

## Guest Care

Missionaries and traveling preachers have been a part of the Lord's work since the very beginning of the church.

3 John 5 "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;"

vs. 6 "Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:"

vs. 7 "Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles."

vs. 8 "We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth."

In verse 5, the phrase, "...the brethren, and strangers..." refers to the recipient of the writing. These brethren were said to have gone "...forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles..." (verse 7), and the church was to help them.

vs. 8 "We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth."

How often have we heard these words in church: "Let's take a special offering for this good Brother visiting from Africa" (or from some other mission field)? Or how often have we heard a guest evangelist preach, and the pastor ask, "Folks, could we take a special offering to help out with the needs of this good family?"

For decades, that was the way we did things. Preachers and evangelists trusted in the Lord to provide for their needs. Some churches, like ours, write a check to our guests to assure they received enough to care for their needs, and then we take an offering to see what God might do above and beyond what we had given. If the offering exceeds the check we wrote, the guest receives another check. If the offering is less, we are grateful we had the opportunity to help our friends in the ministry.

Some churches simply pass a plate and leave the offering to the Lord; we did that for years, but now that we have more financial stability, we have done a little more. We have maintained the "love offering" atmosphere on purpose; we want God to work on people's hearts and to draw them into the ministry of personally helping the servants of God.

When the church writes a check, there is no personal involvement. The church's giving the evangelist a check is wonderful, but giving this way does not involve the heart of the church member that was blessed by the preaching.

Recently, I listened to the conversation of a few pastors and heard a shocking statement. One pastor said, "I quit taking love offerings because some of these guests were getting bigger checks than I do as the pastor." That statement reeks of selfishness, greed, pride, and faithlessness! Is it a problem if the missionary or evangelist touches the heart of members, and they generously help him?

Paul wrote of the Gentiles' generous giving to the poor saints in Jerusalem; he said they were debtors, and so are those hearing the Word preached!

Romans 15:26 "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem."

vs. 27 "It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things."

God makes it clear that we are to care for those who minister to us in the Word of God.

1 Corinthians 9:9 "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?"

1 Timothy 5:18 "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

De 25:4\* Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn."

I take special offerings for various ministries or preachers because I hope God touches the hearts of our members to invest in the work of God elsewhere. We want to be a help to others. We do not want to keep all our money in our church or our city. Our church may not be enormous, but if by chance, some guest preacher gets a large offering, I am thrilled!! When Kevin Walker wrecked his motor home and lay critically ill in the hospital, we told our church of the situation. We told of the loss of instruments and clothing, and so much more. We took an offering, and sent a large amount of money to the Walkers — I could not have been happier!

A guest missionary mentioned that their new church needed to be built and that it would only cost about \$900. One of our members came to me insisting that he get to give the entire amount; he fussed at me saying he wanted the blessing! I doubt he gave that significantly to our church. Another member heard from a missionary that \$3,000 would buy land and a few thousand more dollars could enable him to build a church building for one of their new congregations that meet outside. He wanted to pay for the entire project, and I was honored to be the messenger of the good news! WOW! We get to give! My members get to have rewards in Heaven — that is GOOD!

Let me encourage you to take good care of guests. Do not bring in someone for whom you cannot provide. Let me urge you to allow God to move on the hearts of His people to meet the needs in the lives of His servants. It will not hurt the church or the pastor to have members give to others.