

The Tanner St Church of Christ meets each Lord's Day beginning with Bible classes at **9:30 AM**. We continue with our worship at **10:20 AM** and again at **5:00 PM**. We also meet each Wednesday evening at **7:00 PM** for Bible study and worship. Our meeting place is located about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from I30 at 1512 Tanner St in Malvern, AR.

If you have questions about what we believe and teach, please visit our website, [tannerst.com](http://tannerst.com) to listen to sermons or read past articles from our bulletin. Or you can contact us and we will be glad to find a convenient time to study with you.

Phone: (501) 332-8806 Email: [preacher@tannerst.com](mailto:preacher@tannerst.com)

## Consider: Romans 8:1 Needed News

**Dolline Fain** broke her wrist in a fall last week and is now in Encore, here in Malvern, for rehab and evaluation. Her room and phone numbers are posted on the bulletin board in the foyer. This situation offers us an excellent opportunity to visit with her and help lift her spirits.

**Conrad Harris** is continuing cancer treatments. **Gloria Harris** is exhausted from helping with his care.

**Joyce Venable** is also exhausted as she is trying to help **Bill Venable** as he recovers from a major kidney infection.

**Paula Laubach** is continues to suffer with foot pain. She will have an MRI done Monday to check for a possible torn ligament.

**Ricky Ragsdale** is still in a nursing home in Fort Smith for rehab and therapy. He is not cooperating with his therapy. This of course is distressing to his family. **Phyllis Jackson** has made a couple of trips to visit him and take **John Ragsdale** to see him also.

Remember these in your prayers. Opportunities to visit and help others abound.

# Seeking His Righteousness

*"...seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.." Matthew 6:33*

August 2015

Volume 4 Number 30

## Given To Hospitality

David Holder

I've had the privilege of being invited into a Christian's home in the Ethiopian countryside. The hut was a round structure made of mud and grass formed over a eucalyptus pole frame with a thatched-grass roof. The floor was dirt, and the benches were crudely made from logs. In this primitive structure, we were warmly welcomed and loved.

Many, if not most, of us in our country have nice, comfortable homes. But more and more of us seem to be using them less and less to practice hospitality. In Paul's "living sacrifices" theme of Romans 12, in a paragraph about love, he includes "practicing hospitality." The term literally means "love for strangers." Inns in those days were few and far between, and were often unsafe places. It was important for Christians to open their homes to fellow-believers who were traveling. In fact, Paul's verb means not merely practicing but "pursuing" hospitality.

In contrast, it is not uncommon today for a local church to have trouble filling up a meal list for a visiting preacher during a four day Gospel Meeting. Not so in first-century Philippi. One wonderful day in this city, Paul and Silas joined a woman's prayer meeting beside the river. Lydia listened as Paul preached, and God's Word found a home. Luke explains that "the Lord opened her heart to respond" so that Lydia and her family were baptized into Christ. She followed this

with these words: "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." Luke notes that Lydia "urged us" and "prevailed upon us." When Lydia's heart was opened by the gospel, her home was opened, too.

Both Paul (Romans 12:9-13) and Peter (1Peter 4:8-9) place hospitality in the context of Christians' fervently loving each other. Opening our homes may be occasions for believers to know each other better, to discuss spiritual concerns, or to love and support one another. Christians are often distracted and disturbed by the world; we need the shelter, security, and warmth of our homes. The point is that in practicing hospitality we are not simply cleaning the house and preparing a meal, but we are acting for the cause of Christ. Is any amount of time, energy, and effort too much for this? "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward." (Matthew 10:42).

It will help us to pursue hospitality by keeping it in perspective. Hospitality is not an occasion to showcase our homes, but to strengthen our faith. It is easy to make Martha's mistake (Luke 10:38-42). She fussed about food while Mary focused on the Lord. Martha served, but she also missed. This reminds us to keep hospitality in perspective. Don't be so preoccupied with food that you miss conversation. Don't think only in terms of a several course meal with china, crystal, and silver. If it means doing it or not, serve a simple meal on paper plates. Potluck meals are easier and cheaper. Don't kill yourself in practicing hospitality. Be diligent, but be simple.

One Sunday evening, a group of families with young children went to eat pizza at a local restaurant. After eating, the adults were standing together outside while children were running and playing. One couple asked, "Why don't you

just come over to our house so the children can play and we can visit?" Several accepted the invitation, and we went. When we entered the house, laundry was piled on the sofa. The lady of the house scooped it up and moved it to a bedroom. It occurred to me later that the thought of having laundry on the sofa would have prevented many of us from opening our homes. But why should it? I don't know about you, but I've seen laundry on the sofa before. And it was a lot better for her to just move the laundry than not to invite fellow Christians into her home.

To practice hospitality, many of us need to get down to business. Rarely does a busy schedule or the lack of equipment prevent us from doing what we really want to do. We find a way. We must decide that opening our home is important and has significant potential for the Cause of Christ. Then we must extend invitations. And don't limit yourself to your circle of friends. We naturally gravitate toward people like ourselves and may find our circle of friends unintentionally closed. In the strictest sense hospitality is love extended to strangers. All local churches have members who are at the margins: of all people, they need some attention and encouragement.

Suppose each family sets a goal of inviting a different family into their home every other month, and perhaps hosts a larger group every now and then. If most everyone in the church did this, think of the spiritual potential this would create in a year's time! What if Jesus planned to visit your area? Imagine the clamor as people jockeyed to get on the list to have Him into their homes. And why not? It would be a great honor. But what did Jesus say? "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40).

Focus Magazine, Number 103, Feb. 2009.