

# God's Law Of Hospitality

## February 27, 2005

### **Matthew 10:40-42 (NKJV)**

"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. [41] He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. [42] And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

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I want to talk to you today about the great opportunity we are going to have beginning next Sunday to **receive** a lot of wonderful people here to Elim Church in the name of the Lord.

Of course, I'm talking about the pastors, missionaries, evangelists and others who will be our guests for the **Elim Convention** that begins next Sunday.

### **First, I want to give you a little background concerning our convention.**

When I became the pastor of Elim Church in May of 1982, Elim was a church of less than 100 in attendance on Sunday mornings. I did not know very many pastors and we had very little fellowship with other churches.

Elim was like an island and to be honest about it most people even in our own neighborhood didn't know anything about us. Many who knew that Elim was here had no idea what kind of church it was. They said, "What's an Elim?"

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I wanted to fellowship with other churches but I had no idea how to go about it. Then, a wonderful preacher, whose name is **Maxey Thomas**, came to preach for us and He invited me to a pastor's convention that he was having at his church in **Auburndale, Florida**. At that time I had been the pastor of Elim for a couple of years. He told me that if I could get there, his church would pay for my motel room and serve me breakfast and lunch free of charge. He said, "**We will treat you like a V.I.P.**"

That sounded pretty good! Being treated like a V.I.P.

I went to the convention in Auburndale and sure enough they paid for my motel room and served me a free breakfast and lunch for four days and treated me like a V.I.P. There was about 150 ministers there and it was a wonderful, refreshing uplifting experience. I was truly refreshed and renewed in my spirit.

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I realized after going to that convention that there are a lot of independent, full-gospel churches in America that believe like we do and worship like we do. I didn't feel so isolated anymore. As a matter of fact, I found out that if all the independent full-gospel churches formed a denomination, it would be the largest denomination in America. I was so glad that Brother Thomas' church was making it possible for pastors like me to have fellowship with other pastors. It was truly a blessing!

**I looked forward to the next year so that I could go back to Auburndale.**

I went back to that convention each January for about three or four years and I will never forget when I was coming back from one of those conventions, **the Lord spoke to me** and told me that He wanted us to host a Pastor's convention at Elim. He told me that we were to do it like they did in Auburndale. We were to pay for the motel rooms of the ministers who came and provide food for them.

**I argued with Him for a while.** I thought of all the reasons why we couldn't do it. I said, "We don't have enough people here to do it." I said, "We don't have the money." I said, "I don't know that many pastors. I don't even know how to begin.

**But I knew God was speaking to me.** I could not ignore it. So I told the people of our church what I felt that God wanted us to do. I think a lot of them were skeptical but they went along with it and we had our first Pastors' Convention seventeen years ago during the first week in March.

**How many of you were here for that first Pastor's Convention?**

There were only a few pastors who came but we treated them like V.I.P.s and God showed up and we had a wonderful convention. Those who came were truly blessed. We paid for their motel rooms and served them breakfast and lunch and they heard great messages preached by David Cook and Maxey Thomas and they couldn't wait to come back the next year.

**That was seventeen years ago and we are about to do it again next week.**

I am preaching this message today because I want to remind all of you who have helped in the past and tell those of you who have recently join Elim, **how important this convention is to the ministers who will come** here next week. There is no way that I can overstate how important our convention is to the ministers who come. They look forward to our convention. It is the highlight of their year.

**But not only is the convention important to those who come,** it is also of vital importance to our church. I am convinced that it is a major reason why God has blessed this church so much.

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You see God has a law. **I call it God's law of hospitality.**

Jesus laid it out for us in the scripture that I read to you as my text for this message. He said....

**Matthew 10:41 (NKJV)**

He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

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**One of the greatest examples of receiving a prophet** and receiving a prophet's reward in the Bible is found in II Kings, Chapter 4. **It's the story of the Shunammite woman.**

**2 Kings 4:8-10 (NKJV)**

Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food. So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food. [9] And she said to her husband, "Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes

by us regularly. [10] Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there."

**This woman recognized that Elisha was a man of God and she received him.**

She gave him a place to stay and she provided food for him to eat. She realized that when she ministered to him she was ministering to the Lord. She wasn't doing it with a selfish motive. She was doing it as unto the Lord. She was doing it simply because it was the right thing to do.

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**Jesus told His disciples.....**

**Matthew 10:40 (NKJV)**

"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

**When we receive these ministers who are coming to be with us next week, we are receiving Jesus.** We need to treat them the same way we would treat Jesus if He were to decide to come to visit us in the flesh.

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The Shunammite woman wasn't doing what she did to get a personal reward but the Law of Hospitality is .... "If you receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, you will receive a prophet's reward."

**Matthew 10:41 (Living)**

If you welcome a prophet because he is a man of God, you will be given the same reward a prophet gets.

**You cannot give without receiving.**

**2 Kings 4:11-13 (NKJV)**

And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there. [12] Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite woman." When he had called her, she stood before him. [13] **And he said to him, 'Say now to her, 'Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What can I do for you?'** Do you want me to speak

on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?" She answered, "**I dwell among my own people.**"

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**Elisha** was the most powerful man in Israel. He was a man of considerable influence. He was personally acquainted with the king and with the commander of the army. If he would tell them to do something for this woman they would do it.

**But she wasn't interested in that.** She simply wanted to be a blessing to the man of God because she realized that in blessing him she was giving to God.

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### **2 Kings 4:14-17 (NKJV)**

So he said, "What then is to be done for her?" And Gehazi answered, "Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old." [15] So he said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. [16] Then he said, "About this time next year you shall embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!" [17] But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her.

**She received a man of God and God did something supernatural for her.**

She and her husband were unable to have a child. God gave her a miracle!

**She was operating in God's Law of Hospitality and God blessed her immensely.**

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**We are going to have a wonderful opportunity to practice God's Law of Hospitality next week.** Men and women of God are coming to us from various parts of the United States and the world. They are His servants. He has chosen them to be pastors and missionaries and evangelists and to serve in various other areas of ministry. When we receive them and minister to them and bless them, He looks at it as if we are receiving Him. We need to look at it the same way.

**Think about it for a moment.** If Jesus were going to be here in the flesh next week, what would you do; what would we do to receive Him?

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**I know one thing we would do. We would all be here!** We would clear our schedules and come and let Him know that we are so glad He decided to come to our church. To stay at home would be an insult! It would show that we really didn't appreciate His visit.

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**To practice God's Law of Hospitality,** the **first thing** you have to do is **show up!** We cannot show hospitality to our guests if we are not here.

**Please! I beg you! Come to the convention!** Just your presence will make a difference. When you come and enter into the worship it creates an atmosphere for the Lord to move. **The Elim Convention is not just for ministers. It's for us too!** It's for you! You are going to minister to them and as you do, you will receive a prophet's reward! I guarantee that if you will come you will hear something that will change your life!

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I went to Fayetteville, Arkansas this past week to attend a convention very similar to the one we will have here next week. Only, they didn't pay for our motel rooms and they didn't give us a free lunch. But, they did have three wonderful speakers each day that ministered God's word and it was refreshing, challenging and life-changing. It was worth the time and the money and the effort. God spoke to my heart. He is going to do the same thing for those who come to our convention!

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In order to show those who come our hospitality, we must think about their needs and treat them like we would like to be treated if we were going to a convention in their church.

**Put yourself in their place and think about things you can do to make their visit to our church a warm and pleasant experience.**

**Think about it for a moment.** We come here every week and we know where everything is. We know where the **restrooms** are and where the **fellowship hall** is and where the **nurseries** are and the **children's church** is and the **hospitality room** is and the **media center** is and where all the other places are that they might want to go. But visitors are not familiar with our church.

We have a large campus here and receiving visitors means that we make them feel welcome and go out of our way to help them find what they are looking for. By the way, we need to do these things every Sunday, not just at convention time.

If you see a guest with small children asked them, "May I take you to the nursery?"

If someone is searching for a restroom, tell him or her where it is. Etc.

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**One more thing; Don't be afraid to talk to the ministers who come.** Give them a word of encouragement! Tell them how delighted you are that they are here. If God prompts you to tell them something, do it. It may just be the thing they need to keep them going.

**They are coming to Elim Church to receive something from the Lord.** They won't get it from the building. They will get it from the preachers who will preach the Word of God and from the singers who will sing God's praise and from you and me as we receive them in the name of the Lord.

**Being a pastor or a missionary is a difficult job.**

According to Charisma Magazine, 17,000 pastors resign every month in America. They quit! They do something else. It really is amazing how many pastors and other full time ministers are discouraged and thinking about doing something else. I read one report that said over fifty percent of the people who go into the ministry will resign at some point and it said that the highest drop-out rate was among Pentecostals.

At the convention last week in Fayetteville, one of the messages was directed to those ministers who were there who were discouraged and at a

crossroads in their ministry and I was amazed at how many of them were really in a crisis situation.

I don't think the average Christian has any idea of the tremendous burden that pastors and missionaries are under. Not only is the job itself a twenty-four hour a day, seven days a week job, but the minister is on the most wanted list of the devil. Satan works over-time to discourage ministers.

And by the way, he uses church people to do the job! The most effective means he has to **discourage** a pastor or a missionary is to use a brother or sister in the church to criticize the pastor or the missionary.

However, God also uses church people to **encourage** His servants! The most effective tool He has is a person who will be the pastor's armor-bearer. Someone who will encourage him and pray for him and stand shoulder to shoulder with him in doing the work that God has called him to do.

Next week, we are going be a blessing to those who come. I hope and pray that each of you will help me to make our guests feel welcome and minister to their needs.

Remember.....

If you receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, you will receive a prophet's reward.

Give invitation.