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2-part series.

Part 1

There is a valued gift that God wants to impart to all His people.

It is a gift that operates solely from a platform of love, charity and compassion.

Hospitality is something that is losing traction with the Christian world on a grand scale. Jesus saw this coming almost 2000 years ago. He explained in Matthew 24:12 concerning the last days of mankind, that the “love of many would grow cold”. Our decrease in love is directly correlated to the decrease in hospitality. When we are willing to make ourselves vulnerable toward others, even at the risk of being hurt, offended or crucified, we draw closer to doing the will of God. This is what it means to be a blessing to others...

Timothy is told to fan the flame of God’s gift within Him (2 Timothy 1:6) so that the gift he was given by the Holy Spirit would not lie

dormant or become useless. Likewise, Spirit-inspired love is not only stirred by words and good intentions – but by acts of godly Hospitality.

Excuses, excuses...

Every year more and more “Christians” are strangled in their loving of others and the excuses seem reasonable at a glance – but in truth, nothing should hold us back from being the salt and light through the things God has given us to steward on earth.

Many excuses are floating around that seems to be the fall-back position of those embracing loveless Christianity. Some sound legitimate. In truth, there is no legitimate reason not to love our neighbour. There is no legitimate reason to live in disobedience.

The LIE: I don't have enough time.

Truthfully – God made time, He can give you all the time you need to meet with people if you ask Him for time.

The LIE: I don't have enough money, I am too poor, and my house is not good enough.

Truthfully – God can supply everything you need to be a blessing to others. The Abrahamic promise of God extends to Jews and Gentiles alike “I will bless you and make you a blessing”. You may not be able to offer the Hilton hotel, but Jesus taught that we must be faithful with the little we have before we can expect God to give us more to be responsible with.

The LIE: I don't have enough help.

Truthfully – The Lord is all the help you need when you are living and learning at His feet – God will help us when He needs us to obey Him. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word... Martha ran around complaining she had no help. God will help us when we have our priorities straight. Our priority is to love and obey God's instructions

to us even when we are on our own. Jesus did teach us to ask the Lord of the harvest to send in labourers.

The LIE: The people are too strange or different.

Just because someone is different, doesn't make them people we cannot learn from or relate to. Every person has red blood; every person has hopes, dreams, emotions, hurts, expectations disappointments. We may find far more in common with people of other backgrounds than we can believe. We also have the promises of Jesus that He would send us the advocate who would give us the words we need to speak and be hospitable to the stranger.

The LIE: It is too dangerous to be hospitable to strangers.

It is more dangerous to disobey God than to show love and hospitality to the most aggressive people group. Romans 12:1-2 tells us to lay our bodies down as a living sacrifice. This is how we can worship God acceptably. Many Christians have lost their lives living Romans 12 in a loving hospitable way.

Godly examples of Hospitality...

Hospitality is found all over the scriptures and the Lord leads the way in showing hospitality to mankind.

- In creating the Garden of Eden, the Lord made a beautiful paradise for mankind. Except for one tree in the Garden, all of the trees in the garden had fruit that was accessible to Adam and Eve. It could be said that not only was the host the Lord hospitable, but also generous. The Lord did have one house rule, which any household can expect to have. Guests in someone's home do not have carte blanche access to every part of a home. A house rule does not make someone inhospitable, on the contrary, house rules lay healthy boundaries so that all who benefit from the host's hospitality would be happy and free.

- Abraham was beloved by God and was honoured because of his hospitality to strangers. In Abraham's day, hospitality was essential, as it might mean life or death for the stranger travelling in the wild.
 - Abraham hosted Melchizedek the High priest (Genesis 14:17-20) giving him a tenth of the spoils of war as a tithe. Melchizedek was also known as the King of Salem – Salem means peace. By welcoming Melchizedek into his presence, Abraham was opening up his home and life to peace itself.
 - Abraham hosted angels (Genesis 18:1-15) and gave them one of his best animals to eat. His hospitality brought him the promise of a son.
 - Abraham hosted God, by honouring the request of God, to sacrifice his only son Isaac to God (Genesis 22:2-18). Abraham's willingness to give his best and most prized possession showed the Lord that Abraham's hospitality was sacrificial and loving. God did not need or want Isaac's sacrifice and in return provides an alternative, a ram caught in the thicket. God also blesses Abraham for his act of Godly and true hospitality. The Lord blessed him and made him a Father of many nations; His descendants would defeat their enemies, and the nations of the earth would be blessed through his descendants.

- Many people seek riches, wealth and health when they say they are Christian and serve the Lord. Jesus said "Seek the Kingdom of God first... and all these things would be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33) everything we need to show love and hospitality to others would be added to us. Those things that are added to us are not the things that make us prosperous in God's eyes. Love and hospitality are what makes us blessed in God's eyes.

- In the New Testament, we see Jesus commending sinners for their hospitality (Luke 7:44-50 NLT). Here Jesus was anointed by a sinful woman to the disgust of the religious elite. The religious elite did the

bare minimum with regards to customary hospitality toward Jesus. Yet, Jesus commends the woman for doing a deed of great love saying...

- “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn’t offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.”
 - This woman was genuine in her actions - willing to show love and hospitality to someone who was barely tolerated by the religious elite who were meant to welcome Jesus with open arms.
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- Through hospitality, Zacchaeus welcomed the King of peace into his home (Luke 19:1-10). This encounter moved Zacchaeus and an amazing turnaround took place. So much so that even Jesus was touched by his gesture. Because of Zacchaeus’ hospitality, the Lord call’s him “a true son of Abraham”.
 - For like Abraham who welcomed the High priest & king Melchizedek into his home, so too did Zacchaeus welcome Jesus, the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, the living temple of God and the King of Peace, into his home.
 - Jesus Christ brought “the bread and wine” and Zacchaeus brought a tithe from the spoils of war that he waged against his people. The tithe was a restoration of all that he stole (not to the temple) but to those, he stole from.
 - Additionally, he paid alms to the poor too, another act of hospitality.

- Jesus Christ demonstrated the greatest act of hospitality to the world. He gave his life for us. His death and resurrection opened the doors of the Father's home to those who believe in Him (John 3:16).
- In the future, we look forward to God's hospitality at the marriage supper of the Lamb. A great feast in the household of God.

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