

40 “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. <sup>66</sup>  
10:41 Whoever receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward. Whoever <sup>67</sup>  
receives a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s  
reward. 10:42 And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a  
disciple, I tell you the truth, <sup>68</sup> he will never lose his reward.”

13:1 Brotherly love must continue. 13:2 Do not neglect hospitality, because through it some have  
entertained angels without knowing it. <sup>1</sup> 13:3 Remember those in prison as though you were in prison  
with them, <sup>2</sup> and those ill-treated as though you too felt their torment. <sup>3</sup>

The scripture today talks to us about how to be hospitable to God and his people. We are instructed not  
to neglect hospitality because it could be a messenger, an angel of God, or God himself who seeks us  
out. I remember hearing a story about a woman with three strange visitors as a small child. It went  
something like this;

It was a cold Nebraska morning and the wind was howling. The woman had just gotten out of bed and  
dressed for the morning when she hear a knock at the door. There stood an old man shivering in the  
cold. He asked if he may come in and warm by the fire. The woman, a little nervous because she was  
alone thought for a moment. She let him in and fixed him breakfast. He then went on his way and she  
set about finishing her chores. She was just about to sit down for a light lunch when another knock  
came at the door. There stood a young woman shivering in her worn out clothing. She asked if she  
could warm herself by the fire. The woman said sure, but looked longingly at her lunch. There was  
only enough for one and she was mighty hungry. The woman decided to give it to the stranger who was  
very thankful. After a time, the young woman stood up to leave. The woman saw her start to shiver as  
she stepped into the cold so she gave her her only coat. The woman, once again alone, stopped to look  
around her and ponder what an odd day it had been. She washed her dishes, brought in more firewood,  
and began making her grocery list. Right as she was about to step out of the door, she received another  
knock. This time when she opened the door she was greeted by a miserable sight and a horrific smell.  
There stood a large man in threads with few teeth but a lot of hair and beside him stood the ugliest,  
meanest looking dog. The man asked if he might come in and the woman really stopped to ponder. She  
was alone, night was beginning to fall, and she was pretty sure she wouldn't be receiving any friendly  
visits. If she didn't get to the store, she would be without a hot dinner and milk for the morning. She  
was tired of hosting strangers and this one was quite unpleasant. She wondered why he didn't have a  
home of his own...just what had he been up to. But, it was cold outside and she had a warm house to  
offer. So, she let him in. She built back up the fire and fixed him a sandwich for it was all she had to  
offer. He stayed about an hour and then went on his way. After his departure she got ready for bed and  
just as she was sliding under the covers she hear a knock. Now in her nightgown and bone tired she  
didn't want to answer it, but she did. And there stood God. She fell to her knees and said, “My God, my  
God you are here.” God said, I have been here three times today and each time you have welcomed me.  
You are a blessing and so shall you be blessed my good and faithful servant.'

Would you have been a good and faithful servant? Where does your hospitality end? At what  
point do you let fear or self-interest over power your sense of Godly hospitality? It is difficult to have  
guests within one's home. Often this is due to a sense of needing to clean and put out one's best.  
However, when a stranger comes we often don't answer or are gracious enough to share are old stuff. In

the church our welcoming can be exuberant or cautious. Are we cautious because the other person seems strange? Are we wondering how they may change things? I believe we often say we are open and affirming, that we welcome all but we don't really mean it. We welcome you as long as you come at the right time. Don't interrupt the service with your loud children. We welcome you as long as you dress appropriately; please leave the fishnet pantyhose and dog collar at home with the purple hair. We welcome you as long as you aren't too conservative or too liberal. In other words, you're welcome if you can blend in. Now, that not true for everybody here either. Many of you truly do seek to welcome everyone who comes in the door and that's awesome. I believe that would be godly hospitality.

However I don't think welcoming everyone who comes through the door is exactly what God had in mind. Hebrews 3:13 says Remember those in prison as though you were in prison with them, <sup>2</sup> and those ill-treated as though you too felt their torment. Those in prison cannot come through our doors. Often those who have experienced torment feel so un-worthy that they do not feel welcome anywhere so they keep to themselves and area they know -this is life limiting. So how do you welcome those who don't come?

First, you pray. You ask God to help you have Godly hospitality. You look within and consider your own limitations. What are your hang-ups? How did they get there? What can you do about it?

Then, you pray some more. You ask God to help you with your limitations and to guide you out into the world. Ask God to let you find the angels, to those in need of Godly hospitality. Then, you listen and you keep your eyes and hears open. When you feel that tug or hear the Spirit urging you on, you invite the angels in and offer them some Godly hospitality.

Godly hospitality is not easy, but I remind you of today's scripture:

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Nowhere in there did it say to offer hospitality when it is easy. Godly hospitality is hard work that must be done. We must let God in to work on us so we can go out and welcome others in. The good news is that God is with you and loves you just as you are! The rest of the good news is that God loves everybody, just as they are. Now we got to let them know that. Most folks are just aching to be loved for themselves. I invite you to listen as George expresses this desire. I invite you to think about Godly hospitality.