 10:45, follow His lead = 1Cor 11:1, 1Jn 2:6, 1Pe 2:21).

This exhortation to serve the Lord as a slave refers not so much to our external obedience as to our inner spiritual attitude of submission (see notes on filled with the Spirit -Ephesians 5:18ff+) to the Lord as our "Kurios", our absolute Owner, Master, Possessor, the One Who has all rights over us and can use us as He will. As Paul stated earlier those who are now dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus are to be "obedient from the heart" (see Ro 6:16,17+; Ro 6:18-+)

Lord (2962) (kurios) means lord, master, owner or the one who has absolute ownership power. Jesus is referred to some ten times as Savior and some seven hundred times as Lord. Supreme in Authority. Kurios translates Jehovah (LORD in OT) in Septuagint (LXX) 7000 times.

Martin Luther puts "Lord" in an interesting perspective noting that "The life of Christianity consists of possessive pronouns. It is one thing to say, "Christ is a Saviour"; it is quite another thing to say, "He is my Saviour and my Lord." The devil can say the first; the true Christian alone can say the second.

Romans 12:12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer(NASB: Lockman)

Greek: <u>te elpidi</u> <u>chairontes</u>, (<u>PAPMPN</u>) <u>te thlipsei</u> <u>hupomenontes</u>, (PAPMPN) <u>te proseuche proskarterountes</u>, (PAPMPN)

Amplified: Rejoice *and* exult in hope; be steadfast and patient in suffering *and* tribulation; be constant in prayer. (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

NLT: Be glad for all God is planning for you. Be patient in trouble, and always be prayerful. <u>NLT - Tyndale</u> House)

Phillips: Base your happiness on your hope in Christ. When trials come endure them patiently, steadfastly maintain the habit of prayer. (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: rejoicing in the sphere of hope; patient in tribulation; with respect to prayer, persevering in it continually (Eerdmans)

Young's Literal: in the hope rejoicing; in the tribulation enduring; in the prayer persevering;

rejoicing in hope - Ro 5:2,3; 15:13; Ps 16:9-11; Ps 71:20-23; Ps 73:24-26; Pr 10:28; 14:32; Lam 3:24-26; Hab 3:17,18; Mt 5:12; Lk 10:20; 1Co 13:13; Php 3:1; 4:4; Col 1:27; 1Th 5:8,16; 2Th 2:16,17; Titus 2:13; 3:7; Heb 3:6; 6:17-19; 1Pe 1:3-8; 4:13; 1Jn 3:1, 2, 3

See study of The Dynamic Relationship of Biblical Hope and Joy

Paul has linked hope, tribulation, and perseverance in Romans 5:3-5, and, he links hope, perseverance, and prayer in 8:24-26.

Notice the Phillips paraphrase - "Base your happiness on your hope in Christ. When trials come endure them patiently, steadfastly maintain the habit of prayer."

Martyn Lloyd-Jones - Tribulation, hope and prayer always go together in the New Testament and it is a very good way of testing ourselves to ask whether they always go together in our experience. They should.

Rejoicing (5463) (chairo - see related word - chara) means to be "cheer" full, calmly happy or well-off. Chairo implies and imparts joy. Chairo is used in a whole range of situations in which the emotion of joy is evoked. To be in a state of happiness and inner sense of well being (often independent of what is happening when the Source is the Spirit!). Chairo means to enjoy a state of gladness, to be delighted.

Rejoicing is **present tense** which pictures us as living life with a habitual attitude of inner joy and outer rejoicing, something not possible naturally but only possible supernaturally as we are enabled by the Spirit (cp one aspect of the Spirit's fruit - Gal 5:22-+, enabled by the Spirit even in tribulations - 1Th 1:6-+, a product of prayer - Ro 15:13+).

William Newell - Our **hopes** are bound up with our **Lord's Coming**, in prospect of which we should constantly be filled with exultation. (Ed: Are you? Is this your day to day experience? It can be in Christ! It is our Father's desire for His children to be continually filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit.) (Romans 12 Commentary)

Wuest paraphrases it "rejoicing in the sphere of hope." In the "atmosphere" of hope is the idea. Like a fish needs water to thrive, joy needs hope to be alive. In other words when a believer's hope is fresh and full and focused on Jesus Who Himself is our Hope (1Ti 1:1), this believer's hope will be like a rain falling on a barren heart, bringing forth the fragrant flower of joy. Indeed, hope fixed on the good that God will do to us in the future is a sure foundation for Christian joy in the present. This present joy is independent of present circumstances (which may be cheery or dreary), for it is a supernatural joy, a joy that can still survive in the dark night of a believer's soul. Such glorious joy is based not on our feelings, but on the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22+). Such joy can also be the fruit of prayer, so if your hope is low, ask a brother or sister to intercede for you with Paul's prayer...

Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, **that you may abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Ro 15:13+)

Meditate on the Biblical truth about **Hope** (See The Blessed Hope), remembering that our sure and steadfast hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. Trust the Spirit to take that truth and renew your mind, and bring forth supernatural fruit of joy manifest in the act of **rejoicing**.

Cranfield writes that...

this joy has its source not in this present age to which he is not to be conformed, nor in his present circumstances, but in that which is still future, which he grasps by hope. But this hope is not the sort of hope which disappoints (cf. Ro 5:5); since that which is hoped for is altogether sure and certain, this hope means present joy. For 'although believers are now pilgrims on earth, yet by their confidence they surmount the heavens, so that they cherish their future inheritance in their bosoms with tranquility'. (A critical and exegetical commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. London; New York: T&T Clark International)

Sanday - The Christian hope is the cause of that Christian joy and cheerfulness of disposition which is the grace of Christian love: cf. 1Cor 13:7 'Love...hopes all things.' (Sanday, W., & Headlam, A. C.. A critical and exegetical commentary on the Epistle of the Romans)

Johann Bengel - True joy is not only an emotion of the mind and a benefit [privilege], but also a Christian duty, Ro 12:15. It is the highest complaisance in God. He wishes us to rejoice and to spend our spiritual life joyously.

A sorrow shared is But half a trouble. A joy that's shared is A joy made double.

Hope (1680) (elpis) (See also elpis -2 and the Believer's Blessed Hope) is a desire of some good with the expectation of obtaining it. It is the opposite of despair. Paul reminds Timothy that ultimately "Christ Jesus, who is our hope." (1 Timothy 1:1)

Hope of future salvation stimulates present joy.

Rob Morgan - When we can't **rejoice** in circumstances, we can **rejoice** in the anticipation of what God's going to do with them, in them, through them, despite them, and because of them. On cloudy days the sun still shines as brightly as ever in the center of the solar system; and when we **rejoice in hope**, we're saying, "Despite current conditions, the Son is shining for me as brightly as ever with healing in His rays."

Spurgeon, preached a sermon on Ro 12:12 (Romans 12:12 Constant, Instant, Expectant) in which he said the first two phrases — rejoice in hope and be patient in affliction—are powerful antidotes against poison, but they must be taken with prayer. "Joy and patience are curative essences," he said, "but they must be dropped into a glass full of supplication, and then they will be wonderfully efficient."

As noted with joy above, hope is also a product of prayer...

Now may the God of hope fill you with **all joy** and peace in believing (the qualifier so to speak), that you may abound **in hope** (How?) by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Ro 15:13+)

Observe the pattern in this prayerful passage...

BIBLICAL HOPE
Source: God of Hope
Power: Holy Spirit
Prayer: For filling
Result: Overflowing hope

John Trapp - **Hope** makes absent joys present... and beguiles calamity as good company doth the time....This life would be little better than hell, saith Bernard, were it not for the hopes of heaven....(Hope) holds head above water, this keeps the heart aloft all floods of afflictions, as the cork doth the line, as bladders do the body in swimming.... He who sees visions of glory, and has sure hopes of heaven, will not be overcome by a shower of stones; he that is to take possession of a kingdom will not lose hope in a foul day. Hope *unfailable* is grounded upon faith *unfeigned*, which is seldom without a joy *unspeakable* and full of glory (1Pe 1:8KJV+, cp James 1:2-3-+)

John Stott says that "*Christ ones*", followers of the Messiah, those who are true believers "should be the most positive people in the world. We cannot mooch round the place with a dropping, hang-dog expression. We cannot drag our way through life, moaning and groaning. We cannot always be looking on the dark side of everything, as negative prophets of doom. No, "we exult in God." (see Romans 5:1+) Then every part of our life becomes suffused with glory. Christian worship becomes a joyful celebration of God and Christian living a joyful service of God. So come, let us exult in God together! (John W. Alexander, ed., Believing and Obeying Jesus Christ - Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980)

Remember that this **hope** is not "*I hope so*" but is "*a hope sure*!" In other words, for a saint Biblically based, Spirit wroughthope is an absolute certainty of future good, that God will do good to us in the future and thus this hope comes "pre-packaged" not only with a desire of divine good but with the sure expectation of obtaining it. That's a state of mind which will keep you stable when the circumstances of your life scream otherwise! And so Paul exhorts us to be continuously rejoicing, for our past sins are paid in full and our future gain is fully certain! Christ has redeemed us and purchased our salvation on the cross in the past (see Ro 5:1, 2+), His Spirit is presently sanctifying us (progressively setting us apart more and more from the world and unto our Lord, making us holy - see 2Cor 3:18+) (Gal 5:16-25)see notes;) and one day soon He will lead us to future eternal glory (see Colossians 1:26, 27+; 1Jn 3:2+, 1Jn 3:3+).

Calvin says Paul is warning us not to become content with earthly joys but to "raise our minds to heaven, that we may enjoy full and solid joy."

The reality of our certain hope should bring continual joy independent of our current circumstances. (Torrey's Topic 'Hope').

Hope is the Christian's lifeline (along with communion in prayer) to his glorious future. As stated above the opposite of hope is despair as the story of an American prisoner tragically illustrates.

A certain American prisoner held in North Viet Nam, led to believe that if he cooperated with his captors he would be set free, had done quite well despite two years in captivity. With this vision before him, he even became the leader of a prison thought-reform group. However, the day his vision dissolved and he realized he was being deceived, he curled up on his bunk, refused nourishment, and was dead in a couple of weeks. When faith in his vision was removed, he could no longer cope. (Hughes, R. K.. Acts: The Church Afire. Page 341. Crossway Books)

Robert Haldane comments that "Here, in the midst of exhortations to attend to various duties, they are commanded to rejoice in hope (Ed note: It is not literally an imperative or command). Hope is founded on faith, and faith on the Divine testimony Hope, then, respects what God has declared in His word. We are here exhorted to exercise hope with respect to future glory, and to rejoice in the contemplation of the objects of hope. What can be better calculated to promote joy than the hope of obtaining blessings so glorious in a future world? Were this hope kept in lively exercise, it would raise believers above the fear of man and a concern for the honours of this world. It would also enable them to despise the shame of the cross. The objects, then, of the believer's hope are the spiritual and celestial blessings which are yet future, to which his eyes should constantly be directed, and which are calculated to fill him with the greatest joy. It is not the prospect of terrestrial possessions in which he is to rejoice, but of a house eternal in the heavens. 'In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' It is that glorious communion with Jesus Christ of which the Apostle speaks, when he says, 'Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.' It is that state in which believers shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is. As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.' It is the hope of righteousness for which, through the Spirit, believers wait, Gal.

5:5. This hope is founded on the unchangeable promise of God-on His promise accompanied by His oath-on the blood of Christ with which He has sealed His promise-on Him who was not only dead, but is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for His people. This hope, then, is both sure and stedfast, and entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner, even Jesus, is for us entered.

Alexander Maclaren

Now, we all know—from the boy that is expecting to go home for his holidays in a week, up to the old man to whose eye the time-veil is wearing thin—that hope, if it is certain, is a source of gladness. How lightly one's bosom's lord sits upon its throne, when a great hope comes to animate us! how everybody is pleasant, and all things are easy, and the world looks different! Hope, if it is certain, will gladden, and if our Christianity grasps, as it ought to do, the only hope that is absolutely certain, and as sure as if it were in the past and had been experienced, then our hearts, too, will sing for joy. True joy is not a matter of temperament, so much as a matter of faith. It is not a matter of circumstances. All the surface drainage may be dry, but there is a well in the courtyard deep and cool and full and exhaustless, and a Christian who rightly understands and cherishes the Christian hope is lifted above temperament, and is not dependent upon conditions for his joys.

The Apostle, in an earlier part of this same letter, defines for us what that hope is, which thus is the secret of perpetual gladness, when he speaks about 'rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.' Yes, it is that great, supreme, calm, far off, absolutely certain prospect of being gathered into the divine glory, and walking there, like the three in the fiery furnace, unconsumed and at ease; it is that hope that will triumph over temperament, and over all occasions for melancholy, and will breathe into our life a perpetual gladness. **Brethren, is it not strange and sad that with such a treasure by our sides we should consent to live such poor lives as we do?**

But remember, although I cannot say to myself, 'Now I will be glad,' and cannot attain to joy by a movement of the will or direct effort, although it is of no use to say to a man—which is all that the world can ever say to him—'Cheer up and be glad,' whilst you do not alter the facts that make him sad, there is a way by which we can bring about feelings of gladness or of gloom. It is just this—we can choose what we will look at.

If you prefer to occupy your mind with the troubles, losses, disappointments, hard work, blighted hopes of this poor sin-ridden world, of course sadness will come over you often, and a general grey tone will be the usual tone of your lives, as it is of the lives of many of us, broken only by occasional bursts of foolish mirth and empty laughter.

FEELINGS WILL FOLLOW OUR THOUGHTS

But if you choose to turn away from all these, and instead of the dim, dismal, hard present, to sun yourselves in the light of the yet unrisen sun, which you can do, then, having rightly chosen the subjects to **think** about, the **feeling** will come as a matter of course.

You cannot make yourselves glad by, as it were, laying hold of yourselves and lifting yourselves into gladness, but you can rule the direction of your thoughts, and so can bring around you summer in the midst of winter, by steadily contemplating the facts—and they are present facts, though we talk about them collectively as 'the future'—the facts on which all Christian gladness ought to be based. We can carry our own atmosphere with us; like the people in Italy, who in frosty weather will be seen sitting in the market-place by their stalls with a dish of embers, which they grasp in their hands, and so make themselves comfortably warm on the bitterest day. You can bring a reasonable degree of warmth into the coldest weather, if you will lay hold of the vessel in which the fire is, and keep it in your hand and close to your heart. Choose what you think about, and feelings will follow thoughts....

Brethren, I believe that one great source of the weakness of average Christianity amongst us to-day is the dimness into which so many of us have let the hope of the glory of God pass in our hearts. So I beg you to lay to heart this first commandment, and to rejoice in hope. (Romans 12:12 Sermon)

Steven Cole

Romans 12:12a, "rejoicing in hope." Does that describe you, especially when you're going through a difficult trial? According to the U. S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, about nine percent of those in the United States report that they suffer from current depression (within two weeks of the survey), with four percent suffering from major depression (www.cdc.gov/Features /dsDepression). And believers are not

exempt. Some godly saints, such as Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, and the hymn writer, William Cowper, have suffered from severe depression. Probably some of you are depressed right now. But since joy and hope are the opposite of depression, we all should try to understand what the Bible teaches about how we can have such joy and hope, especially in the face of difficult trials.

Before we look at what the Bible says, let me say that the causes of depression can be very complex. It can stem from various diseases, from physical conditions (such as post-partum depression in women), from grief over loss, or from our genetic brain chemistry. Psychiatrists do not understand exactly how brain chemistry or anti-depressant drugs work. If you suffer from inexplicable depression, the first thing you should do is get a medical checkup, to see if a doctor can determine the cause.

Regarding anti-depressant drugs, my view is that if you need them to get out of the pit so that you're able to function somewhat normally again, then take the drug as you would any other medication if you were sick. But once you're stable, unless you absolutely need the drug to remain depression-free, I would advise weaning yourself off the drugs under a physician's supervision.

But having said that, I have a caution: If your depression stems from some known sin, taking an antidepressant so that you feel better and moving on with life without dealing with your sin is spiritually and emotionally damaging. God designed things so that our sin has negative emotional effects to get our attention. The proper response to sin is not to take a pill, but to repent and seek to please Him.

Depression is often an emotional indicator that you are living to please yourself, not to please God. Those who are severely depressed to the point of being suicidal are not thinking about pleasing God or about the effect their action would have on others. Rather, they are focused on how to get out of their pain, with no regard for pleasing God or serving others. So when you're battling depression, seek to please God beginning on the thought level.

The first man born in sin disobeyed God and became jealous of his brother, who obeyed God. When Cain sinned, he became depressed and angry (those emotions often go together). God didn't prescribe an anti-depressant. Rather, He confronted Cain with his sin and told him to counter it with godly behavior (Gen. 4:6-7): "Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." God's prescription for Cain's depression and anger was obedience.

The Bible often (as in our text) says that believers are to be full of joy and hope, even in the midst of severe trials. Joy is not a minor theme in the Bible. The Psalms are full of commands to praise the Lord and rejoice in Him. Joy is promised to all that walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Paul wrote Philippians when he was in prison and other believers were attacking him. That short book is brimming with joy in the Lord. He writes (Php 3:1), "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you." In case we missed it, he repeats (Php 4:4), "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"

To help you understand this important matter, let me mention three things that biblical joy is not and then show how to get it. By the way, no one has written more capably on this than John Piper. All of his books deal with it, but I especially recommend **When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy** [Crossway]. As he often says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." Our joy is all about glorifying our merciful God and Savior.

First, biblical joy is not a matter of personality or temperament. Some by nature are cheery and optimistic. Others are naturally more gloomy and pessimistic. But biblical joy comes from walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, not by natural temperament. Those who are naturally more melancholic will have to fight harder to attain biblical joy. But those who are naturally cheery should not assume that they have biblical joy, unless they know that their joy comes from dependence on God and His promises.

Second, biblical joy is not a matter of happy circumstances. Paul could rejoice in prison and in the face of many trials because his joy was in the Lord, not in circumstances. In the Psalms, the psalmist is often in horrible circumstances, sometimes despairing of life itself, but when he puts his trust in the Lord, he ends up praising and thanking Him and literally singing for joy.

Third, biblical joy is not a phony, superficial happiness that smiles on the outside when the heart is hurting on the inside. Just three verses after our text, Paul tells us to "weep with those who weep." He doesn't say, "Tell those who weep to buck up and smile!" There is a time for grieving and sorrow. Paul

described himself (2 Cor. 6:10) "as sorrowful yet always rejoicing." The shortest verse in the Greek New Testament is 1 Thessalonians 5:16, "Rejoice always." The shortest verse in the English New Testament is John 11:35, "Jesus wept." There is no contradiction. Biblical joy is a solid undercurrent that is not affected by the surface storms of life.

Then how do we get this joy? Paul says here that it comes from hope. And hope comes from focusing your mind on the sure promises of God for the future. The Bible tells us that we can set our minds on certain things that are true of us in Christ (Col. 3:1-4+):

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Either Jesus and Paul were liars and you can chuck the entire Christian faith, or they spoke the truth. Jesus promised to come back and complete our redemption, so that we will share His glory. Focus on that truth, even if you don't feel like it! Feelings eventually follow your thoughts. Set your mind on the hope of eternal glory and joy in the Lord will follow. (Romans 12:12 Joyful, Prayerful Perseverance)

PERSEVERING IN TRIBULATION (crushing, pressing circumstances): te thlipsei hupomenontes (PAPMPN)

Ro 2:9, 5:3, 8:35, Jn 16:33 Rev 1:9, 2:9,10,22, 7:14, 1Th 3:3 Heb 10:33) (Ro 2:7; 5:3,4; 8:25; 15:4; Psalms 37:7; 40:1; Luke 8:15; 21:19; Colossians 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 3:5; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 3:10; Hebrews 6:12,15; 10:36; 12:1; James 1:3,4; 5:7,10,11; 1 Peter 2:19,20; 2 Peter 1:6; Revelation 13:10)

Paul repeatedly links hope with endurance - Ro 5:2-4, Ro 8:24-25, 1Cor 13:7, 1Thes 1:3.

Rob Morgan - Rejoicing in hope enables us to be patient in affliction. Patience is hope in different clothing. It's the ability to wait calmly as the Lord works everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.

William Newell - Patience in trial is the only path to our perfecting; wherefore James says we should count "manifold trials to be all joy"; and, "let patience have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." (**Romans 12 Commentary**)

Note also that in the original Greek, the order is "in hope rejoicing, tribulation persevering, prayer devoted."

Persevering when you are experiencing crushing circumstances is not a call for you to just "man up" as they say and to "grit your teeth" and "bear it." That is the "world's way" of dealing with difficult situations. God has given His children a new and better way to navigate the roaring waters of adversity and in context it is by having one's mind and heart strengthened by hope in which they are rejoicing. In short, since hope is fixed on our glorious future, it is independent of present crushing circumstances. Don't misunderstand - Those circumstances are still painful and difficult. It is just that now God has given us a way of escape that we might be able to bear up under the load of these circumstances. So clearly rejoicing in hope is linked with persevering in tribulation. The former enables us do the latter. Ultimately continual rejoicing and steadfast persevering call for the believer to "jettison" self reliance and self-effort and instead to yield, surrender, submit and depend on their indwelling, ever with them, ever ready and able Helper, the Holy Spirit Who provides the supernatural enabling power to walk through the difficult circumstances. The result is that we are molded more into the image of God's Son and God is greatly glorified as both lost and saved see our supernaturally empowered attitudes and actions! Praise the Lord!

Present circumstances cannot remove supernaturally enabled rejoicing because present circumstances cannot, in the long run, impact our future hope of the glory of God, which includes the redemption of our bodies (Ro 5:2+, Ro 8:19+, Ro 8:23+), for this hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. And on this Solid Rock we can stand!

Spurgeon - The old physicians tell us of two antidotes against poison, the hot and the cold, and they expand upon the special excellence of each of these; in like manner the Apostle Paul gives us first the warm antidote, "rejoicing in hope," and then he gives us the cool antidote, "patient in tribulation." Either of these, or both together, will work wonderfully for the sustaining of the spirit; but it is to be observed that neither of these remedies can be taken into the soul unless it is mixed with a draught of prayer. Joy and patience are curative essences, but they must be dropped into a glass full of supplication, and then they will be wonderfully efficient.

MacArthur explains that "because we have perfect assurance concerning the ultimate outcome of our lives **Ed**: This is what Biblical hope does - it assures us that the ultimate outcome of our temporal life, even one filled with temporal tribulation, will give way to a life of eternal glory!), we are able to persist against any obstacle and endure any suffering. That is why Paul could declare with

perfect confidence that "we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:2–5). (MacArthur, J: Romans 9-16. Chicago: Moody Press)

Persevering (5278) (**hupomeno** from **hupo** = under + **meno** = abide - see study on related word **hupomone**) literally means to abide or remain under but not simply with resignation, but with a vibrant hope (see note on Romans 5:3). It describes a resisting by holding one's ground which is not a passive "putting up with" things, but an active, steadfast endurance even in the face of serious trouble. (See also Torrey's Topics - "Afflicted Saints", "Steadfastness")

Note that **hupomeno** is in the **present tense**, which calls for this to be our continual, habitual practice! Now, just try to accomplish this in the strength of your flesh! You cannot. Only the Spirit in us can accomplish this objective! (cf Jn 6:63)

The Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries spoke a great deal about perseverance. **Thomas Watson** wrote: "God's decree is the very pillar and basis on which the saints' **perseverance** depends. That decree ties the knot of adoption so fast that neither sin, death, nor hell can break it asunder."

Watson's companion in conflict was William Secker who put it profoundly "Though Christians be not kept altogether from falling, yet they are kept from falling altogether.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: By perseverance the snail reached the ark.

Samuel Johnson claimed "Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance."

And so we think of William Wilberforce, a 19th-century parliamentarian, was moved by the Lord to oppose the slave trade. In 1807 he brought about the banning of the slave trade in England. But not until 1833 was slavery as an institution abolished, and the news reached Wilberforce on his deathbed.

As someone has said "Triumph is umph added to try."

Wayne Detzler writes that "True Christian perseverance is not tied to tenacity. It is rather the work of God the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. The starch in a saint's spine is shown by Scripture to be nothing less than the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Only in this way can one explain the work of Gladys Aylward, a London parlor maid. Societies scorned her missionary application. She seemed too dull to master Chinese and fulfill her vision of serving in China. Realizing this, she scoured up her own fare to China and sailed in 1930. After slogging her way across Siberia she reached her field in remote Yangcheng. When the Japanese invaded in 1940 she led 100 children on an epic journey that caught the imagination of Hollywood (The Inn of the Sixth Happiness - a great film for the family!). In 1947 failing health forced her back to England where she crusaded for missions until her death in 1970. That was tenacity, not just British grit. It is God's persevering grace." (Borrow New Testament Words in Today's Language)

Nature also illustrates **perseverance**, for as someone has well said "Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's little nut that held its ground"

Tribulation (2347) (**thlipsis** from **thlibo** = to crush, press, compress, squeeze in turn derived from **thláo** not found in NT but see related word **sunthlao**) (Click word study on thlipsis) originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. Medically thlipsis was used of the pulse (pressure). It is a pressing together as of grapes. It conveys the idea of being squeezed or placed under pressure or crushed beneath a weight. When, according to the ancient law of England, those who willfully refused to plead guilty, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death, this was literally **thlipsis**. The iron cage was **stenochoria** (see below). **Thlipsis** thus refers not to mild discomfort but to great difficulty.

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Thlipsis-45x in the NT - Matt. 13:21; 24:9, 21, 29; Mk. 4:17; 13:19, 24; Jn. 16:21, 33; Acts 7:10, 11; 11:19; 14:22; 20:23; Rom. 2:9; 5:3; 8:35; 12:12; 1 Co. 7:28; 2 Co. 1:4, 8; 2:4; 4:17; 6:4; 7:4; 8:2, 13; Eph. 3:13; Phil. 1:16; 4:14; Col. 1:24; 1Th 1:6; 3:3, 7; 2Th 1:4, 6; Heb. 10:33; Jas. 1:27; Rev. 1:9; 2:9f, 22; 7:14
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Thlipsis presents a great picture! Don't we all occasionally feel like the weight of the world is weighing us down?

Jesus warned His disciples that this world would bring us its full share of difficulties (In 16:33 Spurgeon's devotional)

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Paul knows from experience that tribulations are a certainty for believers and so he exhorts us to persevere. For example Luke, describing Paul's missionary travels to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, writes that Paul (and Barnabas) were...

strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many

tribulations we must (speaks of a necessity, an obligation) enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

Paul exhorts us as new creatures in Christ who are possessors of a new "power supply" to continue steadfast in the time of trouble. The realization that life is to some extent an obstacle course keeps a person from being surprised when things do not go as planned. Afflictions are to be borne patiently in His power.

This exhortation to **persevere** follows naturally from the former -- Our hope-inspired joy should produce a courage which is able to hold up under the afflictions of this present age, which is passing away. As Paul has already instructed us, from another perspective, afflictions are even to be exulted in because as they are endured, even more hope is produced (Ro 5:3-5+). Don't misunderstand - affliction is still affliction and the pain and suffering experienced are very real, but a believer can know they are momentary and light in the context of eternity and that they are producing for us an incomparable eternal weight of glory (2Cor 4:17+).

J Ligon Duncan - The hope of future glory in salvation is able to animate our rejoicing even in the midst in the most real and severe and overwhelming trials in this life. If our ultimate hope was derived even from the desire that bad situations we are in now will eventually become good, we could not rejoice in all circumstance. Not all the bad circumstances that we are in now will be good in the long run in our lives. There will be some things that will never be rectified in this live. That hope of glory, however, enables us to rejoice in every circumstance Paul says, rejoicing in hope. ...When the Spirit enables us to perseverance (Ed: Read that statement again - this perseverance in crushing circumstances is not possible naturally but supernaturally!), the spirit enables us to not simply bear up under stress, to survive the things that we are going through, but the Spirit enables us to continue to be useful in kingdom service despite that stress and despite that trial. Paul is calling on us to manifest this in our Christian life and experience. Persevering in tribulation. (Romans 12)

Jamieson - Here it is more lively to retain the order and the verbs of the original: "In hope, rejoicing; in tribulation, enduring; in prayer, persevering." Each of these exercises helps the other. If our "hope" of glory is so assured that it is a rejoicing hope, we shall find the spirit of "endurance in tribulation" natural and easy; but since it is "prayer" which strengthens the faith that begets hope and lifts it up into an assured and joyful expectancy, and since our patience in tribulation is fed by this, it will be seen that all depends on our "perseverance in prayer."

Adam Clarke - Remembering that what you suffer as Christians you suffer for Christ's sake; and it is to his honor, and the honor of your Christian profession, that you suffer it with an even mind.

Barnes - Christians may be enabled to do this by the sustaining influence of their hope of future glory; of being admitted to that world where there shall be no more death, and where all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes, Revelation 21:4; Revelation 7:17; compare James 1:4. See the influence of hope in sustaining us in affliction more fully considered in the notes at Romans 8:18-28. (Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible)

John Trapp - Bearing up under pressures, as among many other martyrs Nicholas Burton, who by the way to the stake, and in the flame, was so patient and cheerful, that the tormentors said, the devil had his soul before he came to the fire, and therefore his senses of feeling were past. (Acts and Mon.)

John Gill - Nothing tends more to animate the people of God to a cheerful serving of him (Ro 12:11), or to make them more patient under afflictions, **than a hope of being for ever with the Lord:** Whilst the saints are in this world they must expect tribulation (Jn 16:33); their way to heaven lies through it (Acts 14:22, 2Ti 3:12, Php 1:29); and it becomes them to be patient under it, not murmuring against God (Php 2:14), on the one hand, nor reviling of men, on the other (cf Jesus attitude in 1Pe 2:23). (John Gill Commentary)

William Barclay - We are to meet tribulation with triumphant fortitude. Someone once said to a gallant sufferer: "Suffering colours all life, doesn't it?" "Yes," said the gallant one, "it does, but I propose to choose the colour." When the dreadful affliction of complete deafness began to descend on Beethoven and life seemed to be one unbroken disaster, he said: "I will take life by the throat." As William Cowper had it:

"Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say.

'Even let the unknown tomorrow
Bring with it what it may,
It can bring with it nothing
But he will bear us through."

When Nebuchadnezzar cast Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the burning fiery furnace he was amazed that they took no harm. He asked if three men had not been cast into the flames. They told him it was so. He said, "But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods" (Daniel 3:24-25). A man can

John Calvin

Paul first forbids us to acquiesce in present blessings, and to ground our joy on earth and on earthly things, as though our happiness were based on them; and he bids us to raise our minds up to heaven, that we may possess solid and full joy.

If our joy is derived from the hope of future life, then patience will grow up in adversities; for no kind of sorrow will be able to overwhelm this joy. Hence these two things are closely connected together, that is, joy derived from hope, and patience in adversities.

No man will indeed calmly and quietly submit to bear the cross, but he who has learnt to seek his happiness beyond this world, so as to mitigate and allay the bitterness of the cross with the consolation of hope. But as both these things are far above our strength, we must be instant in prayer, and continually call on God, that he may not suffer our hearts to faint and to be pressed down, or to be broken by adverse events. (Calvin's Commentary)

Alexander Maclaren

Now, if my heart is filled with a calm gladness because my eye is fixed upon a celestial hope, then both the passive and active sides of Christian 'patience' will be realised by me. If my hope burns bright, and occupies a large space in my thoughts, then it will not be hard to take the homely consolation of good John Newton's hymn and say-

'Though painful at present, 'Twill cease before long; And then, oh, how pleasant The conqueror's song!'

A man who is sailing to America, and knows that he will be in New York in a week, does not mind, although his cabin is contracted, and he has a great many discomforts, and though he has a bout of sea-sickness. The disagreeables are only going to last for a day or two. So our hope will make us bear trouble, and not make much of it.

And our hope will strengthen us, if it is strong, for all the work that is to be done. Persistence in the path of duty, though my heart be beating like a smith's hammer on the anvil, is what Christian men should aim at, and possess. If we have within our hearts that fire of a certain hope, it will impel us to diligence in doing the humblest duty, whether circumstances be for or against us; as some great steamer is driven right on its course, through the ocean, whatever storms may blow in the teeth of its progress, because, deep down in it, there are furnaces and boilers which supply the steam that drives the engines.

So a life that is joyful because it is hopeful will be full of calm endurance and strenuous work.

'Rejoicing in hope; patient,' persevering in tribulation. (Romans 12:12 Sermon)

RAKU - Some friends gave us a piece of Raku pottery. "Each pot is hand-formed," the tag explained, "a process that allows the spirit of the artist to speak through the finished work with particular directness and intimacy." Once the clay has been shaped by the potter it is fired in a kiln. Then, glowing red hot, it is thrust into a smoldering sawdust pile where it remains until finished. The result is a unique product—"one of a kind," the tag on our piece insists. So it is with us. We bear the imprint of the Potter's hand. He too has spoken through His work "with particular directness and intimacy." Each of us is formed in a unique way for a unique work: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10+). But though we are created for good works, we're not yet finished. We must experience the kiln of affliction. Aching hearts, weary spirits, aging bodies are the processes God uses to finish the work He has begun. Don't fear the furnace that surrounds you. Be "patient in tribulation" and await the finished product. "Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4+).

We are here to be perfected, Only God our needs can see; Rarest gems bear hardest grinding, God's own workmanship are we.

DEVOTED TO PRAYER: te proseuche proskarterountes (PAPMPN)

Eph 6:18, 19, 20 Spurgeon, 2Th 3:1-2 Acts 2:46, 6:4 Col 4:2) (Genesis 32:24, 25, 26; Job 27:8, 9, 10; Psalms 55:16,17; 62:8; 109:4; Jeremiah 29:12,13; Daniel 9:18,19; Luke 11:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; 18:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9-43; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4; 12:5; 2 Corinthians 12:8; Ephesians 6:18,19; Philippians 4:6,7; Colossians 4:2,12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Hebrews 5:7; James 5:15,16; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 5:14,15)

When V. Raymond Edman was president of Wheaton College, he often exhorted the students, "Chin up and knees down." That's good advice for all of us. (Ray Pritchard)

Rob Morgan - Whenever your hope seems to fail you and your joy begins to sink," said Spurgeon, "the shortest method is to take to your knees. By remembering the promise in prayer, hope will be sustained and then joy is sure to spring from it." An **open Bible** and a **bowed head** create a powerful atmosphere in which God's will is brought to bear upon the distresses of life. Jesus even recommended we "nag" God with our requests, like a persistent neighbor at a friend's door or a relentless widow harassing a presiding judge. (100 Bible Verses Everyone Should Know By Heart)

William Newell - In prayer steadfastly continuing-So did the early Christians (Acts 2:42,46,47; 6:4; 12:5,12). But do not forget to watch expectantly, and to give thanks in your prayers. (Col 4:2.) Ten will attend Bible teaching, and one hundred Sunday preaching, to two or three who "in prayer steadfastly continue": but be thou of that two or three; for they prevail, and to them Christ reveals Himself; and they become channels of blessing to countless others (Ed: Lord teach us to pray! Amen). (Romans 12 Commentary)

William Barclay - We are to persevere in prayer. Is it not the case that there are times in life when we let day add itself to day and week to week, and we never speak to God? When a man ceases to pray, he despoils himself of the strength of Almighty God. No man should be surprised when life collapses if he insists on living it alone. (Daily Study Bible)

Sanday & Headlam - Persecution again naturally suggests prayer, for the strength of prayer is specially needed in times of persecution.

Writing to the **Ephesians** Paul exhorted them "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel (Eph 6:18-19+)

Paul also has a similar note to the saints at Colossae (note this an order as from a commanding general which emphasizes the critical need for prayer in the ongoing spiritual war - it's not pray if you feel like it but pray all the time!) "Devote (proskartereo - present imperative) yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving." (Col 4:2+)

Note the progression: hope, tribulation, prayer.

How often does tribulation drive you to prayer?

Someone has well said that prayer is the breath of the Christian life and almost nothing decays so fast in the fallen human heart as the desire to pray. In other words, nothing is more vital than prayer in Christian existence, and few things are more vulnerable to neglect. We must come back to it again and again and stoke the fire.

Most Christians will confess the difficulty of maintaining a regular and effective prayer life. The reason is not difficult to discern. If Satan (or our flesh) can keep us out of touch with God, he will not have to worry about any trouble we might cause for his evil kingdom (or our selfish desires).

Devoted (4342) (**proskartereo** from **prós** = in compound Greek words prós implies motion, direction = toward, to + **kartereo** = be strong, steadfast, firm, endure, hold out, bear the burden) (Click word study on **proskartereo**) is in the present tense and means continuously, habitually devoted to or attending to. The literal meaning is to be strong toward or earnest toward something, and it carries the ideas of steadfast and unwavering. It also conveys the idea of waiting on or being ready for something as illustrated in (Mk 3:9) where the boat was standing ready for Jesus (Is my "vessel" standing ready for Jesus?).

The **present tense** calls for this to be the believer's continual attitude. Ultimately this is only possible as we learn to yield to the Spirit Who enables our will to want to be devoted and energizes us to follow through (Php 2:13NLT+).

Denney - The strong word suggests not only the constancy with which they are to pray, but the effort that is needed to maintain a habit so much above nature (**Ed**: Cp our need for the Spirit's initiation of this "genre" of prayer. Ro 8:26, Eph 6:18, Gal 4:6, Jude 1:20). (**Romans 12 - The Expositor's Greek Testament**)

Proskartereo - 10x in the NT -- Mk. 3:9; Acts 1:14; 2:42, 46; 6:4; 8:13; 10:7; Rom. 12:12; 13:6; Col. 4:2. Translated - continually devoting themselves(2), continued(1), continuing(1), devote ourselves(1), devote yourselves(1), devoted(1), devoting themselves(1), personal attendants(1), stand ready(1).

Proskartereo was a dominant attitude in the early church in Acts especially regarding teaching, prayer and breaking of bread (for a sense of this word see the <u>6 uses in Acts</u>). Paul has a very picturesque use of **proskartereo** in (Romans 13:6+) where he describes the unceasing activity of the tax collector! If a tax collector has this attitude for treasure that fades away, what should be a saint's attitude towards prayer knowing that they are being "<u>added</u> to the <u>prayers</u> of <u>all</u> the <u>saints</u> on the <u>golden altar</u> which was <u>before</u> the <u>throne</u>. (of God in heaven)" (Rev 8:3±)

If the church demonstrated in its prayer life the dedication and persistence of the government in its collection of revenue, then the church would indeed have little to fear from the gates of hell!

Matthew Poole - be instant and constant in the duty. A metaphor from hounds, that give not over the game till they have got it: see Luke 18:1 Ephesians 6:18 Colossians 4:2 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

Prayer (4335)(**proseuche** from **pros** = toward or immediately before + **euchomai** = to pray or vow) is the more general word for prayer and is used only of prayer to God. The prefix **pros** would convey the sense of being immediately before Him and hence the ideas of adoration, devotion, and worship. The basic idea is to bring something, and in prayer this pertains to bringing up prayer requests. In early Greek culture an offering was brought with a prayer that it be accepted. Later the idea was changed slightly, so that the thing brought to God was a prayer. In later Greek, prayers appealed to God for His presence.

Romans 12:13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: tais chreiais ton agion koinonountes, (PAPMPN) ten philoxenian diokontes. (PAPMPN)

Amplified: Contribute to the needs of God's people [sharing in the necessities of the saints]; pursue the practice of hospitality. (Amplified Bible - Lockman)

NLT: When God's children are in need, be the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night. (NLT - Tyndale House)

Phillips: Give freely to fellow-Christians in want, never grudging a meal or a bed to those who need them. (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: with respect to the needs of the saints, being a sharer with them, eager for opportunities to show hospitality. (Eerdmans)

Young's Literal: to the necessities of the saints communicating; the hospitality pursuing.

Contributing - James 2:14, 15, 16, 17, Gal 6:10) (Ro 12:8; 15:25, 26, 27, 28; Psalms 41:1; Acts 4:35; 9:36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41; 10:4; 20:34,35; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 8:1, 2, 3, 4; 9:1,12; Galatians 6:10; Philemon 1:7; Hebrews 6:10; 13:16; 1 John 3:17)

Literally "to the needs of the saints contributing."

Gal 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

James echoes Paul "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." (James 2:14-17)

John adds "But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1Jn 3:17)

William Barclay - We are to share with those in need. In a world bent on getting, the Christian is bent on giving, because he knows that "what we keep we lose, and what we give we have." (Daily Study Bible)

Contributing (2841) (**koinoneo**) describes the sharing of one's possessions, with the implication of some kind of joint participation and mutual interest. The **present tense** which calls for a lifestyle of sharing.

Koinoneo - 8 uses in the NT - Ro. 12:13; 15:27; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15; 1 Tim. 5:22; Heb. 2:14; 1 Pet. 4:13; 2 Jn. 1:11

Koinoneo was used in Greek marriage contracts where the husband and wife agree to a joint-participation in the necessities of life. (what a contrast with modern day "pre-nuptial" agreements!) The key idea is that of a partnership, a possessing things in common, a belonging in common to.

Koinoneo is derived from the Greek word koinos (Click in depth study of related word koinonia) meaning that which is common or belonging to several (commonality, partnership, or mutual sharing) and is translated "in common" in (Acts 2:42, 43, 44, 45, 4:32, 33, 34, 35 cf 1Ti 6:17, 18).

Christian **koinonia** or fellowship is much more than a pat on the back and a handshake. It means sharing the burdens and the blessings of others so that we all grow together and glorify the Lord.

The idea is not just the outward act of giving, though, but sharing in one's own heart the burden of need felt by the needy, and the sense of a common ownership of those things that can meet these needs (Acts 4:32, 33, 34, 35). In Murray's words, "We are to identify ourselves with the needs of the saints and make them our own"

The application of Paul's exhortation is clear...When the children of God fall into want, take a part of their wants upon yourselves. Make their wants your wants to the full extent of your ability to relieve them, which should be a natural outflow of the truth that although we "are many, (we) are one body in Christ & individually * members one of another" (see Romans 12:5+) and so "if one member suffers all the members suffer with" them. (1Cor 12:26)

William Newell - When you obey this injunction and begin wisely to inquire about the saints' needs, you will be astonished at two things: first, at the actual pressing necessities of many saints all about you; and second, at the way God will supply your own necessities as you minister to them. When the Holy Spirit took complete possession of the early Church, "Not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common"; with the result that "neither was there among them any that lacked." Now this shows the basal spirit of Christian giving. It is not "saying in our hearts" that what we have is "our own, " but holding all in stewardship to the Lord, ready to be ministered, as He shall direct. It is true that Paul, in his epistles, which give the constitution of the Church of God, does not direct those that are rich in this world's goods to "sell all that they have"; but to "do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." This passage (1Ti 6:17-19) should be most carefully regarded as at once the Divine protection against the awful "community of goods" of socialism and communism, because the Bible teaches constantly the rights of personal, private property; and also as the foundation principle of our giving. (Romans 12 Commentary)

PRACTICING HOSPITALITY (literally = "love of strangers" or "befriending strangers"): ten philoxenian diokontes (PAPMPN):

Ge 18:2-8, 19:1-3 1Ti 3:2, 5:10, Titus 1:8, Heb 13:2 1Pe 4:9)

1Pet 4:9 Be hospitable (philoxenos - loving strangers) to one another without complaint (no murmuring or grumbling! goggusmos- as in Php 2:14+).

William Newell - Pursuing hospitality-Here the word for hospitality is literally love to strangers, "stranger-loving, " and the translation "given to" is not strong enough. In its forty or fifty occurrences in the New Testament, this word is very frequently translated "pursuing," which is the literal meaning. You have it three times in Php 3:6, "persecuting the church"; in verse Php 3:12, "I follow after"; and in verse Php 3:14, "I press on" The meaning here, then, is, pursuing hospitality.-persecuting folks, even strangers, with kindness! What a wonderful testimony of love, hearty obedience to this simple exhortation to pursue hospitality would be! We have in Hebrews Thirteen three uses of this Greek root phil (meaning love): (1) "Let love of the brethren (Philadelphia) continue"; (2) "Forget not to show love unto strangers" (philoxenia); and, (3) in verse 5, "Be free from silver-loving" (philarguros). If you are tempted to philarguros, Philadelphia and philoxenia, will cure you! "Given to hospitality," then, means far more than being "willing

to entertain" those who may call on you. It indicates going after this business, pursuing it, following it up! The Lord will reward some day even a cup of cold water given in His Name. Let us make "Strangers' Inns" of our homes. We are not staying here long. And the Lord may send "angels" around when we least expect! "Forget not to show love unto strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Heb 13:2) (Romans 12 Commentary)

William Barclay - Over and over again the New Testament insists on this duty of the open door (Hebrews 13:2; 1Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1Peter 4:9). Tyndale used a magnificent word when he translated it that the Christian should have a harborous disposition. A home can never be happy when it is selfish. Christianity is the religion of the open hand, the open heart, and the open door. (Daily Study Bible)

Practicing (literally = pursuing) (**1377**) (**dioko** from **dío** = pursue, prosecute, persecute) means to follow or press hard after, literally to pursue as one does a fleeing enemy. It means to chase, harass, vex and pressure and was used for **chasing down criminals**. Dioko speaks of an intensity of effort leading to a pursuit with earnestness and diligence in order to lay hold of.

THOUGHT - The English word **practicing** loses some of the meaning of the verb **dioko** which conveys the picture of a host who follows or presses hard after (in a positive sense) to show kindness to strangers! Are you as convicted as I am?! Furthermore the present tense emphasizes that this is to be the believer's supernatural (Spirit empowered) lifestyle or habitual practice, of continual earnestness & diligence in order show hospitality. Paul uses this same verb expressing his highest desire in (Philippians 3:14) "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14+)

Hospitality (5381) (**philonexia** from **philos** = friend or loving + **xenos** = stranger) is literally love of strangers or a friend of strangers and thus one who entertains strangers or demonstrates hospitality or kindness to strangers.

Our care and concern will demonstrate itself in practical deeds done for others, either going to them (distributing to the needs of the saints) or inviting them to come to you (given to hospitality). In NT times, travel was dangerous and inns were evil, scarce, and expensive. So the early believers often opened their homes to travelers, especially to fellow believers. In prison Paul gave a special blessing "to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me" --so here we see a "radical hospitality" even at the risk of his own life! (2Ti 1:16, 17, 18 + cf 3Jn 5, 6, 7, 8; Lk 14:12, 13, 14). Church leaders should be role models of this virtue (see Titus 1:8-).

- Hospitality Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology
- Hospitality Torrey's Topical Textbook
- Hospitality Bridgeway Bible Dictionary
- Hospitality Charles Buck Theological Dictionary
- Hospitality Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible
- Hospitality Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament
- Hospitality The 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia

Lenski - Hospitality is literally to be chased after as one hunts an animal and delights to carry the booty home

Spicq relates the story of a pagan Greek citizen, Gallias of Agrigentum, who in the fourth century B.C. was so hospitable "that he posted his slaves at the city gates to welcome strangers when they presented themselves and ask them to his house".

Some Christians have been known to build extra rooms on their houses in order to provide for traveling evangelists and missionaries on furlough.

RELATED RESOURCES ON HOSPITALITY

Smith Bible Dictionary - Hospitality: Hospitality was regarded by most nations of the ancient world as one of the chief virtues. The Jewish laws respecting strangers (Leviticus 19:33,34) and the poor, (Leviticus 23:14) seq. Deuteronomy 15:7 And concerning redemption (Leviticus 25:23) seq., etc. are framed in accordance with the spirit of hospitality. In the law compassion to strangers is constantly enforced by the words "for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Leviticus 19:34) And before the law, Abraham's entertainment of the angels, (Genesis 18:1) seq., and Lot's, (Genesis 19:1) are in exact agreement with its precepts, and with modern usage. Comp. (Exodus 2:20; Judges 13:15; 19:17,20,21) In the New Testament hospitality is yet more markedly enjoined; and in the more civilized state of society which then prevailed, its exercise became more a social virtue than a necessity of

patriarchal life. The good Samaritan stands for all ages as an example of Christian hospitality. The neglect of Christ is symbolized by inhospitality to our neighbors. (Matthew 25:43) The apostles urged the Church to "follow after hospitality," (Romans 12:13) cf. 1Tim 5:10 To remember Abraham's example, (Hebrews 13:2) to "use hospitality one to another without grudging," (1 Peter 4:9) while a bishop must be a "lover of hospitality (Titus 1:8) cf. 1Tim 3:2 The practice of the early Christians was in accord with these precepts. They had all things in common, and their hospitality was a characteristic of their belief. In the patriarchal ages we may take Abraham's example as the most fitting, as we have of it the fullest account. "The account," says Mr. Lane, "of Abraham's entertaining the three angels related in the Bible, presents a perfect picture of the manner in which a modern Bedawee sheikh receives travellers arriving at his encampment." The Oriental respect for the covenant of bread and salt, or salt alone, certainly sprang from the high regard in which hospitality was held.

ISBE on HOSPITALITY; HOSPITALITY; HOST - hos-pi-tal'-i-ti, host (philoxenia, "love of strangers," xenos, "guest," "friend"; pandocheus, "innkeeper"):

1. Among Nomads:

When the civilization of a people has advanced so far that some traveling has become necessary, but not yet so far that traveling by individuals is a usual thing, then hospitality is a virtue indispensable to the life of the people. This stage of culture was that represented in ancient Palestine and the stage whose customs are still preserved among the present-day Arabs of the desert. Hospitality is regarded as a right by the traveler, to whom it never occurs to thank his host as if for a favor. And hospitality is granted as a duty by the host, who himself may very soon be dependent on some one else's hospitality. But none the less, both in Old Testament times and today, the granting of that right is surrounded by an etiquette that has made Arabian hospitality so justly celebrated. The traveler is made the literal master of the house during his stay; his host will perform for him the most servile offices, and will not even sit in his presence without express request. To the use of the guest is given over all that his host possesses, stopping not even short of the honor of wife or daughter. " 'Be we not all,' say the poor nomads, 'guests of Ullah? Has God given unto them, God's guest shall partake with them thereof: if they will not for God render his own, it should not go well with them' " (Doughty, Arabia Deserta, I, 228). The host is in duty bound to defend his guest against all comers and to lay aside any personal hatred--the murderer of father is safe as the guest of the son.

2. In the Old Testament:

An exquisite example of the etiquette of hospitality is found in Gen 18:1-8. The very fact that the three strangers have passed by Abraham's door gives him the privilege of entertaining them. When he sees them approaching he runs to beg the honor of their turning in to him, with oriental courtesy depreciates the feast that he is about to lay before them as "a morsel of bread," and stands by them while they eat. Manoah (Jdg 13:15) is equally pressing although more matter-of-fact, while Jethro (Ex 2:20) sends out that the stranger may be brought in. And Job (31:32) repels the very thought that he could let the sojourner be unprovided for. The one case where a breach of hospitality receives praise is that of Jael (Jdg 4 through 5), perhaps to be referred to degeneration of customs in the conflicts with the Canaanites or (perhaps more plausibly) to literary-critical considerations, according to which in Jdg 5 Sisera is not represented as entering Jael's tent or possibly not as actually tasting the food, a state of affairs misunderstood in Jdg 4, written under later circumstances of city life. (For contrasting opinions see "Jael" in Encyclopedia Biblica and HDB.)

3. The Table-Bond:

It is well to understand that to secure the right to hospitality it is not necessary, even in modern times, for the guest to eat with his host, still less to eat salt specifically. Indeed, guests arriving after sunset and departing the next morning do not, as a rule, eat at all in the tent of the host. It is sufficient to enter the tent, to grasp a tent-pin, or even, under certain circumstances, to invoke the name of a man as host. On the other hand, the bond of hospitality is certainly strengthened by eating with one's host, or the bond may actually be created by eating food belonging to him, even by stealth or in an act of theft. Here a quite different set of motives is at work. The idea here is that of kinship arising from participation in a common sacrificial meal, and the modern Arab still terms the animal killed for his guest the dhabichah or "sacrifice" (compare HDB, II, 428). This concept finds its rather materialistic expression in theory that after the processes of digestion are completed (a time estimated as two nights and the included day), the bond lapses if it is not renewed. There seem to be various references in the Bible to some such idea of a "table-bond" (Ps 41:9, e.g.), but hardly in connection directly with hospitality. For a discussion of them see BREAD; GUEST; SACRIFICE.

4. In the City:

In the city, naturally, the exercise of hospitality was more restricted. Where travel was great, doubtless commercial provision for the travelers was made from a very early day (compare Lk 10:34 and see INN), and at all events free hospitality to all comers would have been unbearably abused. Lot in Sodom (Gen 19) is the nomad who has preserved his old ideas, although settled in the city, and who thinks of the "shadow of his roof" (19:8) as his tent. The same is true of the old man in Gibeah of Jdg 19:16 ff. And the sin of Sodom and of Gibeah is not that wanderers cannot find hospitality so much as it is that they are unsafe in the streets at night.

Both Lot and "the old man," however, are firm in their duty and willing to sacrifice their daughters for the safety of their guests. (Later ideas as to the position of woman should not be read back into these narratives.) However, when the city-dweller Rahab refuses to surrender her guests (Josh 2), her reason is not the breach of hospitality involved but her fear of Yahweh (Josh 2:9). When Abraham's old slave is in Nahor, and begs a night's lodging for himself and his camels, he accompanies the request with a substantial present, evidently conceived of as pay for the same (Gen 24:22 f). Such also are the modern conditions; compare Benzinger-Socin in Baedeker's Palestine(3), xxxv, who observe that "inmates" of private houses "are aware that Franks always pay, and therefore receive them gladly." None the less, in New Testament times, if not earlier, and even at present, a room was set apart in each village for the use of strangers, whose expenses were borne by the entire community. Most interpreters consider that the kataluma of Lk 2:7 was a room of this sort, but this opinion cannot be regarded as quite certain. But many of the wealthier city-dwellers still strive to attain a reputation for hospitality, a zeal that naturally was found in the ancient world as well.

5. Christ and Hospitality:

Christ's directions to the apostles to "take nothing for their journey" (Mk 6:8, etc.) presupposes that they were sure of always finding hospitality. Indeed, it is assumed that they may even make their own choice of hosts (Mt 10:11) and may stay as long as they choose (Lk 10:7). In this case, however, the claims of the travelers to hospitality are accentuated by the fact that they are bearers of good tidings for the people, and it is in view of this latter fact that hospitality to them becomes so great a virtue--the "cup of cold water" becomes so highly meritorious because it is given "in the name of a disciple" (Mt 10:42; compare 10:41, and Mk 9:41). Rejection of hospitality to one of Christ's "least brethren" (almost certainly to be understood as disciples) is equivalent to the rejection of Christ Himself (Mt 25:43; compare 25:35). It is not quite clear whether in Mt 10:14 and parallels, simple refusal of hospitality is the sin in point or refusal to hear the message or both.

6. First Missionaries:

In the Dispersion, the Jew who was traveling seemed always to be sure of finding entertainment from the Jews resident in whatever city he might happen to be passing through. The importance of this fact for the spread of early Christianity is incalculable. To be sure, some of the first missionaries may have been men who were able to bear their own traveling expenses or who were merchants that taught the new religion when on business tours. In the case of soldiers or slaves their opportunity to carry the gospel into new fields came often through the movements of the army or of their masters. And it was by an "infiltration" of this sort, probably, rather than by any specific missionary effort that the church of Rome, at least, was rounded. See ROMANS, EPISTLE TO THE. But the ordinary missionary, whether apostle (in any sense of the word) or evangelist, would have been helpless if it had not been that he could count so confidently on the hospitality everywhere. From this fact comes one reason why Paul, for instance, could plan tours of such magnitude with such assurance: he knew that he would not have to face any problem of sustenance in a strange city (Rom 16:23).

7. In the Churches:

As the first Christian churches were founded, the exercise of hospitality took on a new aspect, especially after the breach with the Jews had begun. Not only did the traveling Christian look naturally to his brethren for hospitality, but the individual churches looked to the traveler for fostering the sense of the unity of the church throughout the world. Hospitality became a virtue indispensable to the well-being of the church--one reason for the emphasis laid on it (Rom 12:13; 16:1 f; Heb 13:2). As the organization of the churches became more perfected, the exercise of hospitality grew to be an official duty of the ministry and a reputation for hospitality was a prerequisite in some cases (1 Tim 3:2; 5:10; Tit 1:8). The exercise of such hospitality must have become burdensome at times (1 Pet 4:9), and as false teachers began to appear in the church a new set of problems was created in discriminating among applicants for hospitality. 2 and 3 Jn reflect some of the difficulties. For the later history of hospitality in the church interesting matter will be found in the Didache, chapters xi, xii, Apology of Aristides, chapter xv, and Lucian's Death of Peregrinus, chapter xvi. The church certainly preferred to err by excess of the virtue.

An evaluation of the Biblical directions regarding hospitality for modern times is extremely difficult on account of the utterly changed conditions. Be it said at once, especially, that certain well-meant criticism of modern missionary methods, with their boards, organized finance, etc., on the basis of Christ's directions to the Twelve, is a woeful misapplication of Biblical teaching. The hospitality that an apostle could count on in his own day is something that the modern missionary simply cannot expect and something that it would be arrant folly for him to expect (Weinel, Die urchristliche und die heutige Mission, should be read by everyone desiring to compare modern missions with the apostolic). In general, the basis for hospitality has become so altered that the special virtue has become merged in the larger field of charitable enterprise of various sorts. The modern problem nearest related to the old virtue is the question of providing for the necessities of the indigent traveler, a distinctly minor problem, although a very real one, in the general field of social problems that the modern church has to study. In so far as the New Testament exhortations are based on missionary motives there has been again a merging into general appeals for missions, perhaps specialized occasionally as appeals for traveling expense. The "hospitality" of today, by which is meant the entertainment of friends

or relatives, hardly comes within the Biblical use of the term as denoting a special virtue.

LITERATURE. For hospitality in the church, Harnack, Mission and Expansion of Christianity, II, chapter iv (10). Burton Scott Easton

NAVE'S TOPIC - HOSPITALITY

Ex. 22:21; Ex. 23:9; Lev. 19:10, 33, 34; Lev. 24:22; Deut. 10:18, 19; Deut. 26:12, 13; Deut. 27:19; Prov. 9:1, 2, 3, 4; Prov. 23:6, 7, 8; Is. 58:6, 7; Matt. 22:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; Mt 25:34, 35, 36, 37, 38, Mt 25:39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46; Luke 14:12, 13, 14; Rom. 12:13; Ro 16:1, 2; 1 Tim. 3:2; 1 Tim. 5:10; Titus 1:7, 8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9-11; 3 John 5:-8 See: Guest; Strangers.

Instances of

- Pharaoh to Abraham, Gen. 12:16.
- Melchizedek to Abraham, Gen. 14:18.
- Abraham to the angels, Gen. 18:1-8.
- Lot to the angel, Gen. 19:1-11.
- Abimelech to Abraham, Gen. 20:14, 15.
- Sons of Heth to Abraham, Gen. 23:6, 11.
- Laban to Abraham's servant, Gen. 24:31; to Jacob, Gen. 29:13, 14.
- Isaac to Abimelech, Gen. 26:30.
- Joseph to his brethren, Gen. 43:31-34.
- Pharaoh to Jacob, Gen. 45:16-20; 47:7-12.
- Jethro to Moses, Ex. 2:20.
- Rahab to the spies, Josh. 2:1-16.
- Man of Gibeah to the Levite, Judg. 19:16-21.
- Pharaoh to Hadad, 1 Kin. 11:17, 22.
- David to Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. 9:7-13.
- The widow of Zarephath to Elijah, 1 Kin. 17:10-24.
- The Shunammite to Elisha, 2 Kin. 4:8.
- Elisha to the Syrian spies, 2 Kin. 6:22.
- Job to strangers, Job 31:32.
- Martha to Jesus, Luke 10:38; John 12:1, 2.
- Pharisees to Jesus, Luke 11:37, 38.
- Zacchaeus to Jesus, Luke 19:1-10.
- The taer to Peter, Acts 10:6, 23.
- Lydia to Paul and Silas, Acts 16:15.
- Publius to Paul, Acts 28:7; Phebe to Paul, Rom. 16:2.
- Onesiphorus to Paul, 2 Tim. 1:16.
- Gaius, 3 John 5, 6, 7, 8.

Rewarded

- Instances of: Rahab's, Josh. 6:17, 22-25.
- Widow of Zarephath's, 1 Kin. 17:10-24.

Ray Pritchard's sermon related to HOSPITALITY - Confessions of a Xenophiliac

They say that true confession is good for the soul, and in that spirit, I want to begin my sermon with a simple confession. Although I am preaching a series of sermons on spiritual gifts, I am not entirely sure that what I am preaching about this morning actually is a spiritual gift. I think it is, I believe it is, but I'm not totally sure that it is. I know that it's biblical, but I'm not sure it's a spiritual gift.

And after you hear this sermon, some of you may wonder why this particular gift wasn't on the Spiritual Gifts Inventory. Well, it was in one way but it wasn't in another because we weren't really sure. It's biblical—you don't have to worry about that—but I'm not totally sure it's a spiritual gift. After you read this sermon, you can make up your own mind.

Is It Or Isn't It?

With that as a background, let's take things step by step. We begin by looking at a very special Greek word—philoxenia. The word shows up in one form or another in the New Testament about 10 times. Philoxenia is a compound made up of two other Greek

words—philos, which means "kind affection" or "love" and xenos, which means "stranger" or foreigner." Literally, philoxenia means "one who loves strangers." It is translated as the English word "hospitality."

That's the first step. We're talking about **philoxenia**, which is translated "hospitality," (**ED**: In NT hospitality is **philoxenos**) which is the act of showing kindness to strangers. It is clearly biblical (a fact we will get to in a few moments) and is in fact mentioned in many different places in the New Testament. But is it a spiritual gift?

I think the answer is yes, but there is some uncertainty because it is not clearly listed as a spiritual gift in the major passages on the subject—Romans 12, I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. But—and this is the key to the whole sermon—it is mentioned in I Peter 4, the last New Testament passage on spiritual gifts.

Here is how the New International Version translates 1 Peter 4:9-10+:

Offer hospitality (The Greek word is philoxenia - **ED**: THE WORD IS ACTUALLY <u>philoxenos</u>) to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others.

It would appear from this translation that Peter is talking about two different things here—that in verse 9 he is talking about hospitality and then in verse 10 he shifts to spiritual gifts. It appears that there is no connection between these two subjects.

But in the Greek there is a connection which the NIV obscures. Verse 10 actually begins with the word kathos, which means "just as." It is a connective which joins verse 9 to verse 10. You could very legitimately translate it this way:

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling just as each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others.

That is, it appears that Peter is using hospitality as an example of how to use your spiritual gifts to serve others. Verse 9 is the example; verse 10 is the principle. Showing hospitality is one way you can use your spiritual gifts to serve others.

That's the biblical basis for the spiritual gift of hospitality (as opposed to the general command to hospitality—a command which everyone recognizes). If that seems a slender base on which to build this sermon, I can only mention that such a conservative stalwart as Bill McRae (BORROW <u>Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts</u>, p. 45) agrees that the Apostle Peter probably considered hospitality to be a spiritual gift. Peter Wagner (BORROW <u>Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow</u>, pp. 69-70) says the same thing as does Kenneth Gangel (BORROW <u>You and your spiritual gifts</u>) (**ED**: David Hubbard - <u>Unwrap Your Spiritual Gift</u>, p. 100) and Leslie Flynn (BORROW <u>Leslie Flynn</u>, 19 Gifts of the Spirit, pp. 108-115), who devotes an entire chapter to the topic.

Therefore, I feel quite confident in suggesting that we ought to add hospitality to our traditional list of spiritual gifts. It is a specimen gift used by Peter as an example of the ways we can use all our gifts to serve others.

Surveying The Biblical Landscape

What else does the New Testament have to say about hospitality? Let's answer that question by taking a quick survey of some key passages. The first one is Romans 12:13+. "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." Some translations say it this way—Pursue hospitality. Not just "practice" hospitality, but diligently "pursue" philoxenia—the love of strangers, which is biblical hospitality.

That is a command of Scripture. It is clearly not talking about spiritual gifts. It is a command given to every man, woman, boy and girl who claims the name of Jesus Christ. If we are Christians, we are to earnestly practice showing love to those who are strangers to us. It is a non-optional command of God.

The second passage is 1 Peter 4:9+. I mention it again because we passed over a crucial phrase earlier: "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling". That's crucial because it is all too easy to open your home only to those who are your close personal friends. Peter isn't talking about having your pals over for a game night. That's good and you ought to do it, but Peter isn't thinking about that. He's thinking about those times when you show kindness to people you don't know very well. How easy it is in those cases to mumble and grumble and gripe under your breath. And when you do that, you miss the blessing God wants you to receive.

We've all done that. We meet some new people and say, "Drop by anytime." So one night we're eating supper and a knock comes at the door. Who can it be? We open the door and it's those new people—all six of them—standing on the porch with big smiles. So what do we do? We smile right back and say, "Good to see you. Come on in." But in reality our fingers are crossed when we say it and in our hearts we don't mean a word of it.

God knows whether we mean it or not. We aren't fooling him a bit. That's why he said our hospitality must be done without grumbling.

The third passage offers us a very unusual encouragement to practice hospitality. Hebrews 13:2+ says, "Do not forget to entertain

strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." The word translated "angels" simply means "messengers." It could mean the literal angels of God or it could mean human messengers. In this case, the writer to the Hebrews is thinking about the possibility that the literal angels of God might come to visit us. In the back of his mind is the story in Genesis 18 where Abraham welcomed three strangers who came to visit him. Without knowing their identity, he served them veal and milk and curds and fresh bread. One turned out to be the Lord himself and the other two turned out to be angels.

The writer is suggesting that such a thing might someday happen to us. By definition, philoxenia means showing kindness to people you don't know very well. Since you don't know them, you don't know in advance who they might turn out to be. Some people we help, we will never see again. Others may become good friends. Others may turn out to be greatly-used servants of God. And who knows? Some may turn out to be angels of God. When you show love to those who are not your close friends, sometimes you are going to be blessed in ways you don't expect. Since you can't know in advance, make it a practice to show Christian love to as many strangers as possible.

The fourth passage tells us something about the importance of hospitality in the life of the church. 1 Timothy 3:2+ and Titus 1:8+ list hospitality as one of the marks of spiritual maturity required of overseers or elders in the local church. The men who lead the church must be "given to hospitality." It is not some sideline issue. The ability to show love and affection to strangers is to be a visible mark of those who lead the people of God. Biblical elders know how to welcome new people into their hearts, into their lives, and into their homes. And we are to actively seek out leaders who meet that qualification.

What does this brief biblical survey teach us? It tells us that ...

- 1. Hospitality is a non-optional command of God. Romans 12:13
- 2. Hospitality must be performed without grumbling. 1 Peter 4:9+
- 3. Hospitality often brings us unexpected blessings. Hebrews 13:2+
- 4. Hospitality is a mark of spiritual maturity required of those who lead the people of God. 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8+

Hospitality Across The Centuries

If you read the commentaries, it soon becomes clear why there is such a strong emphasis on hospitality in the New Testament. Back then, they didn't have Holiday Inns, they didn't have Red Roof Inns, they didn't have Executive Suites, they didn't have Ramada Inns. When Paul came to Corinth, he couldn't check into the Hilton Inn. It hadn't been built yet.

They didn't have all these high-rise fancy hotels and motels that we have today. The few inns they did have were ill-kept and dangerous. F. F. Bruce points out that many of the inns in the Roman Empire were little more than brothels and havens for brigands and robbers.

So as Christians traveled from place to place across the Empire, they didn't have the option of staying in a motel. The only way the Christian message could spread would be for Christians to open their homes to others. The only way an evangelist from Antioch could make it in Ephesus would be for a family in Ephesus to open their home to him. The only way a teacher from Caesarea could visit Cyprus would be for someone from Cyprus to open his home and say, "My Brother, you are welcome to stay with me."

Gaius And Diotrephes

The little book of III John offers a clear example of how this worked out in the early church. John addresses his friend Gaius with these words:

Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. (The "strangers" are traveling Bible teachers who have come to town. Gaius has shown them hospitality even though he didn't know them personally.) They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name they were sent out, receiving no help from the pagans. (When God's servants go out, they can't depend on the world to pay their way. The world isn't going to support God's people in their missionary activity. God's people must support God's servants when they go out to spread the gospel. If we don't, no one else will.) We ought therefore to show hospitality (philoxenia again) to such men so that we may work together for the truth. (3 John 5-8+)

Please take note of this. In the early church, hospitality was one of the key reasons the gospel spread so rapidly. From a tiny beginning in Jerusalem the message reached to the heart of the Roman Empire in just one generation. It happened in large part because of philoxenia. It happened in Philippi and Athens and Sardis and Miletus and Laodicea and Jerusalem because ordinary believers opened their homes and said to their brothers and sisters, "Come on in. You can stay with us while you are spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Back to III John. The next few verses give us another look at the importance of hospitality.

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. (The same "brothers" mentioned above. They were Christian workers from other cities who had come to spread the gospel.) He also stops those who want to do so (that is, those who want to welcome these brothers from out-of-town.) and puts them out of the church. (3John 9-10+)

"what is evil" means refusing to show Christian hospitality "what is good" means offering hospitality to those who need it.

It's very clear what he is saying. Gaius welcomed the brothers, and that's good. Diotrephes didn't, and that's bad. Notice how he puts the matter in 3Jn 1:11+, "Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good." In this context, "what is evil" means refusing to show Christian hospitality and "what is good" means offering hospitality to those who need it.

Here's the capper at the end of verse 11.

"Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God."

That is to say, showing hospitality is a mark that you know God. And refusing to open your home and refusing to share your resources is an evidence that you've never seen God at all.

You say, "Pastor, is it really that big a deal?" It's a lot bigger than I'm making it. It's all the way through the New Testament. The issue of hospitality is no small thing. Opening your home, your heart and your resources to others is a mark that you know God.

Hospitality In Practice

You support God's work by supporting God's workers as they travel from place to place.

Let's take a look at one final passage to see how hospitality worked out in the earliest days of the Christian church. Acts 21 tells of Paul's final trip to Jerusalem before he was arrested and sent to Rome. In the first few verses he is traveling by boat from Ephesus to Caesarea, where he will stay briefly before going on to Jerusalem. Listen as Luke tells the story:

We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went on board and set sail. After sighting Cyprus and passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. (That's the first example.) Acts 21:2-3+

We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for a day. (That's the second example.) Acts 21:7+

Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist We (were) there a number of days. (That's the third example.) Acts 21:8, 10+

We got ready and went up to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and brought us to the home of Mnason, where we were to stay. He was a man from Cyprus and one of the early disciples. (That's the fourth example.) Acts 21:15-16+

This is the secret of Paul's great ministry. He didn't do it alone.

This is the secret of Paul's great ministry. He didn't do it alone. Everywhere he went he relied upon the help of God's people to open their homes to him. In these sixteen verses it happens four times—in Tyre, in Ptolemais, in Caesarea and in Jerusalem. He stayed seven days, one day, a number of days, and then many days in Jerusalem. Thus did the gospel spread in the first century.

The principle is this: You support God's work by supporting God's workers as they travel from place to place.

Your Home, A Hospital For The Weary

Leslie Flynn gives us this helpful background on the meaning of the English word "hospitality."

The main part of the word hospitality is the word hospital. Ancient travelers, whether pilgrims or businessmen, fared poorly when venturing beyond their own country. Thus religious leaders established international guest houses in the fifth century. These havens were called hospices from hospes, Latin for "guest." With the coming of the crusades, the importance of the hospice increased greatly. Pilgrims, crusaders and other travelers found hospices, by this time run by religious orders, the only reputable guest houses of the era. Soon after the

crusades, most of these institutions began to specialize in the care of the poor, the sick, the aged and the crippled. During the 15th century secular interests took over most entertaining of travelers. So the hospital restricted its function to care and treatment of the sick and handicapped. But originally, hospital meant "a haven for guests." (BORROW Leslie Flynn, 19 Gifts of the Spirit, p. 109.)

Too many of us have lost that concept today. We've taken what was meant to be a "haven for guests" and we have turned it into a "haven from guests." Too often, our homes are places where we can go to get away from people.

In modern urban America, your home is your final line of defense against the world. At the end of a hard day, you rush through the maddening crowds to get home by nightfall. Once inside your castle, you grab the rope and begin pulling up the drawbridge. You push a button and water fills the moat around your house and out come the piranhas. Then we dare our neighbors to try and get close to us.

We build walls and fences and elaborate electronic security systems. It's not just to scare off the criminals. It's also to scare off anyone else who might need a meal or a place to stay. Our homes to us are places to get away from other people.

But it was not so in the beginning. Back then, your home was meant to be a hospital for the weary and a haven for the hurting. Oh, how we need to recapture that emphasis today.

What a difference it would make if we viewed our homes not as refuges from the world, but as tools given by God for ministering to the world. What a difference it would make if out from this church there would go hundreds of families determined not to hide in their homes, but who would say, "Oh God, you have given me this home and now I give it back to you. With your help, I'm going to use it to minister to people in Jesus' name."

The Church In Your Home

And let's be honest and admit that sometimes our beautiful church buildings work against this great principle. After all, we spend so much money building enormous sanctuaries and vast educational facilities that it stops us from doing philoxenia, because we think all the ministry takes place here.

But where was the church in the first century? It was in the home. "The church that is in your house." We need to get back to that, back to the concept of open heart, open home. And back to the concept of philoxenia as a mark of Christian maturity. Back to the idea that hospitality is something that Christian leaders are to demonstrate. Back to the idea that showing kindness to strangers is a non-optional command of Scripture.

A Taste Of Haiti

Does it still work today? Or has hospitality gone out of style? You could make a good argument that it doesn't work today. But you would really be arguing that it doesn't work because we don't make it work. Hospitality works when we break out of our 20th century fortress mentality.

In just a few weeks our young people will be taking a mission trip to Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere. I am going with them along with Bob Boerman and several other leaders. We're going to one of the most remote places in Haiti, a village called Pignon. It's a town of 30,000 people tucked away in the north central region of the country. It's about as far away from Oak Park as you can get. There is no electricity, no running water, no radio, no TV, no air conditioning. There are no paved roads and no newspapers. The unemployment rate hovers around 90%. The annual per capita income in Pignon is approximately \$150.

We're going to visit a church with 1000 people every Sunday. Their annual budget is around \$2000. That's right. Two thousand dollars. And somehow they run an orphanage and a school and they have built an open-air sanctuary.

They have nothing. The poorest person at Calvary is rich compared to the richest person in the church in Pignon. And they are going to take care of the rich kids from Oak Park for two weeks. And let me tell you, we'll eat better down there than we do up here. (And we eat just fine up here!)

How do they do it? I don't know. But I do know this. Hospitality is not just a theory with them; it's a way of life. And believe it or not, they don't regard our visit as a burden. To them, it's a blessing for us to come.

Philoxenia In Leningrad

A few days after we get back from Haiti, another group leaves for Leningrad. They will spend two weeks renovating an evangelical church in the heart of that great Russian city. Our people will be staying in the homes of Russian believers. They will work in the church during the day and stay in homes each night.

Have you seen what's been happening in Russia lately? How they are running out of food and how they have to wait in long lines to get into the grocery stores? How it's hard to find staples like milk and sugar and butter?

They don't have much, but they are going to take us in. We have a lot more than they do but they are going to take us in. We're coming over to help them and while we are there they will open their homes to us. We don't know them and they don't know us. Our people don't speak Russian, they don't speak much English. But it doesn't matter. They are going to take us in. They are going to feed us and give us a place to stay, and on Sun-day, they will share their worship service with us. That's philoxenia, showing kindness to strangers.

Yad Vashem (from Isaiah 56:5) (Means in essence - "A Memorial and a Name" = "Enduring Remembrance")

To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.

If you ever visit Jerusalem, your tour guide will probably take you to a museum called Yad Vashem. It's a museum dedicated to the Holocaust. Inside are unspeakable reminders of how the Nazis systematically killed six million Jews during World War II. You cannot visit the museum and go away unchanged.

But to get there, you have to walk along a sidewalk that goes from the parking area to the front doors of the museum. It is called the "Avenue of the Righteous of the World." It looks like a garden because there are olive trees everywhere. At the base of the olive trees are little plaques. On each plaque is the name of a Gentile who at great personal risk gave shelter to the Jews during World War II and spared them from the death camps.

If you search long enough, you will find a plaque with the name Corrie Ten Boom. An olive tree grows by the plaque. You remember her, don't you? She and her family hid seven Jews for several months in their attic in Holland. The Jews escaped but she and her sister were sent to a concentration camp.

They knew when they did it that they might someday be caught. But they did it anyway. That's **philoxenia**, love for strangers, love for those so far away from us.

Back To The Spiritual Gift

There is a spiritual gift of hospitality and I don't doubt that Corrie Ten Boom and her sister had this gift. Here is how I would define it: It is the special ability God gives to certain members of the body of Christ which enables them to provide an open home and a warm welcome to those in need of food and lodging. (As I mentioned earlier, there is no separate category for "Hospitality" on the Spiritual Gifts Inventory. We did, however, put several questions about hospitality in the section on "Service" so if you scored high on "Service" you probably also have the gift of "Hospitality.")

We have several people at Calvary who clearly have this gift. For instance, this weekend two fellows from Paragon Productions are coming in to set up the "Winners" presentation for our Day in the Village celebration. Ron and Brenda Larkin volunteered to give them a place to stay. In fact, Ron and Brenda told us that when they bought their house, they deliberately bought one with an extra bedroom so they could open their home to others.

When we moved to Oak Park last August, we stayed with Fred and Erlene Hartman (and with Anthony and Danny) in their home in River Forest until our home in Oak Park was ready. Like the Larkins, they deliberately bought a house with an extra bedroom so they could use it to show hospitality to those needing a place to stay. (When Bob and Jean Boerman came to Calvary in 1988, they stayed with the Hartmans just like we did.)

Most of you know Glen and Pam Carley. They opened their home for a whole year to Emi Oh Kubo, a foreign exchange student from Japan. She's going back to Japan in just a few weeks. And during these months the Carleys have taken her in. While she was here, she accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior.

I know someone else who is keeping a Concordia student this summer. The funny thing is, the student just put up a notice on the board and my friend called her and said, "You can stay with me for the summer." My friend didn't meet the student until the night she moved in. I am happy to say they are getting along just fine.

I'm thinking of another distinguished family at Calvary. They have a wonderful, elegant home here in Oak Park. I've been in it—it's beautifully decorated. For more than 25 years, this couple has been opening their home to people who need a place to stay. And many of the people have stayed for months and some have stayed for years. I think they are keeping somebody right now. That's philoxenia—love for strangers.

How To Spot A Xenophiliac

What are the characteristics of a person with this gift? People who practice hospitality come in all shapes and sizes and ages and

colors and economic backgrounds. But they usually share a few common traits. If you have this gift ...

- 1. You Enjoy Having People In Your Home. You like the sound of many voices around your table and you enjoy the hustle and bustle of many people coming and going. In fact, you are probably happier when your house is full of people than when it is empty. You would rather be with people than be by yourself.
- 2. You Look For People You Can Help. When you come to church, your radar naturally homes in on new people who look like they need to be taken under someone's wing. Sometimes it seems like you just stumble into people who need a place to stay. Actually, it's not a coincidence at all; it's your gift manifesting itself wherever you go.
- **3. You Don't Feel You Have To Apologize For Messy Rooms.** This is one of the clearest evidences of the gift. Not that you put a premium on messiness. But if someone needs a place to stay, you are glad to offer it to them even though some parts of your house may not be in perfect shape. The rest of us who don't have this gift feel like we have to apologize if things aren't perfect. But the people gifted in philoxenia open their homes, invite strangers in, and do their cleaning right in front of their guests. (Or they give their guests a broom and invite them to join right in!)
- **4. You Aren't Shocked When People Show Up On Your Doorstep At Any Hour Of The Day Or Night.** You expect it, it doesn't bother you, and you don't feel imposed upon.
- **5. You Have The Knack For Making People Feel At Home.** Let me show you how this works. I found the following quote from the May issue of the Calvary Messenger (p. 9):

There are lonely international students at our local colleges and universities who desire American friends. These are immigrants. You can make a difference in their lives ... Those involved with "International Friends" are excited about what God is doing in the lives of international students. Here are a few examples:

Xiaochung—a Chinese student—was befriended by Mark and Brenda Thompson. They invited him to their home and on family outings. With him, they prepared a Chinese dinner. Later, Xiaochung was thrilled to attend a retreat where international Christians presented the gospel. (Lord, help Xiaochung to become a Christian and reach his people.)

Chung and Maojium—Taiwanese students—met Don and Joyce Krumsieg in September and by January transferred to other universities. Yet, during the time they were here, a friendship blossomed as they shared their family times and Thanksgiving together. Now they continue their friendship by phone and through letters. For Mother's Day, Joyce received two lovely cards from Chung and Maojium. (Lord, continue the good work you have begun in the lives of Chung and Maojium.)

What do you need to begin showing hospitality? You need a home or an apartment or a dorm room or a bed or a mat or a cot. And you need a willingness to share what you have with others. That's all you need to begin—just a place to stay and an open heart.

Roadblocks To Hospitality

I wouldn't be fair with you if I made it sound like all this is extremely easy. It isn't, and there are some road-blocks you will have to overcome in order to begin practicing hospitality. Let me list several of the most obvious ones.

Roadblock # 1: Confusing Hospitality With Entertainment.

The two could not be further apart. Hospitality is at one end of the spectrum and entertainment is at the other end. Unfortunately, we think hospitality is what happens when we get all dressed up and invite our friends over for a party. That's nice, and it's good, but it's not hospitality.

The difference is this. Entertainment is what happens when you invite your friends over to amuse them; hospitality is what happens when you invite people into your home in order to minister to them. When you entertain, your focus is on the setting; when you show hospitality, your focus is on the people.

Please understand. Entertainment is not bad. But hospitality is better. Hospitality is broader and deeper. Entertainment is quickly forgotten; hospitality is remembered for a lifetime.

Roadblock # 2: Hospitality Is Inconvenient Because We Are Too Busy.

This is no doubt the main reason we don't practice hospitality more than we do. At least it's my main reason. I confess that I use this excuse all the time. But if you are too busy to show hospitality, then you are too busy. If you are too busy to obey the Bible, then your life (and mine) is out of order.

Roadblock # 3: You Have To Be Rich To Show Hospitality.

Fortunately, this is not true. Some of the most hospitable Christians I know live very modestly. Some are middle-income families and some are lower-income families. In fact, I know plenty of wealthy Christians who don't seem to practice hospitality much at all.

We say, "If I just had a bigger house." Hey, I say that one myself. But who are we kidding? That's like the man who says, "If I ever won a million dollars in the lottery, I would give \$100,000 to the church." But that's not the issue. It's not what you would do with what you don't have, it's what you are doing with what you do have. The same is true with hospitality. Having a larger house won't change anything without an open heart to go with it. If you aren't showing hospitality in the two-room apartment you've got today, what makes you think you're going to show hospitality when you have a three million dollar mansion tomorrow?

<u>L'Abri</u>

Many of you recognize the name L'Abri. It means "shelter" in French. L'Abri was the name Francis and Edith Schaeffer chose for the Christian community they established in Switzerland. During the 1950s and 60s students by the hundreds came to <u>L'Abri</u> from all over the world seeking solid answers to their deepest questions. They came and stayed in the chalets which made up the community. Hundreds of those students found Jesus Christ in the process.

In his excellent book <u>The Church at the End of the 20th Century (BORROW BOOK)</u>, Francis Schaeffer describes what it cost to practice hospitality at L'Abri. These words are from the chapter entitled "Revolutionary Christianity" (pp. 107-108):

Don't start a big program. Don't suddenly think you can add to your church budget and begin. Start personally and start in your homes. I dare you. I dare you in the name of Jesus Christ. Do what I am going to suggest. Begin by opening your home for community.....

L'Abri is costly. If you think what God has done here is easy, you don't understand. It's a costly business to have a sense of community. L'Abri cannot be explained merely by the clear doctrine that is preached; it cannot be explained by the fact that God has here been giving intellectual answers to intellectual questions. I think those two things are important, but L'Abri cannot be explained if you remove the third. And that is there has been some community here. And it has been costly.

In about the first three years of L'Abri all our wedding presents were wiped out. Our sheets were torn. Holes were burned in our rugs. Indeed once a whole curtain almost burned up from somebody smoking in our living room. Everybody came to our table. Blacks came to our table. Orientals came to our table. Everybody came to our table. It couldn't happen any other way. Drugs came to our place. People vomited in the our rooms, in the rooms of Chalet Les Melezes which was our home, and now in the rest of the chalets at L'Abri.

How many times has this happened to you? You see, you don't need a big program. You don't have to convince your session or board. All you have to do is open your home and begin. And there is no place in God's world where there are no people who will come and share a home as long as it is a real home.

First Steps Toward Philoxenia

Where should we begin? I want to give you some simple steps you can do today. Here are four ways you can begin practicing hospitality right now:

1. Go out of your way to meet five new people today.

Every Sunday we have dozens of visitors to our services. Will you take some time to meet them? But it doesn't have to be just the visitors. You can say hello to people you've seen before but haven't met. That's a simple step but it is so important. Hospitality begins by being willing to meet people you haven't met before.

2. Talk to some of our international students.

We have a lot of them here at Calvary. Some are from Cambodia, some from Japan, some from Africa, some are from Europe. They are in the Chicago area studying for a few months or a few years. Eventually they will be going back to their own countries.

But each Sunday they come to Calvary. What a marvelous opportunity to show biblical hospitality. They are truly "strangers" to us. We don't know them and they don't know us. But here they are. We pass each other in the hallways like ships passing at night. Will you care enough to get to know someone from the other side of the world?

3. Invite someone to your home.

They don't have to come today, but why don't you issue an invitation for someone to come to your home this week or the week after that. Invite them over for ice cream or for hamburgers. After all, it's biblical for

Christians to eat together.

4. Call someone you haven't talked to in a long, long time.

It could be an old friend you haven't called in years. It may be someone who used to be a close friend but somehow you've lost touch with each other. It might be someone you need to call in order to clear up some past misunderstandings. It could be a mother, a father, a brother or a sister, a hometown friend, or someone else whose name comes to mind.

The Original Xenophiliac

As you know, I entitled this sermon "Confessions of a Xenophiliac." I began with a confession and now I end with one. There is no such word as xenophiliac. I just made it up by switching around philoxenia, the actual Greek word for hospitality. But I like xenophiliac because it sounds like it ought to be a word even if it's not.

Just before the first service this morning the pastoral staff was praying in my office. When Bill Miller's turn came, he said something like this: "O God, we thank you that you are the original xenophiliac."

At first it sounded odd. And then in a flash it hit me. It's true. God is the original "lover of strangers." For while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. While we were estranged from God, he sent his Son to the earth. And we who were once strangers and aliens on the earth have now been brought near to God by the blood of Jesus Christ.

We are no longer strangers, no longer aliens, no longer orphans, no longer far away from God. We are now as near to God as his own Son is, for through the blood of Jesus we are brought into his family. Because he loved us when we were strangers, we are strangers no more.

Hospitality Pays Off In The End

That same thing happens today when we show hospitality to others. We are only doing for others what God did for us. And in the end we won't be disappointed. Consider these words of Jesus:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.... He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.... Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took me in."

The righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in?"

The King will reply,

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me." (Mt 25:31, 33, 34-35, 37-38, 40+)

That's the bottom line. When you open your home to strangers, you are opening your home to the Lord Jesus. When you welcome them, you welcome him.

No one will ever be sorry they opened their home. No one will ever be sorry they said, "Come on in and have a meal with us." No one will ever be sorry they put up with the inconvenience. No one will ever say, "I wish I hadn't helped those people."

Hospitality has its rewards, both now and in the world to come.

Who's that knocking at your door? It might be Jesus.

Rod Mattoon - Examples of Hospitality in Genesis

- 1. Abraham invites the angels into his tent. 18:5
- 2. Lot invites the reluctant angels into his home. 19:2
- 3. Abimelech invites Abraham to dwell in the land. 20:15
- 4. Laban receives Abraham's servant. 24:31-33
- 5. Laban invites Jacob into his house. 29:13
- 6. Joseph cares for his brothers in his home. 43:24
- 7. Pharaoh invites Joseph's family to live in Egypt. 45:18–20

James Freeman - Borrow Manners & customs of the Bible page 25 and page 26 - FEET WASHING - Where the soil is dry and dusty and sandals or similar footwear is worn, frequent washing of the feet is not only a luxury, but a necessity for comfort and health. It is, also, extremely refreshing, as anyone knows who has bathed their feet in cool water when they're dusty and hot. Under such circumstances, it's great hospitality and consideration to see that the feet of guests are washed with cool water. Just as important as feeding them when they're hungry, or giving them a place to rest when they're tired. Not to do so would be discourteous and even insulting.

In Genesis 24:32, it tells how Rebekah's family gave Abraham's servant and the men who were with him water to wash their feet, "So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet." In Genesis 43:24 it tells how Joseph's servant gave water to Joseph's brothers, "The steward took the men into Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys."

It is this courtesy of providing water for washing that Jesus refers to when He mildly reproves Simon the Pharisee, at whose house He was a guest, for not giving Him water to wash his feet: "Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair" (Luke 7:44).

When the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about the qualifications necessary for a widow be provided for by the Church, he listed foot washing among them: "... and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds" (1 Timothy 5:10). All of these were signs that the person had committed her life to serving others. If she had done this, then it was the responsibility of the Church to provide for her.

These signs of a servant give force to the beautiful symbolic action of our Lord, Who washed the feet of His disciples, so that His disciples might see how they were to act toward each other after He was gone. No one was to be master or lord it over another, each was to be a servant of the other. (John 13:4–15)

Genesis 18:1-19:1+ - Angels Unaware - "Old Bill" was hired to sweep streets in a small town. During the hot days of July and August, Mrs. Brown on the corner got into the habit of taking him a glass of lemonade and a slice of cake. He thanked her shyly and that was all. But one evening there came a knock at the back door of her home. Bill was there with a sack of apples in one hand and a handful of roasting ears in the other. He said, "I brought you these, Ma'am, for your kindness." "Oh, you shouldn't have," exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "It was nothing." "Well, no," the street sweeper agreed, "maybe it wasn't much, but it was more than anyone else did."

Abraham was equally aware of the needs of those around him. When three strangers appeared in front of his tent, he was more than eager to extend hospitality to them. He could have thought, Surely someone who is less busy than I am will have compassion on them. But he didn't. Instead, he ran to meet them and begged for an opportunity to show hospitality to these travelers.

Few people ever traveled when the sun was so hot, so Abraham was immediately both curious and courteous. Hospitality is the first law of the East, and Abraham faithfully obeyed it.

The Bible says that hospitality is to characterize the Christian life. In fact, it's so important that it's listed as one of the qualifications for anyone desiring a position of leadership in the church (1Ti 3:2, Titus 1:8 \pm). The writer of Hebrews said, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (He 13:2 \pm).

Do yourself a favor: when you have opportunity to open your home to a troubled teenager or to host a foreign student while the dorms are closed, do it! You never know when you might come across an angel.

Some may have the gift of hospitality, but we all have the responsibility. Back to the Bible

THOUGHT - The Lord did not come to Abraham's tent and say, 'I am Yahweh. I'm coming in! Open that tent flap--I'm coming in.' He waited for Abraham to show hospitality and Abraham invited Him in. That's how God works. The Lord works by invitation. He will never force Himself on you. He waits for you to invite Him in. Do you feel far from God today? Guess who moved? Invite Him to come fellowship with you again, returning to that joy and excitement you had when you first fell in love with Him (cf Rev 2:4-5±).

The Restaurant Napkin - A pastor sat alone at a small-town café. A homeless man walked in, cold and hesitant. The pastor invited him to sit, handed him the menu, and bought him lunch. The waitress whispered, "You just changed the atmosphere in this place." Hospitality isn't just given to a person—it's given to a watching world, which sees the gospel lived out in real time.

The Good Samaritan Today - A man had a flat tire on a deserted road. Dozens of cars passed. Finally, a stranger stopped, changed the tire, refused payment, and said, "Someone once helped me." The rescued man said later, "I saw Jesus on the side of the road." Hospitality often looks like inconvenience embraced for Christ's sake.

The Elderly Man at the Back Pew - A new widow visited a church on a Sunday morning and said she sat "in the back so I wouldn't be noticed."

An older couple saw her, invited her to lunch, and befriended her. She later said, "Your kindness saved my life. I had no one." Hospitality in the pew is often more powerful than hospitality in the home.

The Storm Refuge - During a winter storm, a woman opened her garage to neighbors whose power was out. She handed out blankets, soup, and Scripture cards. A neighbor later said, "I didn't step into a garage—I stepped into the love of God." Hospitality turns ordinary spaces into holy spaces.

The Man at the Airport Gate - A Christian overheard a soldier being told he didn't have the money to fly home for a funeral. Quietly, he stepped forward and said, "I'll take care of it." The soldier whispered, "Why would you do that?" The man replied, "Because Christ has been generous to me."

Hospitality is generosity guided by grace.

The Coffee Shop Conversation - A believer noticed a college student crying in a corner booth. She felt the Spirit's nudge and ordered a coffee "for a friend I haven't met yet." A conversation followed, opening the way for prayer, comfort, and the gospel. Hospitality begins with availability, not ability.

The Motel Lobby Bible - A traveling businessman saw a frightened woman with two children stranded in a motel lobby, abandoned by a broken promise. He quietly paid for their room. The next morning the woman told him, "My son opened the Bible in the room and read, 'God is our refuge.' I think God sent you to prove it." Hospitality opens the door for Scripture to enter wounded hearts.

The Table with an Empty Chair - One missionary family always kept an empty chair at their table "for whoever the Lord brings." Over the years, that empty chair hosted widows, students far from home, lonely soldiers, and wandering souls. Many came to know Christ simply because someone had space for them. An empty chair can preach the gospel louder than a sermon.

- Hospitality is love in motion toward someone you've never met.
- A warm welcome can thaw a cold world.
- Hospitality is the gospel with hands and feet.
- When you serve a stranger, you serve your Savior. (Mt 10:42)
- Make room at your table—God may be sending an angel to dinner.
- Kindness to strangers is often God's chosen doorway to dispensing His Gospel of grace.
- A stranger's need is a believer's invitation from God.
- Your home may be ordinary, but God can make it a sanctuary for a stranger.
- Hospitality turns interruptions into divine appointments.
- Generosity to a stranger is a sermon without words.
- Love for strangers is love for God in its purest form. (Because we too were once "strangers" to Him!)
- You may be the first kindness someone has experienced in years.
- Open doors can open hearts.
- Hospitality is "grace served warm."

The Pastor Who Missed an Angel

A pastor confessed that one Sunday he brushed past a homeless man sitting near the church door because he was "too busy preparing to preach."

After the service, the man was gone.

But an usher approached with tears:

"Pastor... I think you missed Jesus today."

Those words cut through him like a sword.

He vowed that from that day on, he would never again hurry past the hurting.

Hospitality begins when we stop seeing interruptions as obstacles and start seeing them as opportunities from God.

The Refugee Family and the Empty Room

A Christian couple heard about a refugee mother and child with nowhere to go.

They had a guest room but had never used it.

That night, the mother and child slept safely under their roof.

Months later, the mother became a believer and said:

"I saw the love of God before I ever heard the message of God."

Hospitality often preaches the gospel long before a sermon does.

The Stranger at the Funeral

At a funeral for a young believer, a man no one recognized kept weeping.

Later he explained, "I was her Uber driver. On the way to the doctor she prayed for me, bought me lunch, and gave me the only Bible I own. I came today because she was the kindest stranger I ever met."

Hospitality has a long reach—often far beyond what we ever see.

The Church That Grew Because of One Meal

A tiny rural church began to decline. One woman suggested hosting meals every Sunday—open to anyone in town.

They fed the lonely, the poor, the widowed, and the drifting.

Within two years, the church doubled—not because of programs, but because of tables.

When asked the secret, the pastor said:

"We opened our doors, and God opened hearts."

The table is one of God's most powerful evangelistic tools.

TODAY IN THE WORD - The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning, by David Smith and Barbara Carvill, proposes hospitality as the foundation for our "encounters with strangers," that is, for cross-cultural relationships. We should view a short-term missions trip, for instance, as an opportunity to receive hospitality, and getting to know an immigrant neighbor as a chance to offer hospitality. Biblical hospitality includes a pattern of showing humility and respect when interacting with others, and Smith and Carvill apply this pattern to foreign language learning in ways that should encourage and convict both students and teachers.

The virtue of hospitality doesn't get much attention today, yet it is in the list of qualifications for eldership. Neither this list nor the one we'll study tomorrow are exhaustive or definitive. Both were written to pastors at relatively new churches— Titus in Crete and Timothy in Ephesus—so they could organize the local congregations and develop godly leadership teams.

One interesting principle that emerges is that marriage, parenting, and home life are seen as proving grounds for church leadership (v. 6). Elders must be faithful and monogamous (if married), not engaging in any form of sexual immorality. They must have obedient, believing children whose characters have been shaped by their parents' godly training and discipline. And they must practice hospitality, which literally means "loving strangers" (cf. Lev. 19:34). Those who do so might even entertain angels unaware (Heb. 13:2).

Another key principle is the importance of character. Most of the other attributes on this list, whether stated positively or negatively, have to do with moral actions and habits (vv. 7-8). This is instructive, given our culture's emphasis on abilities and achievements. Elders should be upright and self-controlled, not proud, angry, hurtful, dishonest, greedy, or self-pleasing. Spiritually speaking, their faith should be strong and they should be able to teach and defend sound doctrine (v. 9).

APPLY THE WORD - Are you aware of the leadership policies and procedures at your church or in your denomination? If not, try to find out how leaders are chosen. Who is eligible? Is there any kind of leadership development program? How are leaders held accountable or disciplined when necessary? What authority, responsibilities, and privileges do leaders have? What is the history of the leadership structure currently in place? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Finally, commit to pray for the leaders in your church, and for their families.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HOSPITALITY

Biblical Theme	Description	Key Verse
Commanded virtue	Christians are told to practice hospitality	Romans 12:13
Reflects God's nature	God welcomes us into His family	John 14:2
Supports ministry	Early church used homes for gospel work	Acts 16:15
Required for leaders	Elders must be hospitable	Titus 1:8
Expression of love	Hospitality is a way to love others	1 Peter 4:9

QUESTION - What does the Bible say about hospitality? Gotquestions.org

ANSWER - Hospitality can be defined as "the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way." In the New Testament, the Greek word translated "hospitality" literally means "love of strangers." Hospitality is a virtue that is both commanded and commended throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament, it was specifically commanded by God: "When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your nativeborn. *Love him as yourself*, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34, emphasis added).

During His public ministry, Jesus and His disciples depended entirely on the hospitality of others as they ministered from town to town (Matthew 10:9-10). Likewise, the early Christians also depended on and received hospitality from others (Acts 2:44-45; 28:7). In fact, travelers in ancient times depended heavily on the hospitality of strangers as traveling could be dangerous and there were very few inns, and poor Christians could not afford to stay at them, anyway. This generous provision to strangers also included opening one's home for church services. Hospitality was indeed a highly regarded virtue in ancient times, especially for Christian leaders (Titus 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:2).

The writer of Hebrews reminds us not to forget to "entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2). Indeed, in the book of Genesis we read of Abraham's humble and generous display of hospitality to three strangers. Wealthy and aged, Abraham could have called on one of his many servants to tend to the three unannounced visitors. Yet the hospitable and righteous Abraham generously gave them the best he had. And, as it turned out, he had entertained the Lord and two angels (Genesis 18:1-8).

Christians are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Ephesians 2:10). As followers of Christ, we emulate His love and compassion when we show hospitality, not only to fellow Christians, but even more so to strangers and the less fortunate. In fact, we honor God when we are kind to the needy (Proverbs 14:31; 19:17). As Jesus said, "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed" (Luke 14:13). Christ also taught us the second greatest commandment, to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39), and the Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that "neighbor" has nothing to do with geography, citizenship, or race. Wherever and whenever people need us, there we can be neighbors and, like Christ, show mercy. This is the essence of hospitality.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus discusses the hospitable behavior of those who will inherit the kingdom: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matthew 25:34-36). In these days we often don't think much about entertaining strangers, but hospitality is still an important part of Christian ministry (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9). By serving others we serve Christ (Matthew 25:40) and we promote the spread of God's truth (3 John 5-8).

Related Resources:

• Who were the three men who visited Abraham in Genesis 18? gotquestions.org

Illustration - Gordon M. Ferguson tells of meeting a Filipino Methodist bishop on a European-bound ship. The bishop told of his experience when he came to North America as a student years before. The first Sunday his roommate appeared in the doorway, an umbrella under each arm. He offered to show him the way to his place of worship and then planned to go on to his own church. As they started down the street he thought, "If this man has this kind of faith and interest in my spiritual life, surely I should find out what his faith is like." He asked his friend to take him to his church and he attended it all four years. As a result he entered Drew

Ray Pritchard - Somewhere I read about St. Benedict's first rule for his followers: hospitality. They must always show kindness to strangers because in so doing they are showing kindness to Christ himself. The story is told about an old Benedictine monk who was about to lock the monastery door at the end of a very exhausting weekend. There had been so many guests and some of them had proved quite difficult to handle. He was secretly glad to see them all go so he could have a bit of rest. Just as he was closing the door, a new group of pilgrims walked up the path and asked for admittance. Under his breath, he said to himself, "Lord Jesus Christ, is it you again?"

These words of Jesus offer a liberating perspective because it is easy to feel overwhelmed or perhaps resentful at the intrusion of others into our well-planned agendas. And sometimes, consciously or not, we can give off an air of condescension, of pride and superiority, of smugness because "We've found the truth and you haven't, you poor, benighted pagans." And don't think those "poor, benighted pagans" can't sense it. They're not stupid. They know when Christians talk down to them. The words of Jesus help us see things in a new light.

We know that when we go "in his name," he goes with us. We know that we are going "with him" and "for him." But now we know that we are also going "to him." He's on the receiving end of the mercy transaction. He is there in the face of the Afghan refugee. He stands with the homeless at the Harlem Avenue exit. He is there with the single mother struggling with three young children. He has a cell inside every prison in the world. He walks the halls of the cancer unit at the hospital. He hears the cries of abused children. He is there in the assembly of Sudanese believers. (A Cup of Cold Water)

Ray Pritchard - I traveled to Russia not long after the fall of Communism. Upon my return to America, many people wanted to know about the food. I never ate better in my life. It seemed like we had three or four meals every day. Wherever we went, we enjoyed the hospitality of Russian believers. The average Russian family has much less than most Americans have of this world's goods, and yet when you go there, they open the cupboards wide, and they keep bringing it out.

During my visit I was greatly blessed by a particular custom we followed in almost every home. At the beginning of the meal, we all stood and bowed our heads and thanked God for the food. Then we sat down and shared our meal together. At the end of the meal, we stood up again and we prayed, thanking God for what we had just received. That made a powerful impact on my life. That is what Jesus is talking about. That's what it means to say that God has given you daily bread—to be truly thankful and truly content with what he has provided. (Daily Bread Living)

Ray Pritchard in A Tale of Three Men...

Gaius 3Jn 1:1-8 excelled in this gift of hospitality even though these men were strangers to him. That leads me to remark that many of us have underestimated the New Testament command to practice hospitality. The Greek word literally means "love for strangers." Too many of us think that hospitality means that we buy some chips and hot sauce and invite our friends over to watch Monday Night Football. Now I'm all in favor of watching football with your friends, but that's not what biblical hospitality is all about. True hospitality involves opening your heart and home to those in need. It means sharing your time and resources with those people whom you may not know very well.

QUESTION - What does it mean to be given to hospitality (Romans 12:13)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG

ANSWER - If 1 Corinthians 13 is the Bible's "love chapter," Romans 12 is its twin sister. In Romans 12:9–13, the apostle Paul focuses on our relationships with others, asserting that genuine love ought to permeate all our interactions: "Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them . . . with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other" (Romans 12:9–10, NLT). If we truly love others, we will show kindness and generosity to people in need, and we will be "given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13, NKJV).

Hospitality, in the biblical sense, goes beyond merely entertaining guests. It refers to having a welcoming, gracious, and generous disposition toward others, particularly strangers and those in need. The Greek phrase for "given to hospitality" (NKJV) in Romans 12:13 is alternately translated as "seek to show hospitality" (ESV), "be eager to practice hospitality" (NLT), and "pursue hospitality" (CSB). Paul used the Greek word *philoxenian*, translated as "hospitality"; it literally means "love to strangers." This love is not just a feeling but an action—a deliberate effort to make strangers feel welcome, cared for, and valued.

Even if we don't possess the spiritual gift of giving (see Romans 12:8), all believers have the responsibility to practice hospitality and meet the needs of others. The Bible uses vivid images and parables about hospitality to paint a picture of salvation (Isaiah 25:6; Psalm 23:5–6; Matthew 22:1–14; John 14:2–3; Revelation 3:20). As God's redeemed children, we show hospitality in gratitude for the salvation we have received from God (see Isaiah 58:6–7; John 13:12–15).

Paul frequently mentions the importance of showing hospitality to Christian ministers (see Romans 16:1–2; Colossians 4:10; 3 John 5–10). He taught that spiritual overseers should be particularly given to hospitality (see Titus 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:2). The apostle Peter urged, "Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay" (1 Peter 4:9, NLT). In Hebrews, Christians are reminded "to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!" (Hebrews 13:2, NLT).

The concept of being given to hospitality is rooted in the Old Testament (see Exodus 22:21; Isaiah 58:6). Abraham, the great patriarch of faith, is a prime example of one who practiced hospitality. In Genesis 18:1–8, he welcomed three strangers into his home, generously offering them food, water, and rest. This act of hospitality was later revealed to be a divine encounter with God. Similarly, the Law of Moses commanded the Israelites to be hospitable: "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33–34, ESV).

Jesus exemplified what it means to be given to hospitality. He dined with tax collectors and sinners (see Luke 19:1–10), welcomed children (see Matthew 19:14), and healed the sick (see Matthew 14:14). His parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) is perhaps the most striking illustration of hospitality. In this story, a Samaritan helps a wounded man, providing him with care and shelter despite the societal enmity between Jews and Samaritans. The early Christian church continued in this tradition of hospitality, sharing everything they had and partaking of the Lord's Supper and eating meals together in their homes with joyful and sincere hearts (see Acts 2:44–46).

It involves a lifestyle of generosity and openness.

Being given to hospitality means more than offering a pat on the back or hosting an occasional dinner party. It involves a lifestyle of generosity and openness. Here are some practical ways to embody this virtue:

- Opening your home to new neighbors, visitors, or those who need a place to stay.
- Meeting needs such as providing a meal, offering transportation, or simply listening to someone's troubles.
- Fostering a sense of belonging and community through small group gatherings, community events, or regular, intentional acts of kindness.
- Treat everyone with dignity and love, regardless of background or circumstances.

Romans 12 begins with a call to offer our bodies as "a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1). Hospitality is a tangible expression of this sacrifice. It is an act of "true and proper worship" (Romans 12:1), a way to honor God by serving others.

Being given to hospitality reflects the heart of God, who welcomes all to His table. In Matthew 25:35–36, Jesus describes the righteousness of those who will inherit the kingdom by pointing to their hospitality: "For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me" (Matthew 25:35–36, NLT). By practicing hospitality, we honor Christ Himself. We love others as Jesus loved us and live out the gospel in practical ways.