

Share Out, Share In

March 7, 2021 | Romans 12:13

Overview

It is God's nature to share out all his goodness, and welcome responsive people to share in all his love. That's just who God is and what he does. He flows his transforming mercies into our lives.

But where does all that good "God stuff" go after that? It's not like we can contain it. No, it flows through us to others. When blessed and be-graced by God, we can't help but spill over, sharing out all God's goodness and welcoming people to share in all his love. That's the vision behind today's verse: "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."

We share out with the insiders.

When it comes to caring and sharing, it's always, "family first." Not that we disregard the world's needs, but we make sure the family of God is supplied first. And for good reason: Historically and globally, the Christian Church has generally been a poor lot. Typically the rich and high-born don't take to the gospel, but the poor and needy do. From the very first days of the Church, we've had to rally to keep our people fed, clothed, and housed.

This generous serving is part of our *fellowship*. The word "share" is actually the verbal form of *koinonia*, "fellowship." And the grammar of Romans 12:13 is not so much that we are to "share with God's people in need" but rather "share in the needs of God's people." The needs themselves are the ground of our fellowship. The early church took this very seriously. Acts 4:32-37 describes how the first Christians did not consider their property their own. Rather, those who had fields and houses sold them and brought the money to the church. And astonishingly, "There was not a needy person among them" (4:34). People were being ostracized, disowned—*cancelled* and cast out of society—yet every person was supplied by the Spirit of generosity God poured out on his church.

This continues to be a reliable sign of one's spiritual health: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35); "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21).

We share in with the outsiders.

That's the idea behind "Practice hospitality." It's not a call to entertain friends more frequently, although that's a good thing. But the word *hospitality* is *philoxenia*, "love of the stranger." God's call is to open hearts and homes to new people, lonely people, travelers, foreigners, people who are different from us. And to "practice" this is not just to try it out, but to chase and pursue it. The word is literally, *persecute*.

It's like the Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14. A thorough search is made for people to dine at the Master's table. Servants are sent to "compel them to come in" (14:23). There's urgency and eagerness for the sake of the lost and lonely. We actively pursue outsiders so they may share in God's fellowship. Rosaria Butterfield calls hospitality "ground zero of the Christian faith." It's where grace *detonates* in a person's life. Through hospitality strangers become friends and friends become family—forever.



Our Transformed Life
Living the Vision of Romans 12

Discussion Guide

“Share with God’s people who are in need.”

1. When have you been one of “God’s people who are in need”? Have you ever received some timely, tangible help at a key point of need in your life? Share some stories.
2. How regularly do you get to be the one who shares—“it is more blessed to give than to receive”—would you say it’s more daily, weekly, monthly?
3. What kind of sharing do you typically do? What form does it take? (finances, meals, physical help, etc.)
4. Where might we find opportunities to increase our sharing with those in need? To what degree do you think they even exist in an affluent community like ours?
5. OK, let’s “go there” ... Generous giving to the church is maybe the most basic means of “sharing in” (fellowshipping with) the needs of God’s people. How are we all doing here? If we struggle to give to the church, why? What’s the roadblock?

“Practice hospitality.”

1. *Philoxenia* (“love of strangers”) is in short supply wherever *xenophobia* (“fear of strangers”) takes hold and grows.
 - How should we be counter-cultural in this department? What should be different about us?
 - What can we do to help build our church to be notably, distinctively, hospitable to anyone who feels lonely, outside, or “other”?
2. The word *practice* in Romans 12:13 is rather aggressive. It means to chase, pursue, or *persecute*. (Which is interesting because most “others” feel persecuted. But Paul says, “Let’s *persecute* them with something entirely different!”)
 - How does this shape our attitude and posture toward people who are different from us?
 - Read and process this quote. What in it speaks to you? What inspires you?

“Practicing radically ordinary hospitality is your street credibility with your post-Christian neighbors. It allows you to listen, to keep secrets, to be a safe friend, and to speak a word of grace into dark places. In post-Christian communities, your words can be only as strong as your relationships. Your best weapon is an open door, a set table, a fresh pot of coffee, and a box of Kleenex for the tears that spill.” (Rosaria Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, p. 40)
3. Read Luke 14:15-24, then P-R-A-Y it. (Praise, Repent, Ask, Yield)

“Radical ordinary hospitality—those who live it see strangers as neighbors and neighbors as family of God.”

Rosaria Butterfield