

Acts of Mercy: Welcoming the Stranger

Hebrew 13:2 (American Standard Bible)

³⁰Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Brotherly love can be expressed in hospitality. Like the Apostle Paul, traveling missionaries and teachers in the first century nearly always depended on the hospitality of their fellow Christians. Inns back then bore little resemblance to our twenty-first century Holiday Inns or Comfort Suite Hotels. Those early inns were known for being dirty, for being centers of immorality, and for being very expensive. That is why the early Christians traveling depended so much on the hospitality of their fellow believers. The reference to “some have entertained angels without knowing it” was a time when Abraham showed hospitality to three strangers who turned out to be angels of God. (Genesis 18)

Discuss the following questions. If you are in a larger group, you may want to divide into groups of three for this discussion. You may then decide to report back to the larger group or to move directly to prayer time.

1. Do you ever have unexpected guests come to your home and stay?
2. What type of supplies could you keep in your home to welcome visitors?
3. How often, when we gather with a group of people, do we want to engage in conversation with people we know and not those who are new to us?
4. What fears in our society make us leery of greeting unexpected strangers?
5. In what ways can we show hospitality to someone who is new to our church?

Prayer: Gracious God, by your grace and mercy you welcome us into your family. Help us to welcome the stranger among us so that all may experience the love extended to us through your son, Jesus the Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.