

SHOWING HOSPITALITY

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"And Yahweh appeared unto him [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. And he lined up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him. And when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, 'My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant.'" -Gen. 18:1-5

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." - Heb. 13:2

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." -Matt. 25:40

The Bible tells us that "Yahweh appeared (vayera¹)" unto Abraham, and that Abraham looked and saw (vayar¹) three men. The first verse tells *what* happened ("Yahweh appeared") and the following verses explain *how* it happened: the Lord appeared in the three men who approached Abraham's tent. By showing hospitality to these strangers, Abraham "entertained angels without knowing it," in the same way that we can show kindness to Yeshua Himself whenever we do it unto the least of His brethren.

One day in the winter of 1987-88, I was working on an oil painting and listening to some Keith Green music when I heard a knock at the door. I opened the door, and there stood a young lady trying to sell Avon products. She looked very down and depressed as she stood there in the cold, grey, damp weather and asked if



we would be interested in buying anything. She was not real well-dressed, and she was not smiling. Her face and her demeanor said that she had already resigned herself to the disappointment of another "no sale." She did not look at all like the typical Avon lady one sees in ads.

I was not about to buy any Avon products. I had no job, no regular income, and almost no money. We could not even afford a phone at that time. Besides, my wife, Teresa, did not wear any kind of make-up (nor did I), so I politely said, "No thanks" and went back to my painting, slightly annoyed by the fact that my work had been momentarily interrupted by a door-to-door salesgirl.

As I thought of the Avon girl's sad face, though, I began to feel sorry for her. "She's just a poor soul trying to make a living," I thought to myself. "It must be especially hard and discouraging on a cold, rainy day like this. Maybe I should have invited her in, offered her a cup of hot tea, and introduced her to Teresa. We could have given her some words of encouragement and invited her to come to our home Bible study meeting this week. Oh well, its too late now..."

My music tape was still playing, and at the exact moment when I finished the above thought, Keith Green's voice sang these words:

*He sends people to your door And
you turn them away*

*As you smile and say,
"God bless you; be at peace"
And all heaven just weeps,
'Cause Jesus came to your door
And you've left Him out in the street*

The words of the song were like a sword in my heart as I realized that I had, indeed, "left Jesus out in the street." I immediately ran outside, praying that the Avon girl would still be in the neighborhood so I could invite her into our home. To my great disappointment, I was too late. She was nowhere to be found. I returned to my house, went into the bedroom, and wept bitterly over my insensitivity and the opportunity I had missed.

Nearly ten years later, I am still haunted by the sad face of that Avon salesgirl, because her face was one of the faces Yeshua wears - the faces of sad, needy people that He sends to us. I was so wrapped up in my artwork that I missed an opportunity to show hospitality to a stranger whose life might have been changed. What makes this episode even more tragic and ironic is the fact that the painting I was doing was a painting of *Abraham*, the one who showed kindness and hospitality to strangers! I never was able to finish that painting to my satisfaction, and ended up destroying it.

It is so easy to get wrapped up in our own lives, our own pursuits, our own interests. If we are too busy to show hospitality and brotherly love, we are too busy. It was a hot day when the three strangers approached Abraham's tent. If Abraham had chosen to remain in the cool shade and comfort of his tent, rather than show kindness and hospitality to three strangers, he would have missed the blessing of the Lord. Only eternity will reveal how many blessings we have missed by not taking opportunities to show hospitality and brotherly love to people who are sent our way by Divine appointment, n