

# South Bay Church Plant Sabbath School

## 14 – The Gift of Hospitality

### Introduction

In this week's lesson we will look at some remarkable stories of kindness and hospitality. They remind us of the importance of caring for strangers and welcoming them in.

When did someone show hospitality to you and how did that make you feel?

### ***Paul Goes to Rome***

The account of Acts ends with Paul's journey to Rome to await a trial before Caesar. Sailing late in the fall, they meet headwinds and are forced to shelter on the island of Crete. Paul warns them against sailing any further, but his warnings are ignored. They end up running against a strong northeaster storm and fearing for their lives, they throw some of their cargo overboard.

### ***Acts 27:21-26***

Even though Paul is a prisoner, he suddenly becomes the preacher again during the storm. What is the theme of his message? How would you have felt if you were a Roman soldier listening to Paul?

Two weeks in, the ship is eventually blown up against an island. Some of the sailors attempt to escape in a small boat, and after Paul talks to the centurion, the soldiers cut the ropes to the boat and everyone stays on board.

### ***Acts 27:33-38***

Why are Paul's actions remarkable, considering he is a prisoner?

As they ate together, what do you think was going through Paul's, the sailors', the prisoners', and the soldiers' minds?

### ***Acts 27:39-44***

What kindness is shown to Paul by the centurion? Why do you think he did this?

### ***Acts 28:1-2***

How are the islanders' actions described?

One of the words used is *philanthropia* from which we get the word philanthropy. It means literally, "a love of man." The NKJV describes their actions as "unusual kindness."

Think of a situation when you were stranded and someone showed unusual kindness to you. How can you be more alert to the needs of others to help them when they are in need?

### ***Acts 28:3-6***

Although Paul has just gone through 14 days of no food on the high seas, has gotten shipwrecked, and crawled out of the high seas on a piece of wood, what do we find him doing when he is on land? What does this tell you about the kind of person Paul is?

What makes Paul so casually confident that he simply shakes off the snake into the fire?

### **Acts 28:7**

What different words are used to describe the actions of Publius?

Hospitality is one of the key attributes of the Bible. The word used here is *xenizo* which was a common Greek concept of showing kindness to strangers. Elsewhere, hospitality is called *philoxenia* which means a love of the stranger. Is it easy to love strangers? Why or why not?

### **Acts 28:8-10**

The interesting thing about hospitality is that it is a two-way street. When you provide for a stranger, that stranger can end up blessing you in unexpected ways. Who was more blessed in this situation? Even Jesus said, "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me in" (Matthew 25:35). In taking a stranger in, we open ourselves up to the hidden blessings of that stranger. He/she ends up being Christ.

Have you been blessed by someone you helped? In what ways?

### **Hebrews 13:2**

What advice is given in this Scripture? What might this look like today?

### **Genesis 18:1-9**

What would have been unusual about what Abraham did? Do you think you would have wanted to visit Abraham again? Why?

One of the reasons why the early church grew so rapidly was the unusual kindness they showed to strangers and the needy. This hospitality grew out of the Old Testament tradition and was reaffirmed by Jesus and the early church. However, it is not always practiced today.

What are ways in which we can be more hospitable to people coming to our church? To those in our community? Why is it hard to practice hospitality?

Describe churches that you have found to be welcoming and those that are not. Read the article on 5 *Keys to a Sticky Church* and identify which ones the church needs to work on more.

### **Paul in Rome**

Three months later, the Roman contingent with its prisoners finally set sail again for Rome. Once in Rome, Paul is placed under house arrest but is given considerable freedom. Paul reasons with the Jewish leaders and people in Rome, with growing numbers coming to him. However, they struggle to accept that salvation has gone to the Gentiles.

### **Acts 28:30-31**

How does the story of Acts end? How do these final two verses summarize Paul's life?

### **Conclusion**

Throughout these final two chapters we find people who do kind things for others. This is what truly changes other people and makes them want to come to our churches. And it reveals whether our own hearts have been truly changed by the gospel. "The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within." *Reflecting Christ*, 234. The blessing given to others will in turn bless us. "Give, and it will be given to you." Luke 6:38

How can we be more hospitable toward others?