**A MOMENT WITH MIRIAM:**

One-Anothering with Hospitality.

It seems wise to begin a discussion of hospitality with a definition. Oxford defines hospitality as “the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers.” The Greek word translated to the English “hospitality” in Scripture, however, is more inclusive. *Philoxenos,* is a compound word from *philo -* to love, and *xenos -* strangers. Since we are trying to understand what God means when he tells us “Always be eager to practise hospitality” (Rom.10.13.) perhaps we should lean a little harder into the Greek definition.

What might the loving of strangers look like? In our culture (and many others) the word “hospitality” usually conjures up visions of happy people around a large laden table, or perhaps casually enjoying a barbecue, but I think God’s vision is much broader. While hospitality definitely includes the above I believe it also includes such exchanges as the following incident that left me a little flabbergasted. All I did was smile.

I walked out of the Dr’s office back through the waiting room and smiled at an elderly lady whose eyes sought mine, something I often do. I was surprised to see this woman follow me to the elevator, but when she blurted “I just wanted to say you have a beautiful smile” I was floored. My face has never fully recovered from a run-in with Bell’s Palsy; it remains stubbornly crooked. Yet somehow this stranger saw a light behind this wonky smile that made her feel welcomed, perhaps momentarily loved.

Philoxenos - to love strangers - can be as spontaneous as a smile, but most likely it will be intentional. It will include greeting the janitor, but also caring (loving) enough to stop and chat. Perhaps even more challenging, it might include showing equal care for a boss or other superior. Impromptu or planned, the operative word in this commandment is “love”. Frequently Scripture’s One-Anothering refers to other believers, but God intends His love be shared with all. May we all be eager to learn the heart and art of sharing what God has given us.