

Introduction

Many times the longer that people are believers, the less contact that they have with the world. We get involved with church activities, and fellowshiping with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we lose contact with unbelievers. God wants us to love the brethren and have fellowship with them, but He also wants us to meet and show hospitality to strangers. What Karen and I have experienced is that the strangers we have brought into our house have all become Christians. A young man named John Chetti, who was from New York needed a place to stay, and we took him into our home. It was not long before John became a Christian. He is now a deputy Sheriff in California, and we stay in touch by Facebook.

Another young man named Greg Millen, who was from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, wanted to become a professional golfer, and he needed a place to stay. Wally Armstrong, who was on the PGA Tour, asked me if we would be willing to house him. Even though Wally had a big house and two children, and we had a 1450 SF home with six children at the time, we took Greg into our home. Greg prayed to receive Christ the first week he was living with us.

Another man named Dave, who was a caddy on the Nike Tour, needed a place to stay during the winter, and we invited him into our home. He received Christ at the breakfast table shortly after he moved in, and we baptized him in our bathtub/Jacuzzi.

Why do I share these examples of hospitality? I share this because hospitality opens up the doors to communication and fellowship. When you share meals together, conversations take place that would not normally take place in other settings. When you share lives together, people get to see the real you, not the view from the outside, but a look at you from the inside.

The early church practiced hospitality. They shared meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, and were praising God. The result was there was great unity, they had favor with all the people, and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Hospitality opens up the doors to relationships, and relationships open the door for ministry, whether evangelism, discipleship, counseling, or other areas.

(Acts 2:46-47) "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, {47} praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

In our text today, the Lord visits Abraham, and he eagerly hosts the Lord. His hospitality opened the door for some conversations. The first conversation is about the birth of his son, Isaac, which will take place within the next year. The second conversation is about the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. If Abraham had not practiced hospitality, some of these conversations may not have taken place. This morning, we are going to look at Abraham's hospitality, and then we will briefly look at the two conversations that took place.

The Lord's Visit With Abraham

1. Abraham Shows Hospitality To The Lord (Gen 18:1-8)
2. The Lord Discusses The Birth of Isaac (Gen 18:9-15)
3. The Lord Discusses The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:16-33)

1. **Abraham Shows Hospitality To The Lord** (Gen 18:1-8)

(Gen 18:1-8) "Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. {2} When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he **ran** from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, {3} and said, "My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. {4} "Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; {5} and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant." And they said, "So do, as you have said." {6} So Abraham **hurried** into the tent to Sarah, and said, "**Quickly**, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it and make bread cakes." {7} Abraham also **ran** to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant, and he **hurried** to prepare it. {8} He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate."

The first thing that we see is that the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre. It was in the heat of the day, and it gets plenty hot in that part of the world in the summer time, even if you are under an oak tree. Abraham was probably dozing off and when he looked up, he saw three men, and one of them was the Lord. Who were the other two? In verse 22, the two men turned away and went toward Sodom, while the Lord stayed with Abraham. In Genesis 19:1, these two men who had gone toward Sodom came to Sodom, except this time, they are called angels. So, the Lord and two angels had come to meet with Abraham. The two angels had been given an assignment to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

(Gen 18:22) "Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD."

(Gen 19:1) "Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground."

In Hebrews 13:1-2, we are exhorted to love the brethren and to also show hospitality to strangers. We see that sometimes when we do this, we are actually entertaining angels without knowing it. It is possible that Abraham recognized the Lord but did not know right away that the men with him were angels. He may have entertained angels without knowing it.

Hebrews 13:1-2 {1} Let love of the brethren continue. {2} Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

We would think that we would immediately recognize an angel. In Daniel, Gabriel appeared before him dressed in linen, and had his waist girded with a belt of pure gold. His face had the appearance of lightning, and his eyes were like flaming torches. I think we would recognize that Gabriel was not a man if we entertained him. However, not all angels are going to come with that appearance. We can make a safe assumption from Hebrews 13:2 that it is not that easy to recognize all angels. Some will come dressed like us, acting like us, and we won't even know that we have shown hospitality to angels.

(Dan 10:5-6, 18) "I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. {6} His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult. {18} Then this one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me."

I share these things with you to encourage you about showing hospitality to strangers. The Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia* (Strong's G5381). *Philo* means to have brotherly love and *xenia* means a stranger. To show hospitality is to treat strangers with love, as if they were our brothers. We are to treat them as family. When Karen and I invited people to live with us, they were treated like they were part of our family.

It is not just strangers that we should be hospitable to. The early church shared meals together day after day. They fellowshiped and shared their lives with one another. The hospitality they practiced helped them to be united and to have closer relationships with one another.

Hospitality is something that all of us should do. My mother loves to practice hospitality. She loves for people to come over. But all of us are supposed to practice hospitality, even if that is not our primary gifting. When a widow was being considered for church support, one of the criteria is that she must have showed hospitality (1 Timothy 5:10). When someone is being considered for the office of pastor, one of the qualifications is that he must be hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2). Elders or pastors merely model the behavior all of us should be living. God wants all of us to practice hospitality. Abraham was a hospitable man.

Let's take a look at Abraham's hospitality. First, I want us to look at his attitude. I think the best way to look at his attitude is with the words that are used to describe his actions. In verse three, this hundred year old man RAN in the heat of the day to meet them. In verse six, Abraham HURRIED into the tent to Sarah and said, "QUICKLY, prepare three measures of fine flour." In verse seven, Abraham also RAN to the herd and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant and he HURRIED to prepare it." The first attitude is Enthusiasm. Abraham was enthusiastic about showing hospitality.

The second attitude that Abraham shows is Respect. When the three men stood before him, Abraham bowed himself to the earth. He bowed in honor of the Lord and the two men who were with the Lord. Abraham also suggested that water be brought to wash their feet. Washing the dirty feet of those who had been walking in sandals was a dirty job. But, it was a way that a host honored and cared for his guests. Abraham also went to the herd and brought back a tender and choice calf. This was not any calf; this was a choice calf. It was the finest and most valued calf that he had. Abraham was going to honor the Lord and the two men by giving them his very best calf. He had Sarah make some bread cakes for them. Abraham and Sarah truly honored the Lord with the meal they prepared. Finally, Abraham stood by them as they ate. When we have people over, we should honor them as our guests; they are guests of honor. Our words and actions should honor them. We should give them our very best. When people visit our church, I frequently say to them, thank you for honoring us with your presence today. I am thanking and honoring them for being our guests.

The third attitude that Abraham shows is Care. Abraham wanted them to rest under the tree, eat, and to get refreshed. He was showing care for them. When we entertain others, we should show

care for them. Abraham wanted them to get refreshed before they went on their way. He was caring for them for a brief time. Hospitality does not mean that you have to have someone live with you. Hospitality could mean a meal. It could mean an overnight stay. Hospitality could mean a longer stay. Karen and I used to invite a different family over to our house for lunch every Sunday. We generally made spaghetti in a crock pot and it would be ready when we got home. One of the couples that we had over was George and Marcheta Kern. At that time, they had no children. During lunch, George said to me, "This is like a three ring circus." I think we had six children at the time so there was a lot going on at any time. Now, they have six or seven children, and he is now one of the elders at Freedom Fellowship in Orlando. Karen and I used to pray for everyone that came to our house. We asked them what we could pray for them, and then we prayed accordingly. It was a way of showing care for them. It was also a way that we could pray God's blessings on them.

The fourth attitude that Abraham showed was Servanthood. Abraham served the Lord and the two men. He was the one that ran and hurried. Notice that Abraham stood while the Lord and the two men ate the meal that Abraham and Sarah had prepared. Abraham took the form of a servant who would wait attentively on his master while the master was eating. The servant would not eat at the same time, but would eat after his master had finished. Abraham took the role of servant and honored his master.

One year when Karen and I arrived a couple of days early for the Pensacola Open, we visited Liberty Church. It was a charismatic church, and during the service the whole congregation was singing in the Spirit. It was a beautiful thing. After the service, a man and his wife asked Karen and I over for lunch. We accepted and had a wonderful time fellowshiping with this couple. Their hospitality spoke wonders about their church. They were full of love for people. The first fruit of the Spirit is love and this church was full of the Spirit. May we learn to be a hospitable church. May we be full of the Holy Spirit and bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and may it be evident to those who visit our church.

2. **The Lord Discusses The Birth Of Isaac (Gen 18:9-15)**

(Gen 18:9-15) "Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There, in the tent." {10} He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. {11} Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. {12} Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" {13} And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?' {14} "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." {15} Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, 'No, but you did laugh.'"

One of the biggest benefits of showing hospitality is the building of relationships. As you get to know people, they open up and conversations go to deeper levels. You get past the Cowboys and Broncos, or the rainfall, and you get into more personal things. Abraham was standing by them under the tree as they ate. Then, THEY said to them, "Where is Sarah your wife?" The conversation began either while they were eating or after they had eaten. THEY began to talk about Isaac. In the Lord's last visit with Abraham, He told him that this season next year your

wife will have a son. Abraham had bowed his face to the ground and laughed. The Lord has come back to visit Abraham and has brought two angels with him, and they came back to the conversation about Isaac. This time, they asked for Sarah. I don't know if Abraham had not told Sarah about the last conversation, or whether they wanted Sarah to hear directly from them. In any case, THEY asked for Sarah. They were under the oak tree and the tent must have been close to them. Sarah was in the door of the tent listening to the conversation. THEY told her that they would return this time next year she would have a son. We know that Abraham is almost 100 and Sarah is about 90, and that they are past childbearing ages. But, Moses made sure that we know that they were old and beyond the age of having children. Sometimes, God has to tell me things more than once. God wanted Abraham and Sarah to know that He was giving them a son, and with Him, all things are possible. Sometimes I get discouraged about circumstances, and I have to be told again and again that with God all things are possible. I have to look to Him for all my needs.

When Sarah heard the Lord say that she would bear a child, her response was much like Abraham's response in Genesis 17; she laughed. It says that she laughed to herself, rather than out loud. The Lord then asked, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?' {14} Is anything too difficult for the LORD?" The Lord heard her because He hears the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. Remember when Hagar had Ismael. She named him Ishmael because God heard her. Ishmael means to be heard by God. Hagar then said, "You are a God who sees." In Hebrew, she said, "Elroi," which means God sees (Gen 16:13). God sees and He hears everything. He saw Sarah laugh to herself. He saw the smile on her face when she laughed to herself. He also heard her inward thoughts.

Sarah denied that she had laughed. Moses said that she denied laughing because she was afraid. Fear causes people to do a lot of things that they should not do. God corrected Sarah, saying, "No, but you did laugh." I appreciate the fact that God corrected Sarah. I appreciate when He corrects me. Hebrews tells us that we are not to regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when we are reprovved by Him. It says that the Lord loves those He disciplines, and that if we are without discipline, then we are illegitimate children and not sons. Abraham and Sarah were God's children, and He loved them, and as such, He disciplined them. He corrected Sarah because He loved Sarah. You and I need to have a reverent fear of God, but not a fear that causes us to try and cover up our actions. We need to know and understand His love and mercy. We need to welcome His corrections in our lives.

(Heb 12:5-8) "and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; {6} FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.' {7} It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? {8} But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons."

3. **The Lord Discusses The Destruction Of Sodom And Gomorrah** (Gen 18:16-33)

(Gen 18:16-33) "Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off. {17} The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, {18} since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty

nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? {19} "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." {20} And the LORD said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. {21} "I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know." {22} Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD. {23} Abraham came near and said, "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? {24} "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? {25} "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" {26} So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account." {27} And Abraham replied, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. {28} "Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five?" And He said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." {29} He spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose forty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it on account of the forty." {30} Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." {31} And he said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the twenty." {32} Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the ten." {33} As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD departed, and Abraham returned to his place."

After being fed and discussing the birth of Isaac, the Lord and the two angels got up to leave. Abraham was walking with them to send them off. The next discussion was like an after thought. It was like the real reason that they came to visit Abraham was to encourage him about the son that he would have the next year. But, as a result of the hospitality and sharing that had taken place, God said to the two angels, "*Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?*" In Amos 3:7, we learn that "the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets." God likes to share what He is going to do with us. In John 15:15, Jesus said, "*No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.*" Abraham was a friend of God and God was going to share with him what He was going to do. Do you want to hear more from God? How is your friendship with God? How is your fellowship with God? Do you spend time with Him? God wants to share more with us, and He will as we spend time with Him.

What was the Lord about to do? The Lord had heard that the sin in Sodom and Gomorrah was exceedingly grave, so He was going to go down to see if it was an accurate report. God is a just God. He verifies facts before bringing judgment. Personally, I don't think that God had to go there. He is Elroi, a God who sees. He is Ishmael, a God who hears. He is Omnipresent, so He is everywhere already. I think that God set an example for us of how we are to judge. We are to investigate and find out the facts before judging a person, people, or situation. When we approach someone about a matter, we should ask questions and verify things before jumping to a conclusion.

The two angels left and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the Lord. Then, Abraham began to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah. The word intercede is comprised of two words. Inter means between and cede means to move. To intercede means to act, interpose, plead, or petition on behalf of someone in difficulty or trouble. (www.dictionary.com) To intercede means to go back and forth between two parties to try and bring resolve to a matter. Abraham was interceding for the lives of everyone in Sodom. He was asking God to spare all their lives on behalf of the righteous that were living there.

The first thing question that Abraham asked was if He would sweep away the righteous with the wicked. Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family were living there. Abraham had a good reason to ask. He wanted to know if Lot was going to be swept away with the wicked. Then, Abraham asked a number of follow up questions. If there are fifty righteous within the city, will you indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty. God said He would spare Sodom if there were fifty righteous people in the city. Then, Abraham asked about forty-five, then forty, then thirty, then twenty, and finally ten. God said, "I will not destroy it on account of the ten." After saying this, the Lord departed and Abraham returned to his place. The Lord and the two angels were on their way to judge Sodom.

Lot and his wife had two daughters, so there were four in his family. Lot's daughters were also engaged (Gen 19:14) so there were six people right there. Lot had herdsmen and people that worked for him. I am sure that Lot's household was bigger than ten. If Sodom was going to be destroyed, Lot's household was going to be affected. Abraham had reason to intercede for the inhabitants of Sodom; he cared for them. Abraham was a righteous man, and he was not in agreement with their lifestyles, but he still cared for them and interceded for them.

The world has a hard time with Christians today. They think that we are being hateful when we do not embrace their lifestyle. We are called to love the sinner, but to hate the sin. We can reject the immoral lifestyles of today without being hateful. It is sometimes difficult to communicate love through our words and actions while at the same time rejecting the sinful lifestyles. We can serve them, pray for them, and do acts of kindness for them. Pamela June lives with her daughter and her partner. Pamela does not endorse their lifestyle, but she serves them. She cleans, does laundry, cooks for them and shows them God's love in tangible ways. It can be a difficult thing to do.

As we conclude I want to make a comparison of this account with the future coming of the Lord. Picture it this way. The Lord and His angels are going to come back. Abraham is the father of faith. Those of us who have placed our faith in Christ are sons of Abraham (Gal 3:7). So, Abraham could represent the believers or the church. Sodom and Gomorrah could represent the world, which is full of sin and immorality. God spoke to Abraham about the coming destruction of Sodom because of the immorality. Abraham, or the church, interceded for those in the world, because he did not want them to be destroyed. Now, let's take a look at a couple Scriptures. Let's turn to Matthew 13:49-50. Jesus said at the end of the age the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus and His angels are coming again, and this time it will be to bring judgment.

(Matt 13:49-50) "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, {50} and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In Matthew 25, we have the account of the Son of Man coming and separating the sheep from the goats. It reads, "but when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left." He tells the sheep that they are blessed and will inherit the kingdom prepared for them. Then, to the goats on the left, He will say, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels....These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

(Matt 25:31-46) "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. {32} All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; {33} and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. {34} Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world....{41} Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels...{46} These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

I believe that the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah was a literal event. All of the things in Genesis 18 happened. But, I also believe that it was a prophetic picture. Jesus, the Son of Man, is going to return. He is telling the church, just like He told Abraham, that He and the angels are going to judge the earth. Like Abraham, we should be interceding for the world. We should be praying for their hearts to be softened, and their eyes to be opened. We should be praying for opportunities to share the good news, the gospel, with people. The mission of the church, the great commission, is to go and preach the gospel. Jesus and His angels will be returning to bring judgment on the cities and nations of the earth. We should interceding for them.

You may be here today, and perhaps you believe in Jesus Christ, but you have never received Christ into your life. You have never asked Him to come into your life and confessed Him as your Lord. In 1 John 5:12 we see that he who has the Son of God has life and he who does not have life. He wrote those things to those who believe so that they would know that they have eternal life. God does not want us wondering or not knowing whether we are a sheep on His right or a goat on His left. When we receive Christ into our life, we will escape the coming judgment (John 5:24). If you have never received Christ, you can receive Him this morning. Simply pray with me, "Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God, and that You died and rose from the dead. I ask You to come into my life. I submit my life to You, and confess You as my Lord and God. Take away my sins and cleanse my heart. I pray this in Jesus' name." Now if you prayed this, according to 1 John 5:12, you can be assured that you now have eternal life.

(1 John 5:12-13 {12} He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. {13} These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Introduction (Acts 2:46-47)

1. **Abraham Shows Hospitality To The Lord** (Gen 18:1-8, 18:22, 19:1, Heb 13:1-2, Dan 10:5-6, 18, 1 Tim 3:2, 5:10)

2. **The Lord Discusses The Birth Of Isaac** (Gen 18:9-15, Heb 12:5-8)

3. **The Lord Discusses The Destruction Of Sodom And Gomorrah** (Gen 18:16-33, Amos 3:7, John 15:15, Gen 19:14, Gal 3:7, Matt 13:49-50, 25:31-46, 1 John 5:12-13, John 5:24)

My Application today: