

Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7
Biblical Hospitality

Biblical hospitality is properly defined as love to strangers. Now, let me state the obvious. Conditions in this country make it extremely hard for us to practice this. Our culture teaches us to be leery of strangers, at best. We teach our children from a very young age not to talk to strangers. And most of us, if not all of us, are aware of a story of someone extending kindness to a stranger and the story not ending well for the person extending kindness. Our culture makes the teaching we find in this story hard to accept and practice. So, today I ask you to examine this story with me in greater detail and for us to wrestle with the truths that will be revealed. I want to make four movements with this story in our effort to dig deeper into the meaning and purpose of biblical hospitality.

Movement one - the strangers appear whose identities are not immediately evident to Abraham. We could easily read this story assuming Abraham new who these men were. But he did not. **V1-2** “One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day.² He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.” Abraham’s actions were completely innocent of him knowing that these guests were divine. It is not apparent that they were planning to stop, and they certainly did not ask anything of him. He approaches them and extends the invitation. **Church, biblical hospitality does not wait to be asked.** Do we go out of our way like Abraham to invite the stranger in. Or do we hope and pray that we are not asked or pretend we do not see the stranger? Could the reason or a part of the reason for the broad

decline we see in mainline protestant churches be the result of our failure to practice hospitality like this?

Heb 13:2 “Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!”

Galatians 6:10 “¹⁰Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.”

Movement two - Abraham prepares the best that he has for these strangers. He does not cut corners. He goes above and beyond, and he involves his entire household in the process. Everyone embraces Abraham’s attitude towards the stranger. Abraham sets the tone, and his entire household follows. **V6-8** “⁶So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, “Hurry! Get three large measures of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread.” ⁷Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. ⁸When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.”

Biblical hospitality does not render the bear minimum. I am embarrassed to say what I am about to say, but my overwhelming experience with church people is that when it comes to hospitality it is not our tendency to go above and beyond. Maybe we fail to practice hospitality like this because we have yet to fully recognize how hospitable God has been towards us in the giving of his Son.

Rom 5:8 “⁸But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”

Rom 12:13 “¹³When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.”

Movement three - the strangers make themselves known and give a prophetic word. God reveals himself. **V9-10** ⁹“Where is Sarah, your wife?” the visitors asked. “She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied. ¹⁰Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!” There’s the prophetic word making known who these men are. However, Sarah is not hospitable to this word. Now, before we give Sarah a hard time, her husband had a similar response to this same prophetic word from God in chapter **17:15-17**: ¹⁵“Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.” ¹⁷Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?”.” It is apparent by the Lord’s questioning of Abraham that he failed to deliver this word of promise to Sarah. They both were inhospitable to the prophetic word of God. They had no reason for their unwelcoming response other than their own human limitations. **Sisters and brothers, biblical hospitality is always welcoming to what God has to say.** Sarah’s response resulted in one of the most quoted responses of God in all of scripture. **V14** “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”. Do we allow our human limitations to make us inhospitable towards the prophetic word of God?

Numbers 23:19 “God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?”

Fourth and final movement- Sarah praises God! Gen 21:1-7

“The Lord kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. ²She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would. ³And Abraham named their son Isaac. ⁴Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. ⁵Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. ⁶And Sarah declared, “God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. ⁷Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!”

Biblical hospitality gives and brings glory to the name of God, to Jesus Christ. Sarah’s initial response to God’s prophetic word was to shrug it off, but when it happened, she praised God and told others. Church, when God’s word is made sure in our lives, we should do the same. Give glory to his name.

Eph 3:20-21 “²⁰Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. ²¹Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.”

If for no other reason, let us practice biblical hospitality so that we bring God’s name glory. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.